



VISIGOTHIC SYMPOSIUM 5: SEPTEMBER 2020 – JUNE 2021

Visigoths, Goths, and Early Medieval Barbarians in Popular Culture

The records of the 16th Council of Toledo held in 693 in the reign of the Visigothic king Egica indicate that officials had expected a sort of early medieval stay-at-home situation for parts of the kingdom's Gallic territory hit hard by the plague. Today, the most effective response to a world pandemic appears similar. It is now only a matter of time before major funding bodies begin publishing calls for research projects studying the history of pandemics. The political intention of these grants will be to employ academia to predict outcomes, sway public opinion, and limit potential popular dissonance. Exposed in this process will be the gap between public and scholarly narratives about the peoples of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages.

The Visigoths specifically have been mentioned by characters across a spectrum of U.S. comics, novels, movies, and types of TV shows including military satire (*M.A.S.H.*), utopian sci-fi (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*), conspiracy theory (*X-Files*), and small-town drama (*Gilmore Girls*). Whether in the Godot-style repartee of the latter, the prose of the others, or the lyrics of Immortal Technique, the meaning of "Visigoth" comes coded within the language of the popular logic, constantly deferred to its imagined opposite. Representations of Visigoths, Goths, and barbarians can be found across the world in music, in the menus of restaurants, in pub themes, and even in the names of far-right groups advocating race war and ethno-states.

The essays of this symposium will interrogate popular perceptions of the Visigoths and other "barbarian" assemblages in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. The aim is to reveal the prevailing uses of these identities in popular cultures. From that awareness, we can better assess the gap between the narratives promoted by politicians and cultural corporations and those sold by academia. We can then evaluate the real, if any, discursive impact of scholars, and even see whether scholars themselves are critical or receptive of popular culture in their representations. We will also establish a grounding for reflection after the emerging mega-grants cycle.

Schedule of Publication

30 September 2020 – Abstracts and Titles (250-500 words)

31 March 2021 – Essays (4,000 words)

30 June 2021 – Response Papers (2,000-2,500 words)

*All material should be submitted firstly in English. If you would like to submit material in another language, please allow extra time for translation and editing.

