Twitter Thread by David M. Perry



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I need to know more about the interest in medieval and classical history in the trump white house. /1

2) Today the WH issued a proclamation of commemoration of the 850th anniversary of the death of St. Thomas Beckett.

https://t.co/H8Fbhg75Ob

3) It's quite a document. "Becket's death serves as a powerful and timeless reminder to every American that our freedom from religious persecution is not a mere luxury or accident of history, but rather an essential element of our liberty...bought with the blood of martyrs."

4) I am reasonably sure that Donald Trump is not a Peter O'Toole fan; and while he and T.S. Eliot would have gotten along in their fascism and antisemitism, I doubt he's read that either. And we can't always just say STEPHEN MILLER! ... can we?

5) Then there was the appointment of Milo's medievalist to a board that oversees cultural exchange and is tasked with stopping illicit artifact trade. Which is an important board but also a weird position.

https://t.co/fPlHs1JzJw

> Of fuck no. pic.twitter.com/VTyLMsYfqI
>
> — David M. Perry (@Lollardfish) December 23, 2020

6) RFB is a name that medievalists know well and whose full entry - rather than dabbling - into the right-wing internet is a problem for medievalists. Alt-right forces use her academic credentials to justify their ideology and medievalists and other scholars need to condemn it.

7) But the pathway from third tier rightwing websites and Milo's failed career to a presidential appointment is a weird one. RFB is just not that big a deal even in obscure right-wing circles. She doesn't have a big footprint (again, this isn't saying medievalists should ignore).

8) how did her name get on a list?

9) Then of course there's the recent executive order on beautiful classical architecture, which was announced in February but rolled out last week.

10) That's the big one in some ways - trying to cement a false white version of antiquity as the only acceptable ancestor of the US federal government. It's absolutely a claim rooted in white supremacist claims about the past and who we - as a nation - are today.

11) That the alt-right fetishizes a false white medieval and classical european past to craft - as Sierra Lomuto says - an origin story for whiteness isn't news at this point. If you follow me. If you follow other medievalists. Hopefully you know this.

12) But the vector to Trump's official documents and pronouncements isn't as clear to me and I'd like to know more. Who put RFB's name on the desk. Who decided to draft this St. Tommy B's proclamation. Because those people aren't going away.

/fin. Back to chapter 12.

addendum: https://t.co/xp1HFBuAU4

> I forgot that I wrote an essay about Trump and Comey, Henry and Becket, back in 2017. https://t.co/N2JqEB8TBp
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> — David M. Perry (@Lollardfish) December 29, 2020