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## The Disarticulation of Christendom: Dismemberment and Decapitation in Medieval Films

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In the opening scene of Kevin Reynolds's 1991 film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, Muslim guards in Jerusalem cut off a Christian prisoner's hand in a seemingly gratuitous moment of violence. This brutal beginning is only one of many filmic depictions of medieval dismemberment: from the limbless Black Knight in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones, 1975) to the decapitation of the villainous Viking Fjölfnir in *The Northman* (Robert Eggers, 2022), cinematic medievalism is rife with broken bodies. At first glance, this gore might appear simply to gratify audiences' expectations of the medieval period as "dirty, violent, and politically unstable or threatening."<sup>1</sup> In her examination of dismemberment and mutilation as a common trope in medieval and modern imaginations, for example, Lila Yawn comments that "everyday speech about the present further propagates the idea that mutilation was somehow peculiar to the middle ages."<sup>2</sup>

To some extent, one might argue that a comparison between modern texts about the medieval period and medieval texts themselves bears out this association. After all, although a modern viewer might think that three separate characters being decapitated in *The Green Knight* (David Lowery, 2021) seems excessive, the Green Knight's gruesome "game," of course, originates in the fourteenth-century romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which, in a passing reference to "þe Holy Hede," also evokes the beheaded Saint Winifred, played in the film by Erin Kellyman.<sup>3</sup> As Larissa Tracy and Jeff Massey argue, however, beheading is not "a feature of some monstrously constructed "Dark Age"; rather, both modern and premodern "audiences have been captivated by the spectacle of the severed head for centuries."<sup>4</sup> This applies to the severed limb, as well. Cinematic decapitation and dismemberment do not simply transmit medieval ideas in an effort at "authenticity." Instead, they also frequently reveal deeper tensions within modern societies struggling to understand the roles of religion and diversity in a world whose secular ideals of pluralism hide deep fissures of religious and racial intolerance. The

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<sup>1</sup> David Williams, "Medieval Movies," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 20 (1990): 1-32, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Lila Yawn, "The Bright Side of the Knife: Dismemberment in Medieval Europe and the Modern Imagination," in *Wounds in the Middle Ages*, ed. Anne Kirkham and Cordelia Warr (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 215-46, 217.

<sup>3</sup> Yohana Desta, "The Green Knight: Who Is Winifred, the Beheaded Ghost?" *Vanity Fair*, July 30, 2021, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2021/07/the-green-knight-saint-winfred>.

<sup>4</sup> Larissa Tracy and Jeff Massey, Introduction to *Heads Will Roll: Decapitation in the Medieval and Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Tracy and Massey (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1-13, 2.

visceral sight of the broken body evokes horror and, through this affective impression, represents not only the grim reality of the medieval world, but that of the modern world as well.

Elaine Scarry's concept of "substantiation" may be relevant here. As she remarks, at times of social crisis, "the sheer material factualness of the human body will be borrowed to lend [. . .] the aura of 'realness' and 'certainty.'"<sup>5</sup> It is this substantiation that suffuses the injuring and killing of bodies in war with motivation and meaning; filmmakers similarly draw on this aura of "realness" to imbue their films with "medieval" comments on modern social conflicts. From the torture and beheading of William Wallace in *Braveheart* (Mel Gibson, 1995) to the severing of a rebel's ear in *King Arthur: Legend of the Sword* (Guy Ritchie, 2017), the cinematic figure of the dismembered or decapitated body variously emphasizes villainy, motivates action, and comments on nationhood and class. Equally important, it expresses discomfort with both religious ideals and national identity as filmmakers attempt to reconcile faith and history with modern democratic ideals. Where these films' use of dismemberment often falls apart, so to speak, is in their efforts to insist on a universally fragile human body even as race, class, and gender in the films amply illustrate that not all bodies are treated equally. As Laila Dawney argues, building on Scarry's ideas, "Broken bodies affect us because we have a capacity to feel pain and to imagine the pain of others, *but only if we feel that their pain matters*."<sup>6</sup> An unproblematic bodily identity is ultimately elusive for contemporary films depicting deeply divided societies, whose commentary on the role of faith in politics is inflected by an ultimate focus on the white male Christian. In this essay, I examine three films—*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, *Kingdom of Heaven* (Ridley Scott, 2005), and *Pilgrimage* (Brendan Muldowney, 2017)—that deploy bodily mutilation and decapitation in foregrounding fractures in Christianity, distinguishing prejudiced and self-interested Christianity from a more tolerant and compassionate version. In the process, the specifics of ethnic and religious identity are frequently elided, indicating that modern society has been no more successful than the fictionalized medieval past in healing its own social ruptures.

