



Chaucer's Afterlife: Adaptations in Recent Popular Culture

Kathleen Forni

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This study explores Chaucer's present-day cultural reputation by way of popular culture. In just the past two decades his texts have been adapted to a wide variety of popular genres, including television, stage, comic book, hip-hop, science fiction, horror, romance, and crime fiction. This cultural recycling involves a variety of functions but Chaucer's primary association is with the idea of pilgrimage and the prevailing tenor is populist satire. The target is not only cultural elitism but also the dominant discourse of professional Chaucerians. Academics in turn may have doubts about the value of popular Chaucer; popular culture theory, however, would maintain that such skepticism has less to do with critical discrimination than the assertion of social distinction. Nonetheless, the fact that Chaucer has a popular afterlife, and remains an ideological product over which competing groups lay claim, attests to his current cultural vitality.

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