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“JEDES HERZ...”: TERROR AND HORROR IN DIE FETTEN JAHRE SIND VORBEI

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Hans Weingartner's *Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei*, also known by its American title *The Edukators*, explores the relationship of a young anti-capitalist activist, Jan, with his own friends, the *bourgeoisie* he opposes, and himself. Jan and his friends engage in some relatively benign but disruptive “terrorist” acts. Though the film cannot be said to belong to the horror genre, *Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei* nonetheless employs horror elements and tropes to expose the intrinsically subjective definition of terrorism, and to explore terrorism's relationship with the “other.”

Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei de Hans Weingartner, aussi connu sous le titre américain de *The Edukators*, met en scène le rapport d'un jeune activiste anticapitaliste, Jan, avec la bourgeoisie à laquelle il s'oppose, avec ses propres amis, et avec lui-même. Jan et ses amis commettent des actes terroristes relativement bénins mais perturbateurs. Bien que le film ne puisse être défini comme appartenant au cinéma d'« horreur », *Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei* utilise néanmoins certains éléments et tropes de ce genre afin de dévoiler le caractère intrinsèquement subjectif du terrorisme, en plus d'examiner le terrorisme à travers la question du rapport à l'altérité.

Hans Weingartner's *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei*, called in English *The Edukators*, explores the relationship of a young anti-capitalist activist with his own friends, the *bourgeoisie*, and himself. The activist and his friends engage in some relatively benign but disruptive "terrorist" acts. Though the film cannot be said to belong to the horror genre, *Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei* nonetheless employs horror tropes to expose the intrinsically subjective definition of "terror."

In *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei*, a group of "Edukators," to use the American title, vandalizes people's homes to criticize their middle-class, *bourgeois* lifestyle. Jan, the group's ostensible leader, Peter, and Jule, through a series of accidents and misadventures, kidnap a wealthy businessman, Hardenberg. Unsure of what to do, the group takes Hardenberg to a remote mountain cabin. After a long discussion of the merits and disadvantages of their respective ways of life, Hardenberg promises not to inform the authorities of the group's actions, at which point they release him. Hardenberg, however, does not make good on his promise, prompting the Edukators to crash his boat in an act of defiance and protest.

Critics and popular reviewers of *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei* have not discussed the film in relation to the horror genre—and with good reason. The film ranges between comedy, drama, and what can loosely be called "crime" genre conventions, and is a far cry from the popular conception of "horror film." Horror films often quickly establish the "good" and the "evil" characters. Even when horror films center their plots around the "hidden monster," the final moments most often leave no ambiguity in the nature of the film's characters.

Of course, "terror" and "horror" are also linked semantically. Achin Vanaik presages the necessity of such a linguistic study. In discussing

the uncertainty of the term "terror," he writes that "that kind of effort [to trace the meaning of 'terror'] might etymologically focus on the word 'terror' and then go on to draw out the meaning of terrorism as something that causes and sustains terror" (4164). This definition deconstructs the root of the word, leaving the definition bereft of political content. The word "terrorism," as a function of the root "terror," links the intended effect of "terrorist" activities to the intent of horror films in general. Horror films "frighten and panic, cause dread and alarm, and [...] invoke our hidden worst fears, often in a terrifying, shocking finale, while captivating and entertaining us at the same time in a cathartic experience" (Dirks).

The usual mode of reception of the "terrorist message" further strengthens the link between terrorism and horror. The true difference, then, lies in both the inherently political nature of terrorism and the lack of a "captivating and entertaining [...] cathartic experience" in terrorist activities. Martha Crenshaw differentiates terrorism from other violent movements by describing terrorism as "deliberate and systematic violence performed by small numbers of people [...] to intimidate a watching popular audience by harming only a few" (Crenshaw 406). Films dealing with terror can then be said to be part of terror's "highly optical character" (Derian 23)—in other words, the fetishization of terror imagery. This fetishization manifests itself in the often-replayed video from the September 11th attacks, and films like *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex*, *Munich*, and *Flight 93*, which present familiar terrorist events as film imagery.

