



Barbarian Memory: The Legacy of Early Medieval History in Early Modern Literature

Nicholas Birns

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This book investigates the use of Late Antique European history (roughly, the fall of Rome and the establishment of barbarian kingdoms) by late medieval and Renaissance writers such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Davenant, Trissino, and Corneille. Barbarian memory in this era was seen as at once a rousing evocation of ethnic origin and an embarrassing reminder of an era of disruptive invasions and strange, uncouth names within a European fabric that desired to see itself as seamless. We see the stories of Goths, Vandals, and Lombards crop up from Spain to Sweden, from major texts like *Hamlet* and *Don Quixote* to virtually unread works such as Corneille's *Pertharite* or Davenant's *Gondibert*. The issues of ethnicity and religion raised by the barbarian era makes its representation very different from that of the classical world, and makes the book an investigation not just of this particular topic but how time and history conceived in the early modern period.

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