

iii Films

- The Advocate* or *The Hour of the Pig*. Dir. Leslie Megahey, 1993. An amusing and disturbing tale about the murder trial of a pig. Animal trials did occur in later medieval France (and elsewhere), and for all its satiric presentation of absurdity, the film contains a powerful defence of such strange justice in a courtroom speech delivered by Donald Pleasance.
- Anchoress*. Dir. Chris Newby (1993). Set in fourteenth-century England, and loosely based on a story of such a girl, the film tells of a young girl whose visions lead her to becoming an anchoress. Without discrediting belief, the film well displays the disenchantments of the anchoritic life and its entanglements with human weakness.
- Beckett*. Dir. Peter Glenville (1964). Based on Jean Anouilh's play, this powerful film depicts the story of the (implicitly homosexual) relationship between Henry II of England and his 'turbulent priest' Thomas Beckett. Whatever the accuracy of its portrayal of their relationship, the film brings to life the conflicts between Church and state.
- Beowulf*. Dir. Graham Baker (1999). A sci-fi story with, frankly, only the loosest of connections to the OE poem, it nonetheless captures some of the poem's moody atmosphere.
- Braveheart*. Dir. Mel Gibson (1995). Historians object to its depiction of the Battle of Stirling, the success of which depended on Wallace's unchivalric attack on the English before they had finished crossing the bridge. The film depicts no bridge, but well conveys the grit of battle engagement, and the divisive politicizing of the Scottish barons.
- Excalibur*. Dir. John Boorman (1981). Visually beautiful, the film has a storyline that sprawls like the book it is based on – Malory's *Morte Darthur*. The fidelity to much of the original comes at the price of continuity of plot and characterisation, but the film remains well worth watching.
- The Fisher King*. Dir. Terry Gilliam (1991). A medieval romance about a quest for a grail set in modern-day New York. A comic study, it is an intelligent imitation of the romance form with its themes of providential design, the quest, faith, love and forgiveness.
- A Knight's Tale*. Dir. Brian Helgeland (2001). With its vaguely punk heroine and accompanying rock music, this film makes no attempt at all to recreate historical authenticity, yet curiously manages in a lighthearted way to reinvent Chaucer and medieval popular culture.
- Lancelot du Lac*. Dir. Robert Bresson (1974). A brooding and tragic anti-romance, the film exposes the sinfulness, doubt and weakness of Camelot's heroes.
- The Lion in Winter*. Dir. Anthony Harvey (1968). Depicts the aging Henry II (Peter O'Toole) and his 'turbulent' family. Eschews anachronistic luxury of castle life, exposes the draughty, dirty existence of medievals, even royalty, and reveals the complex connections between England and France, the instability of the throne and the uncertainty of hereditary succession.