If the purpose of terror, to use Crenshaw's quote, is to "intimidate a watching popular audience," the violence acts only as a means toward a spectacle, as Tyler Cowen suggests. These spectacles "can be thought of as an investment in focality" (235), or in other words, an attempt to draw visibility and

focus to a particular issue. These "investments in focality" are not limited to acts usually described as "terror," but can also apply to organized military actions as well. These "spectacles" mirror the conception of film as spectacle, in which the film seeks to present the viewer with imagery that evokes feeling and thought. Filmmakers design the imagery of film to dialogue with the thoughts and feelings of the audience.

Die fetten Jahre contains elements that can be interpreted diagetically as horror, and simultaneously, through the process of identification with its main characters, the film forces its audience to confront its own fears. The spectacles of fear, key to both terrorism and horror film, provide the audience of *Die fetten Jahre* with a shifting landscape of identification and repulsion. Though a particular viewer may not hold the same values as Hardenberg or the other *bourgeois* families, the sympathetic representation of the film's "terrorist" permits the viewer to identify with their lives and, perhaps, their message.

Jan and Peter's "educational" acts rely on the traditional definition of terror. That is to say, the characters in the film attempt to enact political change by creating a climate of fear, which would then force their "victims" into accepting and subscribing to their views. Jan and Peter's acts mirror the intent of groups like Al Qaida, which expressed an intent to "foment a 'clash of civilizations'" and spread their message across the *umma*, or the community of Islam (Atwan 225). The inactive portions of the *umma* must be brought into the fight through the spectacle of terrorism and war. Though on a much smaller and less violent scale, Jan and Peter seek to "awaken" the *bourgeoisie* by presenting them with images, events, and information that they have not seen before.

The popular definition(s) of "terrorism" inform the filmic convention of terrorism.

This difficulty is only exacerbated by problems with the term terrorism itself. As Peter Kurrild-Klitgaard, Mogens K. Justesen, and Robert Klemmensen state, "[t]he term 'terrorism' is one of those controversial and essentially contested concepts within the discourse of politics and accordingly also in social science research" (290). Conventional wisdom casts terrorism as an attempt to induce political or ideological change through the creation and promotion of fear.

In addition to the traditional meaning of actions causing or creating fear to achieve political goals, the term has come to also mean anyone who battles against the status quo in some way. The differentiation of terror based on power relationships hints at a subjective nature of the term. Crenshaw explains that the term "terrorism" can also be "a pejorative label, meant to condemn an opponent's cause as illegitimate rather than describe behavior" (406). Furthermore, the subjective nature of terrorism also results in a dialectical relationship with "retaliation." Virginia Held posits that "[m]any acts of political violence are described by those supporting them as retaliation for earlier acts of political violence, though described by their detractors as 'new' or 'fresh' or 'renewed' acts of terrorism" (192).

In the film, the *bourgeois* families see Jan and Peter's acts as terrorism, and the pair themselves as terrorists. Jan and Peter attempt to cause fear by violating the perceived safety of these families' homes. For Jan and Peter, however, the families themselves are the terrorists. These middle- and upper-class families control wealth and, as shown between Jule and Hardenberg, they do not hesitate to wield their influence to their own benefit, even at the expense of others.

Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei presents its main characters as ambiguous in the very first moments. Jan and Peter commit acts designed to "intimidate a[n ...] audience," but the film

also shows the pair, and especially Jan, to be sympathetic. In the first scene with Jan and Peter, we see Jan berate Peter for stealing a watch from one of the homes. While Peter seems committed more to youthful rebellion, for Jan the theft undermines the message he wants to communicate. As such, although the audience may interpret Jan's actions as irrational or criminal, the film presents Jan as, at the very least, an earnest believer of his own code. Furthermore, contrary to Jan, Peter, and Jule's views, Hardenberg reveals himself as sympathetic to their cause, and admits that he too once fought against the ideas to which he now subscribes.

