



# Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England

*Jessica Brantley*

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Just as twenty-first-century technologies like blogs and wikis have transformed the once private act of reading into a public enterprise, devotional reading experiences in the Middle Ages were dependent upon an oscillation between the solitary and the communal. In *Reading in the Wilderness*, Jessica Brantley uses tools from both literary criticism and art history to illuminate Additional MS 37049, an illustrated Carthusian miscellany housed in the British Library. This revealing artifact, Brantley argues, closes the gap between group spectatorship and private study in late medieval England.

Drawing on the work of W. J. T. Mitchell, Michael Camille, and others working at the image-text crossroads, *Reading in the Wilderness* addresses the manuscript's texts and illustrations to examine connections between reading and performance within the solitary monk's cell and also outside. Brantley reimagines the medieval codex as a site where the meanings of images and words are performed, both publicly and privately, in the act of reading.

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