The opening of *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, in which Robin of Locksley (Kevin Costner) witnesses a Muslim guard chopping off a fellow prisoner's hand, is often derided as indicative of the film's stereotypical representation of Muslims and its facile attempts to inject diversity with the character of Azeem (Morgan Freeman), a Muslim who helps

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<sup>5</sup> Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 14.

<sup>6</sup> Leila Dawney, "Affective War: Wounded Bodies as Political Technologies," *Body & Society* 25, no. 3 (2019): 49-72, 59; emphasis original.

Robin escape from prison and becomes his supporter and confidant.<sup>7</sup> Meriem Pagès finds Azeem an inadequate counter to the initial negative representation of Muslims, reflecting an American society that values diversity—as long as it takes the form of a few highly skilled exceptions among a white majority.<sup>8</sup> Kathleen Biddick, meanwhile, suggests that the contrast between Azeem and the prison guards might be read in the context of the Persian Gulf War—waged in January and February of 1991, between the filming of *Prince of Thieves* in fall 1990 and its final edit and release in June 1991—and a “new Orientalism, governed by a new imperialism that pits progressive Arabs against Islamic fundamentalists.”<sup>9</sup> Another reading, however, is enabled by contextualizing the hand amputation with other examples of dismemberment perpetrated by the Sheriff of Nottingham (Alan Rickman), the film’s villain.

Ostensibly guarding England while King Richard is on Crusade, the Sheriff threatens its political and religious coherence as well as the bodily coherence of its subjects. In addition to his literal dismemberments—he cuts out the eyes of Robin’s retainer Duncan, guts his cousin Guy of Gisborne, and almost beheads Will Scarlett—his speech is littered with references to decapitations, mutilations, and, in one of the film’s more memorable lines, cutting out Robin’s heart with a spoon: “It’s dull, it’ll hurt more!” His obsession with bodily fragmentation is matched by the social dissolution his regime has caused in England. Raised by a witch, he worships the “Old Ways” and has converted fellow traitorous lords to “Devil worship,” while simultaneously attending Mass regularly and cultivating the Bishop’s (Harold Innocent) greed. This religious duplicity allows him to take advantage of social and ethnic fragmentation in the British Isles: when he seeks military strength against Robin Hood, the witch Mortianna (Geraldine McEwan) recommends that he seek help from “the beasts that share our God,” by which she means “the Celts.” Not divided into specifically Welsh, Scottish, or Irish nationalities, the “Celts” dress in animal skins, communicate primarily via guttural shouts, and, according to the Sheriff, “drink the blood of their dead.”

Though this caricature of non-English British peoples clearly does not attempt to reflect historical conflicts over land and sovereignty, the religious and ethnic divides in *Prince of Thieves*’ Britain underlie a disintegration of the land that the film compares both with the imperialism of the Crusades and, paradoxically, with the sufferings of English crusaders

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<sup>7</sup> The concept of a Muslim Merry Man is not original to *Robin Hood Prince of Thieves*, but rather is an early echo of Mark Ryan’s assassin Nasir in the TV show *Robin of Sherwood* (ITV, 1984–86).

<sup>8</sup> Meriem Pagès, “Saracens Abroad: Imagining Medieval Muslim Warriors on the Silver Screen,” *Essays in Medieval Studies* 32 (2016): 5–21.