Therefore, though horror film uses horror elements and tropes to quickly code characters as either "good" or "evil," *Die fetten Jahre* uses the same tropes to constantly define and redefine the "good" and the "monsters" in the film. This cycle of definition and redefinition reflects the subjectivity inherent in the concept of "terrorism". Furthermore, the shifting identification of the "good" and "evil" in *Die Fetten Jahre* creates a microcosm of the retaliatory nature of political terrorism.

Even before the audience views the film, the movie posters for *Die Fetten Jahre*, before the first second of the film, call to mind other genres, including horror. One poster shows the three "Edukators" standing in front of a red-splattered white wall, looking coolly into the camera. Above, written in coarse red letters, is the title of the film. The gang motif that this poster invokes calls forth posters for films like Rob Zombie's *The Devil's Rejects*, certain promotional material for Dennis Iliadis's remake of *The Last House on the Left*, or even the poster for Wes Craven's *Scream 4*.

Though posters for other films also use the gang motif, the staging of this particular poster actually relates more to the above examples than to posters such as that of



FIG. 1, 2, 3.

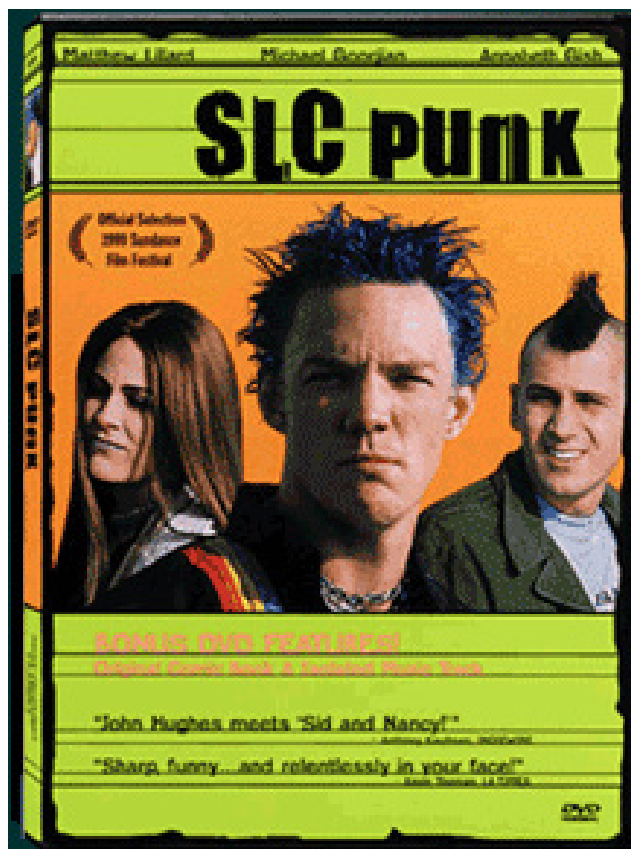




FIG. 4.

James Merendino's *SLC Punk*. The scrawled red screeed on the white wall does not call to mind the light-hearted anarchy of the poster of *SLC Punk*, but rather the stark consequences of physical violence, in the figure of blood. Another film poster for *Die fetten Jahre* makes this comparison starker. The poster once again depicts red writing on a white background. This time, however, under the title of the film, we see an architectural sketch, presumably of Hardenberg's house. Those who have seen the film will realize that the film's turning point—the kidnapping of Hardenberg—occurs in this house. Even those who have not seen the film would be presented with an image that calls to mind the horrific image of bloodied hands, writing on the white background. In combination with the title, a viewer could easily draw the conclusion that the film deals with the end of the “fat years” through an act of violence.

These posters show an attempt towards visceral reaction. They presuppose a sort of violence that nevertheless only appears towards the midpoint of the movie and, in reality, only for a brief moment. These posters are proleptic of the violence that is only partially resolved in the film. Presumably, these posters were created to give exactly that anticipation of violence, that visceral reaction, as a means of provocation to see the film. Critics leveled these criticisms of

provocation at films like Eli Roth's *Hostel* and James Wan's *Saw*,¹ and it is exactly the same impulse that informs these statements (as well as the initial presentations of these “torture porn” staples) as does the posters of *Die fetten Jahre*.

