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He has a pair of foot-long vertical scars by his shoulder blades (where Rollins’s Captain-America-shield-sized ‘Search and Destroy’ tattoo should be, or perhaps a fallen angel’s wings).

He keeps himself to himself. His interactions with people are stilted. He just doesn’t get them. He states the obvious. He offers nothing. He is as deadpan as Buster Keaton. (His one loquacious moment is a seemingly interminable list, flatly delivered, of the many jobs he has had over the centuries.)

In his ears there is a constant roar – of screams and cries and growls, of weapons and machines – but as long as he can keep it tamped down, everything is fine. As long as it is tamped down, he doesn’t kill people.

He has a long history of killing people. Very long. In fact, he started it.

He’s an immortal cannibal straightedge, just about holding it together by not drinking or smoking or doing drugs or eating meat (nothing, he explains, that has had blood flowing through it). Although he does store mysterious limb-sized packages, bought from a hospital intern, in his fridge.

He is the vampire. Not just a vampire, *the* vampire. The only one ever. All those stories you’ve heard, every single one, are ultimately about him.

And now someone is coming looking for revenge. Someone with a grudge against Jack, but not nearly enough information about who or what he really is. But they will learn. Quickly, and rather bloodily.

There is also a friendly waitress, and a teenage daughter Jack never knew he had.

But all this is beside the point. The film is about something else entirely. It is about watching the ageing Rollins. It is about the creep of mortality. And about carrying on.

Mckenzie Wark argues that one of the problems in trying to represent the Anthropocene is that ‘nobody lives long enough to really experience geological time’, except perhaps vampires¹ – and Henry Rollins.

There is something geological about his body. It is always present, and has always been present. It is weathered by time. His knees no longer work properly when he walks. His weary face crumbles like granite. This is what it is like for the world to end.

Twenty years ago, Chixdiggitt (and possibly your mom) sang that ‘Henry Rollins is No Fun’. They were wrong. This is what fun looks like.

High-Rise (Wheatley UK 2016)

Paul March-Russell

Ben Wheatley and Amy Jump’s adaptation of *High-Rise* is the best film version of a J.G. Ballard novel precisely because it does not attempt to adapt Ballard’s novel. It’s easy to see why Ballard appeals to filmmakers – his work abounds in artistic and cinematic reference-points whilst his narrative approach is often strikingly visual and imagistic. But these qualities are bound together by a psychological sensibility that does not translate so easily to the screen where actions and motivations have to have some kind of rational credibility. So, in David Cronenberg’s version of *Crash* (1996), the entire link to the psychopathology of the media landscape is lost and, rather than being a glamorous medical TV pundit, Elias Koteas’s distinctly unglamorous Vaughan is simply a fraud and a sexual predator.

By contrast, the changes that Jump and Wheatley make to Ballard’s novel create a film that is internally consistent and which help to develop their re-visioning of the work. So, instead of Wilder’s death-scene in the novel, where he embraces his new (phallic) mothers, in the film Wilder is murdered by the women as revenge for his raping of



1 <http://www.publicseminar.org/2014/12/anthropomise-en-scene/#.WJCytkLxBSo>. Wark writes briefly about Jim Jarmusch’s vampire movie *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013).

Charlotte. But, in a wonderful *tour de force*, the murder is seen through the kaleidoscope belonging to Charlotte's son, Toby, an instrument that he has previously said 'can see the future'. Is the future female, and if so, is it specifically that of Margaret Thatcher, whose voice closes the film, and who Ballard once (jokingly?) said he would like to have as a mistress?

Toby, played with delightful insouciance by Louis Suc, is a superb addition to the story and embodies Jump and Wheatley's intentions. The film is less of an adaptation and more of an intervention into Ballard's novel. Sensibly not updating the work to our own times, but setting it in 1975, Jump and Wheatley seek to use the novel as a kaleidoscope, a distorted prism upon that cryptic decade from whose snare all manner of neo-liberal horrors have now been released. Are we living in the future that Toby spies, or is that future still to come?