<sup>9</sup> Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 75. For the schedule of the film’s production, see Garth Pearce, “Behind-the-Scenes Trouble During ‘Robin Hood,’” *Entertainment Weekly*, June 21, 1991, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://ew.com/article/1991/06/21/behind-scenes-trouble-during-robin-hood/>.

like Robin Hood. In one scene omitted from the final theatrical cut, the Sheriff interrupts a pagan ritual among the English lords to drop bags of money in their laps and literally divides Britain up among them: “You get Cornwall! You get Wales! Scotland is all yours!” This overdetermined confluence of religious transgression, greed, and land appropriation contrasts starkly with Robin’s assertion that “One free man defending his home is more powerful than ten hired soldiers. The Crusades taught me that.” If the Sheriff and his Celts are associated with the crusaders and their “hired soldiers,” though, they are also associated with the crusaders’ opponents. Another scene in the Sheriff’s dungeon parallels the film’s opening: the dim lighting, prisoners hanging from chains, and screams of pain are all reminiscent of the prison in Jerusalem, equating his actions with those of the Muslim guards.

By contrast, Robin and his Merry Men (and women) overcome the divisions of race, faith, class, and gender thanks to what Lisa Schubert calls Robin’s “managerial strategy that ‘accommodates diversity.’”<sup>10</sup> If the Sheriff tears Britain apart, the film suggests, Robin Hood and company can bring it together, a theme explicitly voiced in Marian’s claim that “There’s only one man who can heal the wounds of this land: Robin Hood.” Azeem aside, however, Robin’s workforce is decidedly Christian: Robin, himself a disillusioned Crusader, is identified at several points with a heavy cross necklace he wears; Maid Marian (Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio) prays and attends church; Friar Tuck (Michael McShane) represents an initially intolerant but increasingly enlightened alternative to the treacherous and greedy Bishop. Robin’s benevolent dictatorship of the Merry Men is not only a centering of “true” Christianity, argue Brian J. Levy and Lesley Coote, but also a suppression of women’s and peasants’ agency under “patriarchal and white heterosexual dominance.” As embodied by Kevin Costner and his star persona, Robin’s “90s-style soft masculinity” may provide a positive alternative to the fracturing and dismembering power of the sheriff, but it “unifies” the virtues of its female, Muslim, and peasant characters in the body of Costner’s Robin, with everyone else on the margins of the film’s multicultural England.<sup>11</sup>

Ridley Scott’s *Kingdom of Heaven*, set in Latin Jerusalem in 1184, foregrounds the Muslim-Christian conflict that *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* marginalizes. Released in 2005, the film is often read in connection with America’s wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, though as several scholars have noted, it also speaks to director Ridley Scott’s interest

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<sup>10</sup> Lisa Schubert, “Managing a Multicultural Work Force in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*,” *The Centennial Review* 37 (1993): 571-92, 581.

<sup>11</sup> Brian J. Levy and Lesley Coote, “Mouvance, Greenwood, and Gender in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*,” in *Robin Hood in the Greenwood Stood: Alterity and Context in the English Outlaw Tradition*, ed. Stephen Knight (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 165-86, 185.

in the masculine “warrior ethos” of cowboy movies and early Hollywood epics.<sup>12</sup> Like *Prince of Thieves*, *Kingdom of Heaven* divides both Christianity and Islam into a “good” camp, characterized by tolerance and compassion, and a “bad” camp defined by fanaticism, greed, and cruelty. Unlike *Prince of Thieves*, however, *Kingdom of Heaven* is pessimistic about the long-term prospects of coexistence between peoples, a pessimism registered in its emphasis on the fragility of the human body and, by extension, the “kingdom of conscience” (a phrase repeated throughout the film) that moderate Christians and Muslims have tried to create in Jerusalem. This sense of fatalism is perhaps best represented by Baldwin IV (Edward Norton), the leprous king of Jerusalem, whose imminent death haunts his supporters and incites his enemies but is also present in the film’s lingering shots on *memento mori* wall paintings and dead bodies. On the one hand, Latin Jerusalem represents a utopian fantasy of an integrated whole; on the other, viewers are continually reminded why it cannot exist, and perhaps why it should never have existed.