In the film itself, these same visual motifs persist. The film's protagonist, Jan, and his friend Peter break into the houses of the rich. The group is expressly non-violent and do not steal, but instead Peter and Jan rearrange household items and leave notes with such statements as “Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei,” or “Your days of plenty are numbered.” The disruption is meant to scare the *bourgeoisie* out of their comfortable malaise by creating an uncanny experience. The antagonism between the *bourgeoisie* and the Educators is further exacerbated by Jule's car accident with Hardenberg, a wealthy businessman, which leaves her in debt.

Jan and Jule, however, fall in love with each other. In the scene the first poster references, Jan and Jule cement their growing bond by happily painting a room together. They use red paint to haphazardly write, “Jedes Herz ist eine revolutionäre Zelle,” or “Every heart is a revolutionary cell.” While writing this, Jan wraps Jule in the drop cloth they were using. They complete the message with some handprints in red paint, simultaneously covering themselves, and their hands, in red. All this occurs to a pop-punky soundtrack, lending levity and joy to the scene.

The scrawled red letters, in combination with the words “heart” and “cell,” cannot help but remind the viewer of blood. Horror films use the trope of the blood-scrawled message, or, as Weingartner uses it here, a message written with a blood surrogate, to foreshadow impending violence, to indicate

a site of earlier violence, or both. The iconic “Redrum” written by Jack’s son Danny in *The Shining* (1980) occurs before any actual bloodshed, but the message contains a threat of carnage to later be realized. In the episode “Innocence” (1998) of the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Angelus writes Buffy a message in his victim’s blood, both “signing” his handiwork and implying future violence directed towards Buffy. In a quite recent example, the antagonist in the pilot of the television show *The Following* (2013) leaves the word “Nevermore” in blood as a clue to the protagonist. Similar scenes have been used in recent marketing to evoke campy horror-tinged jocularly, such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), vampires, in the case of *Låt den rätte komma in* (2008), or even the violent malice of the Heath Ledger’s Joker in *The Dark Knight* (2008).

In addition to referencing the red paint as a blood surrogate, the “revolution” of the missive initiates hostility *in potentia*. The word “heart” combines with “revolution” to evoke the idea of a revolution not *of* the heart but *from* the heart. The type of peaceful activism that Jan insists on—limited to reversible vandalism—is designed to change hearts and minds without doing irreparable damage. The pair, as well as their absent third member, clearly envisions themselves as leading a revolution against the *bourgeoisie* to shake them out of their complacency. Jule has only recently joined the “revolution,” and the message stands as her new manifesto. Revolutions, of course, have historically been bloody, violent affairs that forcibly remove the rulers from their stations. Jan and Jule are blissfully unaware of the implied threat which, as the film goes on, they will realize.

The handprints Jule leaves tie into the message as a whole. The bloody handprint appears throughout media forms and genres. The popular website *TV Tropes*² even maintains



FIG. 5, 6.

a list devoted to the bloody handprint. Films like *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) and *Gothika* (2003) use the bloody handprint as a sign of the presence of carnage. In Stephen King’s novel *Carrie*, the titular protagonist leaves a bloody handprint on her teacher after her first period while panicking over the idea that she may bleed to death. In these cases, to name but a few, the handprints indicate human torment and fear. The handprints are usually left by those in pain and bleeding, rather than those causing the pain. The clear symbol of the hand links the sign of struggle to the human form, resulting in a visceral symbol of misery.

Semiotically, the bloody handprint and the message written in blood correspond to the victim and the aggressor, respectively. Weingartner juxtaposes the two images in this scene to blur the lines between victim and aggressor. Visually, the combination of

victim and aggressor in the message on the wall complicates Jan and Jule themselves, positioning them as both victim of the *bourgeoisie* and the activist aggressor.