It is not simply the case though that Toby, like Jim in *Empire of the Sun*, is Ballard's juvenile alter-ego, spying upon what the adults get up to, although that certainly is part of his function. Unlike more reverential treatments of Ballard's work, the film also draws upon aspects of Ballard's own life-story – the dissection of cadavers as a medical student, the loss of his wife Mary (in this version, Laing has been traumatised by the death of his sister), and the father-son relationship that develops between Laing and Toby, just as Ballard was a single-parent to his children. These aspects implicate Ballard in his own fiction so that, in intervening in the novel, the film also intervenes in Ballard's cultural legacy. To that end, *High-Rise* is as much a critical achievement as it is an artistic one.

Mænd & høns/Men & Chicken (Anders Thomas Jensen Denmark/Germany 2015)

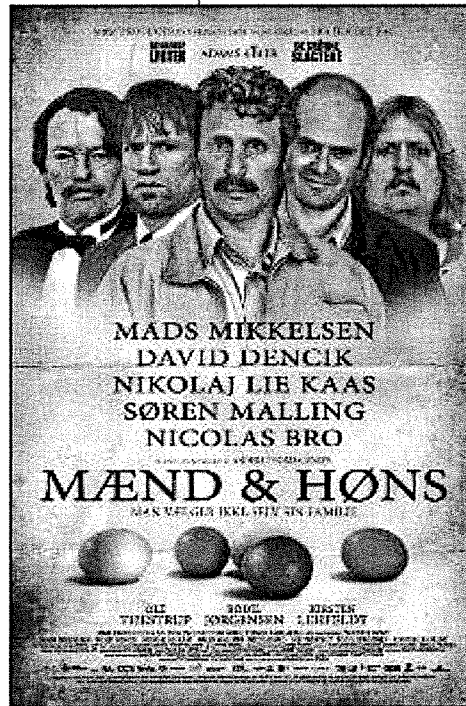
Mark Bould

Once upon a time, in contemporary Denmark, there were two middle-aged, infertile half-brothers, each of whom lost his mother in childbirth.

Gabriel is younger, more responsible, more conventional. Multiple surgical reconstructions have failed to eradicate his cleft lip, and when nervous or upset he suffers from uncontrollable gagging.

Elias, a disastrous lothario, hides his cleft lip behind a scruffy moustache. He cannot resist picking arguments, however foolish or futile, and must masturbate at regular intervals to relieve the priapism from which he suffers. He scours dating websites in search of female psycho-

therapists so that instead of paying consultation fees he can ask them over dinner to explain his recurring nightmare. (The meaning of the gothic dream's imagery – full of sibling rivalry, separation anxiety, sex and violence – is obvious, yet utterly beyond him.)



When their father dies, they discover that he had adopted them. Gabriel, keen to break free of Elias, decides to go in search of their biological father, the long-disgraced doctor and geneticist Evelio Thanatos. Elias, desperate not to lose the closest thing he has to a friend, insists on accompanying his reluctant not-exactly-brother.

And, on the distant island of Ork, in Thanatos's now derelict and otherwise abandoned sanatorium, they discover three more (infertile) half-brothers, each of whom has his own deformities and peculiarities, and each of whom lost his mother in childbirth.

Writer-director Anders Thomas Jensen – who is currently scripting, of all things, the *Dark Tower* adaptation – is probably best known for his deadpan, heart-breakingly sad and yet really quite beautiful cannibalism comedy *De grønne slagtere/The Green Butchers* (2003). He returns with many of the same cast (including Mads Mikkelsen and Nordic noir regulars Nikolaj Lie Kaas, Nicolas Bro, Ole Thestrup and Bodil Jørgensen) to once more scale the heights of absurdist gothic Jutland grotesque – a genre I just made up while writing this sentence. It consists, as far as I know, of Jensen's two films and maybe Henrik Ruben Genz's *Frygtelig lykkelig/Terribly Happy* (2008).

In *Men & Chicken*, Jensen introduces another gallery of adorable yet pathetic misfits, all of them broken and disconnected and abandoned by the world, full of pettiness and desperation, and driven by violent impulses and mundane yet still unattainable desires. And this time he replaces butchery with bestiality. And abasiophilia. And chronophilia or anililagnia or gerontophilia, depending on how you interpret events. And arguably morphophilia or, if you even more mean-spirited, teratophilia. And turpophilia. And even a science-fictional twist or two.

Suffice it to say, Evelios Thanatos is a Baltic Moreau.

And are his children not men? Are they not capable of building a utopia in the ruins of their father's legacy?

'I may not be normal', Elias ultimately confesses, to which Gabriel replies, 'None of us really are'.