Much as *Prince of Thieves* opens with a thematically significant dismemberment, *Kingdom of Heaven* begins with a priest in France (Michael Sheen) ordering the post-mortem decapitation of a woman who has committed suicide. This action is framed as the result of both overly strict adherence to religious doctrine and spiteful hatred toward his brother Balian (Orlando Bloom), the woman’s widower. In its positioning at the nexus of fanaticism and malevolence, the beheading sets the stage for atrocities committed later by Christians in Jerusalem. Christian lord and later King of Jerusalem Guy de Lusignan (Marton Csokas) decapitates a messenger; Guy’s ally Reynald de Chatillon (Brendan Gleeson) cuts a traveler’s torso in half; Reynald’s Templar knights attack and behead Muslim pilgrims. Guy and Reynald use religion to justify their butchery, both characters echoing the crusader slogan “God wills it” (*Deus vult*), but they are also driven by a bloodthirsty desire for power.<sup>13</sup> This mounting bloodshed leads to further assaults on bodies: in the aftermath of Saladin’s (Ghassan Massoud) victory at the Battle of Hattin, the camera lingers on a vulture tearing bits off a corpse, and Balian stares, aghast, at a pile of Christian soldiers’ heads. Reynald’s is one of the heads on display: after Saladin gives the captive Guy a cup of water and, in a show of distrust and disrespect, Guy hands the cup to Reynald, Saladin has Reynald dragged outside and decapitated.

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<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Arthur Lindley, “Once, Present, and Future Kings: *Kingdom of Heaven* and the Multitemporality of Medieval Film,” in *Race, Class, and Gender in “Medieval” Cinema*, ed. Lynn T. Ramey and Tison Pugh (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 15–29; and Jeffrey Richards, “Sir Ridley Scott and the Rebirth of the Historical Epic,” in *The Return of the Epic Film: Genre, Aesthetics and History in the 21st Century*, ed. Andrew B. R. Elliot (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 19–35.

<sup>13</sup> This same slogan has been appropriated by white supremacists and the alt-right, continuing a long trend of crusading rhetoric’s association with intolerant nationalist movements; see Ellen Knight, “The Capitol Riot and the Crusades: Why the Far Right Is Obsessed with Medieval History,” *Teen Vogue*, January 13, 2021, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/crusades-trump-supporters-history>.

Iranian studies scholar Hamid Dabashi, a script consultant for *Kingdom of Heaven*, critiques this scene's placement while emphasizing its importance on both historical and aesthetic grounds: "For me the historically accurate killing of Reynald in his tent would have better balanced Guy's killing of Saladin's envoy earlier in the film."<sup>14</sup> This balance, however, might dovetail with what scholars have argued is the film's scapegoating of Reynald and Guy so as to absolve the "good" Christians of colonialist violence. Matthew Richard Schlimm contends that when Reynald is killed, "the audience feels a level of relief and satisfaction"; because modern audiences do not identify with Guy and Reynald, they "can distance themselves from any guilt over Western involvement in the Middle East."<sup>15</sup> Instead, they can identify with the tolerant Christians whose very benevolence retrospectively justifies the Crusades. Any such identification, however, may be frustrated by the film's emphasis on ephemerality and fragmentation, which results in the disintegration of both Muslims and Christian bodies and Latin Jerusalem, about whose religious significance *Kingdom of Heaven* is ambivalent.