The handprint also parodies the human connection by standing as a sort of childlike signature. Children, before they can write properly, often make art or sign art as theirs by leaving a handprint in paint. When Jule leaves the handprints, then, she ostensibly leaves them as a type of signature, bereft of violent content. The handprints can then also be read as bringing humanity into their revolution, once again echoing the characters' naïveté over the true nature of their revolution.

One of the oddest visuals in the sequence is Jule's mummification. Mummies have been the subject of horror films since nearly the beginning of horror film as a genre.³ The act of mummification, even deconstructed as it is in *Jahre*, calls forth echoes of films like *The Mummy* (1932) starring Boris Karloff, *The Mummy* (1959), starring Christopher Lee, or the various sequels, remakes, and spiritual successors of these films.

Jule's mummification, however, is not the supernaturally inspired mummy of these films, but rather the type of body horror violation that occurs in films like André de Toth's *House of Wax* (1953) or the more visceral 2005 remake of the same name, directed by Jaume Collet-Serra. In these films, corpses are covered with wax and made to look like simple wax figures, reintegrating the uncanny corpse into a more acceptable (and yet, itself uncanny) wax figure. They fulfill the uncanny by separating the human form from its natural state, while retaining the overall shape and impression.

This mummification is a sort of play-acting for Jan and Jule. The alienated human form of the mummy parallels their own (self-)

alienation from society. The backdrop of the "revolutionary cell" statement, written by the two, presents them as simultaneously alienating themselves and forming blanket manifestos of the human race. Jan directs the violence that seems to undercut the interpersonal relationships of the characters towards Jule. Jan covers Jule's body as a type of initiation that references ritual tattooing or body modification. He alienates her and deforms her in order for her to physically incorporate new philosophies. In combination with the atavistic sign of the handprint, the act reduces Jule to a dependent state. After unwrapping her, Jule is figuratively reborn as a member of the Edukators, having fully internalized their credo.

The Edukators themselves already feel alienated by the society around them. The scene alienates Jule from her previously accepted life and physical form by mummifying her, and then both dealienate her physically and realienate her philosophically by freeing her. This body horror trope also appears in films like *Saw 3D* (2010) to mark survivors who have been mentally and physically changed by their ordeal. Jule's defiant, post-mummification pose is one of cool hostility directed towards the world she now finds herself divorced from. The pose also marks her as a survivor, now indelibly altered by her adopted philosophy. The entire arc of this scene also preludes the restraining of Hardenberg later in the film, as well as his (perhaps faked) character shift while held.

The jovial nature of the scene casts these actions as a sort of terrorist pantomime. The music, the setting, and the demeanor of the characters do not fully overcome the nascent violence in their actions. The two deface their *own* property and bodies with a political and physical activism that Jan has already turned outward. The group's peaceful message belies the aggression in their actions. This barely

hidden impetus towards violent action foreshadows the effect of their revolution, even as the characters themselves remain blind to it.

The turning point of the film comes as the group, almost by accident, knocks the rich *bourgeois* Hardenberg unconscious. The group chooses to hold him in an old cabin until they can decide how to deal with the situation. There, the group gets to know Hardenberg, and Hardenberg comes to know the group. In one telling scene, the Edukators and Hardenberg sit together, discussing their differences in a grim parody of dinner table conversation.

For Jan, Hardenberg is a monster, an other made more frightening by his similarity. He claims to have had similar political leanings in his youth as a member of the 68ers, though whether he lies to sympathize with his captors is unclear. Now firmly within the *bourgeoisie*, Hardenberg stands for everything Jan despises—perhaps more so *because* he was once like Jan. At the same time, he serves as a stern warning of Jan's possible future. When Jan recognizes himself in Hardenberg, he comes to know Hardenberg—and also to know himself.

The concept of the monster who walks among us has always found expression in horror and suspense films. Jason Voorhees was once a child at the same camp at which his victims now work in most *Friday the 13th* films.⁴ The cult classic slasher *Happy Birthday to Me* (1981) makes the uncanny nature of the monster explicit, wherein the killer turns out to be a friend and secret half-sister of, as well as a dead ringer for, the film's protagonist, Ginny. In *My Bloody Valentine* (1981), the protagonists reveal that the killer is actually one of them, Axel, disguising himself as the miner Harry Warden, who died after committing a series of murders some years earlier.

