



The culture of medieval English monasticism /

Clark, James G.

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The cultural remains of England's abbeys and priories have always attracted scholarly attention but too often they have been studied in isolation, appreciated only for their artistic, codicological or intellectual features and not for the insights they offer into the patterns of life and thought - the underlying norms, values and mentalité - of the communities of men and women which made them. Indeed, the distinguished monastic historian David Knowles doubted there would ever be sufficient evidence to recover "the mentality of the ordinary cloister monk". These twelve essays challenge this view. They exploit newly catalogued and newly discovered evidence - manuscript books, wall paintings, and even the traces of original monastic music - to recover the cultural dynamics of a cross-section of male and female communities. It is often claimed that over time the cultural traditions of the monasteries were suffocated by secular trends but here it is suggested that many houses remained a major cultural force even on the verge of the Reformation

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Baratz Innovación Documental

- Gran Vía, 59 28013 Madrid
- (+34) 91 456 03 60
- informa@baratz.es