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Sommario/riassunto	The 500 years following the collapse of the Roman Empire is still popularly perceived as Europe's 'Dark Ages', marked by barbarism and uniformity. Julia Smith's masterly book sweeps away this view, and instead illuminates a time of great vitality and cultural diversity. Through a combination of cultural history, regional studies, and gender history, she shows how men and women at all levels of society ordered their world, and she allows them to speak to the reader directly in their own words. This is the first single-author study in over fifty years to offer an integrated appraisal of all asp