The trope of the monster is so distinct that Carol Clover even subdivides it into two types: *Psycho* types, in which the monster functions in normal society until the final reveal, and the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* or *Halloween* type, in which the film always codes the monster as such (Clover, 30). The uncanny nature of the first type is obvious—the monster is indistinguishable from anyone else until he or she is either caught in the act, or when the evidence becomes overwhelming. However, even when the monster performs the monster role from the beginning, he or she can be coded as sympathetic for an audience. *Halloween II* (1981), for example, reveals that the monster Michael Myers is actually the brother of the franchise's protagonist, Laurie Strode. As for the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* franchise, the recent *Texas Chainsaw 3D* (2013), billed as a direct sequel to the first film (1974), centers on a young woman, Heather, inheriting her grandmother's estate. After coming to Texas to collect it, she finds that she was adopted, and is actually a cousin to the franchise's cannibalistic family.

In this trope, some event, often by chance, changes the lives of these monsters and makes them what they are. The dichotomy of Heather and Leatherface in *Texas Chainsaw 3D*, for example, comes not from genetics or blood relation, but rather, as Heather's character shows, from the environment in which they were raised. In *Happy Birthday to Me*, the lost half-sister, Ann, was abandoned by the characters' shared father, as he left Ann to be with Ginny and her mother. In *My Bloody Valentine*, the antagonist watched his father being murdered by Harry Morgan while he hid.

In casting the monster as someone similar, but changed by a single event into a “deformed and destructive being,” to use George Ochoa's term (12), films create the fear of the path not taken. Horror films show the protagonist,

who is often "good" in horror films, but nearly always hapless, as one event away from becoming a deformed and destructive being. By leading the viewers to identify with the protagonist, the films then set up the fear that the viewers themselves may only be separated from the monster by a single event.

Films on terrorism speak directly to these sorts of societal fears. They create an accessible monster. The deformation separates the monster from the *status quo* and creates a *doppelgänger*—a human being so radically altered in mindset and goals as to be strange, and yet similar. As Paul Wells says, "[the *doppelgänger*] is effectively a 'double', in which humankind confronts its nemesis either through the opposition of an individual and a monster or by the exposure of the two competing sides of an individual—normally, one rational and civilized, the other uncontrolled and irrational, often more primal and atavistic" (8).

In films on German terrorism, the notion of *doppelgänger* connects to the idea of homegrown terrorists and the fear of "uncontrolled and irrational" persons or groups disrupting the "rational and civilized" world. *Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei* complicates this clear delineation by coding both the Edukators and Hardenberg as both irrational and atavistic and rational and civilized. For the Edukators, Hardenberg is a deformed and destructive being. Hardenberg was, by his own admission, once like the Edukators, belonging to the German youth movement usually referred to as the 68ers. The events of his life led him on a course that resulted in a *bourgeois* life, but it was never, he indicates, a conscious decision to abandon his earlier principles. Instead, events occurred in his life that changed his philosophy. Weingartner also portrays Hardenberg as childlike and greedy. Hardenberg concerns himself at times more with his possessions, or simply that the

Edukators are not playing by the rules, than he does the "rightness" of his actions.

Exactly this relationship mirrors Wells' notion of horror film: "The overwhelming currency of the horror film errs to the view, however, that the Nietzschean perspective is true— 'modernity' has in effect sacrificed the possibility of faith and purpose to arbitrariness and apocalypse. This socio-cultural context is thus bound to give rise to a deep psychological, emotional, and physical malaise [...]" (6). For Jan, Hardenberg has sacrificed any notion of belief for arbitrariness and self-interest—his nice car, his nice house, his *bourgeois* family. He also experiences this malaise, stating, in effect, that his place in the world reflects the natural order of things that can never be broken. The Nietzsche parallel is particularly apt in this situation. Hardenberg justifies his actions with a sort of Nietzschean parable—namely, that the strong will come out on top, and that to not be subjugated, one must be strong within their system.