The rhetoric of Jerusalem as a "new world" and "a kingdom of conscience" directly echoes that of Crusades chroniclers, glossing over the theft of land necessary to create this kingdom. Godfrey of Ibelin's (Liam Neeson) dying words to Balian suggest that the Latin Middle East is a kind of post-Crusades colonial paradise in which individual merit determines status and people of different faiths can live in harmony. Yet the utopian promise of this world is almost immediately belied by Guy de Lusignan's threats that after Baldwin's death, "Jerusalem will be no place for friends of Muslims or traitors to Christendom." In addition to the lingering xenophobia and religious hatred that underlie the political tensions between Guy and Baldwin, comments by other characters suggest that Latin Jerusalem was built on an inherently flawed foundation. Balian's enigmatic mentor the Hospitaller (David Thewlis) interprets Saladin's current military threat as recompense for the First Crusade, saying, "The Muslims will never forget. Nor should they," while Baldwin's lieutenant Tiberias (Jeremy Irons) laments, "First, I thought we were fighting for God. Then I realized we were fighting for wealth and land. I was ashamed." Balian seems to complete the rejection of the First Crusade entirely in his climactic final speech to the citizens of Jerusalem, in which he claims that both nobody and everybody has a legitimate religious claim to the city. In abdicating the city to Saladin in order to protect civilian lives, Balian prioritizes the human (Christian) body over any religious claim, transforming the utopian vision of Jerusalem from the upwardly mobile individual to the individual survivor rebuilding elsewhere, subject only to his conscience. As Louise D'Arcens argues, "the inter-faith tolerance espoused by the film's moderates is ultimately

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<sup>14</sup> Hamid Dabashi, "Warriors of Faith," *Sight & Sound* 15 (2005): 24-27, 26.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Richard Schlimm, "The Necessity of Permanent Criticism: A Postcolonial Critique of Ridley Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven*," *Journal of Media and Religion* 9 (2010): 129-49, 135-36.

displaced by a retreat into isolationism,” registering its cynicism about the potential for diverse religious perspectives to coexist.<sup>16</sup>

The fragility of this interfaith society is perhaps best embodied by Baldwin and Saladin; ultimately, the film seems to argue, the pseudo-utopian Jerusalem is the product of two men who, given their mortal fragility and the deep fractures within their respective peoples, cannot possibly maintain their temporary peace. Baldwin’s time is limited from his first appearance on screen, in which he announces that he knows he will not live to be thirty. Kathleen Biddick describes him as a “spectral palimpsest,” set visually apart from other Christian characters by his “Muslim-like” robes and headdress as well as his leprous flesh. As Biddick notes, his immobile face mask gives Norton’s performance the air of ventriloquism: Baldwin is both Muslim and Christian; he has a rotting body and he has no body at all, thus encompassing the doomed and contradictory colonial society he rules.<sup>17</sup> Though Saladin is not so perfect a metaphor for his society, he, too, presents a fatalistic suggestion that a world will die when he does. “I quake for Islam when I am gone,” Saladin remarks to a subordinate, and the scattering of the “good” Christians by the film’s conclusion suggests that this fear of dissolution is justified. The death of Baldwin “beheads” his society, causing its rapid disintegration, and the film’s construction of Saladin as Baldwin’s double suggests that a similar fate awaits Saladin’s rule and, perhaps, all attempts to end religious conflict.

Brendan Muldowney’s *Pilgrimage* offers a similar cynicism about Christianity’s internal divisions; unlike *Prince of Thieves* and *Kingdom of Heaven*, however, it does not foreground Muslim-Christian conflict. Instead, *Pilgrimage*, set in Ireland in 1209, situates itself in the overlap between three medieval conflicts between Christians: the Fourth Crusade (1202–1204), in which a crusading party sacked the Greek capital Constantinople; the Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229), in which Cathar heretics in southern France were violently suppressed by Church and state; and the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland (beginning in 1169). Its characters—a French Cistercian bringing a relic to Rome, a group of Irish monks who have hitherto housed the relic in their monastery, and an Anglo-Norman lord who is skeptical of their mission but agrees to guard them—begin on nominally the same side, but the party rapidly disintegrates in a glut of violence. Though Muldowney claims in an interview that the film’s violence is characteristic of “the raw and brutal lives people lead (sic) back then,” he also offers a more modern lens through which to understand it: the power of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Discussing its “use of fear to control,” he claims that any organization as powerful

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<sup>16</sup> Louise D’Arcens, “Iraq, the Prequel(s): Historicising Military Occupation and Withdrawal in *Kingdom of Heaven* and *300*,” *Screening the Past* 26 (2009): 1-11, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Kathleen Biddick, “Unbinding the Flesh in the Time that Remains,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13, no. 2-3 (2007): 197-225, 214-15.



as the Church “is open to corruption and using immoral ways to keep its power.”<sup>18</sup> This corruption works perpetually against any faith-based cooperation in *Pilgrimage*, which ultimately figures power, rather than faith, as the organizing principle uniting—and then tearing apart—its Christian characters.