Jan struggles against this very idea with his actions, as well as his manifesto. He and the other Edukators have been trying to break the *bourgeois* out of their indifference by destroying their sense of safety. Now that he faces a possible logical consequence of life—that aging may force him towards the *bourgeoisie*—he himself can see the dangers of this Nietzschean malaise.

Jan's situation also brings him closer to this malaise. Jan's growing relationship with Jule leads him towards a possible *bourgeois* happy ending. Much of Jan's activism has been predicated on his relationship with Peter. As their relationship strained due to Jan and Jule's love affair, the foundation of the Edukators would seem to be crumbling, leaving only Jan and Jule in a sort of Bonnie and Clyde dynamic. This dynamic plays into the idea of the *bourgeois* pair—a man and a woman. In fact, Hardenberg seems to hint at this in the story of his youth.

Certainly, if Hardenberg is the monster (which, for Jan at least, he is), this moment of stark realization forces Jan to not only know, but also *recognize* the monster. Ochoa deals with this process; quoting Thomas Aquinas's statement that "the thing understood is in the intellect by its own likeness (18)," he puts forth that the understanding of the monster is to have that monster within the mind of the one who understands. In understanding Hardenberg, he also comes to know and recognize him in himself.

Certainly, Jan sees Hardenberg as a monster. However, Hardenberg sits restrained at the table, fearing for his life. For him, a captive under the mercy of terrorists, they are the monsters, and their perceived leader, Jan, doubly so. Therefore, it can certainly be argued that Hardenberg *creates* this 68er persona to shield himself from further harm. The actions of Jan, then, come to form the uncanny in his opposite number.

For Hardenberg, these Edukators are equally uncanny. Unlike the terrorists of Al Qaida or Hamas, these terrorists come from the same place as he does, eat the same food, speak the same language. They are what Hardenberg could have been, or perhaps even was, during his youth. They are what his own children could become. Though, for Hardenberg, the Edukators may act immaturely in their actions, they also have the compassion to let him speak and to let him remain restrained, but otherwise unmolested.

To an extent, Jan represents the failures of Hardenberg's generation. In a review in *Film Threat*, Heidi Martinuzzi casts Jan in this light: "When Jan begins his many speeches about how unjust society is, it seems insincere, spoiled, and frankly, full of bullshit" (Martinuzzi). As he argues the position of his own (perhaps imagined) youth, Hardenberg artificially understands his "monster" Jan.

By feigning an activist youth, he brings the monster into himself, to paraphrase Aquinas. At the same time, the difference in values, which Hardenberg sees as naïve, drives the two apart.

To that end, the horrifying moment in *Die fetten Jahre* comes during this scene, where both the protagonist and the antagonist come to recognize parts of themselves in the monstrous other. The two understand the deformed and destructive being that sits in front of them, at least somewhat, and therefore they take part of that deformation and destruction into themselves. Furthermore, other films on terrorism like *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex*, intentionally present their terrorists as Weingartner does the Edukators—as similar to their opposite number, but changed by an event or events that, more often than not, was not of their own doing. Thus, the viewer can identify with the terrorists in much the same way they would identify with the protagonist or the antagonist of a horror film, by embracing similarity while fearing the minor differences that create the gulf between them.

In the final scenes of the film, Weingartner seems to begin to show the results of this understanding. Hardenberg takes pity on Jule, and forgives her debt to him. He also promises to keep quiet about the entire affair. At this moment, it seems as if the understanding has been successful—the Edukators have returned Hardenberg to his life, and Hardenberg promises to allow them to do the same. The barriers between them—the uncanny distance—have been dissolved, and they are finally able to come to a sort of peace.

Weingartner, though, quickly shows this to be a farce. As police storm the apartment the Edukators had inhabited, they find nothing but a note stating that "some people never change." The Edukators are then shown

to drive Hardenberg's yacht into television towers, finally making good on the promise of widespread terror immanent in the film.

Essentially, by leaving the tensions between the groups unresolved, Weingartner ends the film almost how he begins it—with a radical group and a *bourgeois* man. Their positions, though, are now amplified by their encounter. The radicals have progressed to full-fledged terrorists bent on destroying property and disrupting the "comfortable lives" of the *bourgeoisie*. Hardenberg's capture also forced him to invoke police protection—a service paid for by taxes—to maintain his comfort and stability and, so doing, to cement his personal stake within the system.

In reading this film through horror, the easy conclusion to draw from this amplified, cyclical ending is the possibility of a sequel. The horror genre is perhaps the genre most likely to include sequels; *Friday the 13th* has nine sequels and a reboot, as well as the original film, and the *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise already runs into 9 iterations, to give some examples. The desire to know and understand the monster never removes his, her, or its monstrosity. Instead, the films leave the uncanny divide between the monster and the *status quo*, forcing the struggle between them *in perpetuity*. Of course, at least currently, there is no sequel. Instead, the viewer is left with a marked lack of resolution, with no further hope of such. In other words, the experiences of both the group and Hardenberg, and the sharing of their conflicting ideals remain thesis and anti-thesis. Weingartner leaves the apparent synthesis of the preceding scene as an unattained ideal.

In addition, the arc of *Die fetten Jahre* represents a cycle of ever-increasing stakes between the Edukators and Hardenberg. Because Hardenberg led to Jule owing money, the group breaks into his house, which results

in his being kidnapped. Hardenberg calls the police to arrest the Edukators, and knowing this will happen, the Edukators steal his boat and crash it into the towers. In each instance, Hardenberg and the Edukators both see themselves as the wronged party, and the other as the aggressor. The film shows one small, everyday event—an automobile accident—as the catalyst for the entire destructive, disruptive events of the film.

This ever-increasing spiral of retaliation comments on the nature of terrorism in general. The intelligence and military communities use the term "blowback" to describe this sort of retaliation, which is often presented in the media as terrorism (Johnson, Chalmers). As a result, an objective definition of terrorism remains untenable. Instead, the "terrorist" and "terrorism" exist dialectically. The person defining another as a "terrorist" is invariably the person on the receiving end of the "terrorist" acts. The fluidity of the definition of "terrorism" leads to a rhetorical arms race, with each side trying to make a seemingly ironclad case as to why their enemy uses "terror," and why they are simply defending their way of life.

These constant castings of monsters, uncanny doppelgängers, and violence against individuals and society bring *Die Fetten Jahre* in line with horror films. To this end, Robin Wood describes horror films as "at once the personal dreams of their makers and the collective dreams of their audiences—the fusion made possible by the shared structures of a common ideology" (Clover 12). *Die fetten Jahre* can be read in a way that the film would, at first glance, seem to resist. By creating plot tension and character development through horror themes, a horror reading suddenly becomes "fair game."

In *Die fetten Jahre*, Weingartner has created a fictional, personal allegory of a dynamic of terrorism that usually occurs at the national level. Through horror tropes, *Die fetten Jahre* depicts the subjectivity of “terrorism” as a concept, and exposes a dialectic of “terrorist” and “defender of ideals” that resists easy discussion. Though *Die fetten Jahre* does not incorporate all horror tropes and structures and certainly cannot be classified as a horror movie, the validity of horror readings in the film shows the persistence of tropes across what we would often consider to be rigid, clear genre lines. The use of these tropes becomes essential to *Die fetten Jahre*'s nuanced approach to the causes and results of “terrorist” activities.

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(Endnotes)

1. Mike Clark's review of *Saw* for *USA Today* from 2004, Mark Savlov's review of *Saw* for the *Austin Chronicle* from 2004, and Scott Tobias's review of *Hostel* for *AV Club*, to name a few.

2. <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/BloodyHandprint>

3. Universal's *Mummy* series, the first of which appeared in 1932, for example.

4. In the first film, of course, Jason's mother commits the murders as retribution for her son's death. In later films, Jason abandons Camp Crystal Lake completely.

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