Ruptures are foreshadowed early, when the Cistercian Brother Giraldu (Stanley Weber) orders the reluctant Irish monks to agree to the pilgrimage to Rome: “Infidels surround us on every side,” he warns, “while heretics conspire within our midst.” His white robes, which mark him as a Cistercian, visually emphasize his separation from the Irish monks, who maintain an older tradition of Celtic monasticism and believe in “pagan superstitions.” For their part, the Irish monks are wary of both him and the Normans. These divisions become more ominous when the monks join the party of Raymond de Merville (Richard Armitage), who soon after his introduction orders his men to cut off poachers’ hands and lines the pathway to his camp with severed heads on stakes. Raymond, a veteran of the Crusades, sees religion as largely a practical affair; the relic, he concludes, would make a good bargaining tool for the unnamed king of England in his dispute with the Pope. He betrays the monks by hiring rebel Irish fighters as mercenaries to steal the relic, resulting in the deaths of both Normans and monks and fracturing the party.

What results is a violent revelation of the ramifications of European religious conflicts, even in “remote” Ireland. When Brother Ciarán (John Lynch) hides the relic, Raymond disembowels him with an instrument of torture he brought back from Constantinople, one he used previously “to persuade the Greeks to tell us where they had hidden all of the gold from their churches.” Raymond then reveals why Giraldu (who comes from Albi, after which the Albigensian Crusade is named) was deemed prestigious enough for this mission: he denounced his father for sheltering heretics, resulting in the father’s torture and death. Raymond mockingly implies that Giraldu has built his career on the broken body and confiscated lands of his father, insinuating that his fanatical hatred of heretics is ultimately self-interested. The religious differences between Giraldu and Raymond are thus represented as superficial; selfish violence unites the faithful and the secular. By the conclusion, Raymond, Giraldu, and almost all the monks are dead, and the relic has sunk into the sea, with the one remaining monk, young Diarmuid (Tom Holland), lost and disillusioned. Earlier in the film, he asks Ciarán, “Was there ever truly peace in this land, Brother, before the foreigners came?” The answer—“No. There never was peace. Not here, not anywhere else in the world, not since the Fall”—indicates that this fracturing of men is inexorable, and no religious, national, or family loyalty can prevent it. While the Irish monks embody the closest thing the film has to “good” Christianity, the relic, which supposedly has the power to “separate the faithful from the faithless,” does not prevent

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<sup>18</sup> Brendan Muldowney, interview by Paul Rowlands, *Money into Light*, 2017, accessed June 19, 2023, <http://www.money-into-light.com/2017/08/brendan-muldowney-on-pilgrimage-part-1.html>.

the breakdown of their group, intimating either that they too are faithless or that God is indifferent.

Importantly, *Pilgrimage* ends with the particularity of thirteenth-century Ireland expanding to become a more general state of conflict linking Ireland to the world and, like the other films I have discussed, the past to the present. As Geraldine Heng has argued, the premodern is an active presence in modern formulations of society and informs contemporary worldviews: the present, in short, is “the habitat of multiple temporalities that braid together a complex and plural ‘now’ that is internally self-divided and contaminated by premodern time.”<sup>19</sup> This complex interweaving produces echoes between modern and medieval societies, finding unexpected resonance in the collapse of these time frames in medieval cinema. The human body functions as a microcosm of Christendom, flattened into a microcosm of humanity, using the horror of “medieval brutality” to convey filmmakers’ anxieties about the “now.” Typically self-critical and cynical about religion, these films nonetheless clumsily overwrite ethnic and religious differences in their insistence on the universality of the fragile, divisible human body—a body which, at the end of the day, is white and Christian and male. Critique of imperialist violence perpetrated against others is thereby deflected through the preoccupation with the self as a body whose inner divisions pose a more immediate threat. In the end, the spectacle of the disembodied head or limb becomes a gory means of navel-gazing.

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<sup>19</sup> Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 22.