

Chapter 2

## SCREEN VIOLENCE AND THE LIMITS OF MASCULINE IDEALS



In the idealized military of *Härtetest* or *Es gibt kein Niemandsland*, violence is almost entirely absent: there is no clash with the enemy and even violence between conscripts is barely hinted at. The lack of violence in novels of the Militärverlag is surprising, since in most modern societies the military is one of few contexts in which violence is officially permitted, even encouraged. Violence has accordingly attracted substantial critical attention in work on military masculinities, often focused on warzones. In *An Intimate History of Killing* (1999), Joanna Bourke frames military violence as part of soldiers' negotiations of self and masculinity. She shows that experiences and acts of violence are complex and individual, accompanied not just by 'fear, anxiety, [and] pain', but often by 'excitement, joy and satisfaction'.<sup>1</sup> While in some cases violence is connected to fantasies of heroism, in others love for and intimacy with comrades motivates violence against a common enemy. The link between violence and masculinity becomes yet more complex in the GDR context, where the NVA was never involved in active warfare. Bourke stresses that military training socializes soldiers to commit violence on command and to endure pain and psychological hardship; these obedient and resilient military masculinities are in turn constructed through physical, verbal, emotional and psychological violence during training. These forms of violence are hardly mentioned in *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* or *Härtetest*, but play a central role in DEFA films and in post-reunification film and literature depicting the NVA.

Raewyn Connell explains the importance of violence for masculinity by emphasizing the role of heroic military ideals in 'the definition of hegemonic

masculinity in European/American culture'.<sup>2</sup> However, she argues that military operations actually depend on nonviolent, unheroic skills: technical proficiency, patience and avoidance of aggression. And yet, she writes, 'the imagery of masculine heroism is not *culturally* irrelevant ... Part of the struggle for hegemony in the gender order is the use of culture for such disciplinary purposes: setting standards, claiming popular assent and discrediting those who fall short'.<sup>3</sup> Violence in Connell's account is involved in 'drawing boundaries and making exclusions', just as it is in settling international or personal conflicts.<sup>4</sup> The role of military violence in constructions of gender has since attracted considerable scholarly interest, not only with reference to the warzone but also in studies of peacekeeping or training.<sup>5</sup> Military violence in these contexts is often associated with the assertion of dominance. However, Connell emphasizes that '[v]iolence is part of a system of domination, but is at the same time a measure of its imperfection'.<sup>6</sup> In other words, if violence plays a role in 'setting standards' of masculinity and 'discrediting those who fall short', then its existence within military organizations may reflect 'imperfection' in the military's gender order. Not only can such violence highlight weaknesses in the military's attempts to impose ideal masculinities on conscripts, it actually draws attention to masculinities that exceed or fail to meet the standards of the military's heroic ideals.

Any analysis of the NVA must address violence and brutality, due to the army's reputation for brutal discipline and its complicity in violent moments of postwar European history. The KVP, which later became the NVA, was involved in the violent suppression of the 1953 uprising by Soviet troops, and this event accelerated the foundation of the NVA in 1956.<sup>7</sup> The NVA worked to close the border around West Berlin in 1961, it threatened invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and of Poland in 1981, and it mobilized in 1989 against peaceful protesters.<sup>8</sup> The NVA also routinely used violence to discipline its own members, leading to physical and psychological effects in conscripts' future lives, as Jürgen Fuchs's autobiographical writing has shown.<sup>9</sup> Any understanding of military violence in East Germany must therefore account for the diversity of forms of violence committed by or within the military, whether caused by physical force or by the force of institutional systems. The most violent impact of the GDR's armed forces was at the militarized border with West Berlin and the FRG, and violence committed by and against East German border soldiers left a complex cultural legacy. To analyse these diverse forms of violence, then, this chapter looks specifically at representations of the border.

It explores the representation of violence in three films set at the GDR's border with the West. First, I analyse *Julia lebt* (*Juliet Lives*, 1963), a film directed by Frank Vogel (1929–99) shortly after the construction of the Berlin Wall and the introduction of conscription, which is one of few East

German representations of violence at the inner-German border. I then compare two much later films, which reassess soldiers' complicity and victimhood in violence at the border in the wake of the post-1990 border guard trials: *Drei Stern rot* (*Three Star Red*, 2001), directed by Olaf Kaiser (b. 1959), and *An die Grenze* (*To the Border*, 2007), directed for television by Urs Egger (b. 1955).<sup>10</sup> In very different contexts, each of these three films responds to political events surrounding the inner-German border, and the message in *Drei Stern rot* and *An die Grenze* questioning the morality of the border regime is far from the attempt in *Julia lebt* to justify the fortifications of the border around West Berlin. The films' similarities are more unexpected. They turn inwards to how violence affects individual soldiers, using subjective violence to externalize and render visible structural and cultural violence during military training and active duty at the border. Acts of violence reveal the limits of the socialist soldier personality and are associated with soldiers' challenges to the coherence of this masculine ideal. Through comparison of *Julia lebt* with post-reunification films, and in light of the similarities in their portrayals of violence, masculinities that challenge military ideals emerge as a central concern of military films, even soon after the introduction of conscription.

### Masculinities and Cultural Violence

Although Connell implies that ideal constructions of masculinity can themselves be violent, her discussion of violence focuses largely on perceptible acts of violence by identifiable aggressors. Johan Galtung's and Slavoj Žižek's typologies help explain the relationship between concrete acts of violence and more abstract violence caused by masculine hierarchies. Galtung distinguishes between 'direct violence' perpetrated by a person or other agent and 'structural violence', which lacks a clear aggressor. Galtung sometimes elides distinctions under his category of direct violence: Connell describes physical, verbal and sexual violence as distinct but related phenomena, and psychological violence should also be considered. Galtung's category of structural violence accounts for broader inequalities in society that restrict individuals' life chances.<sup>11</sup> The combined impact of class, gender, geography and race on life expectancies, for example, demonstrates the impact of structural violence, which for Galtung is even more serious than direct violence.

Galtung later expanded his typology by introducing 'cultural violence' to describe cultural forces that legitimize and normalize direct and structural violence.<sup>12</sup> One of his examples is language: he describes how Latinate languages 'make women invisible by using the same word for the male gender as for the entire human species'.<sup>13</sup> Galtung thus indicates how gender can act

as a form of cultural violence: gender inequalities are imperceptibly normalized, enshrined in structures or used to legitimize direct violence against women. Galtung does not expand on this point, but it can be productively extended using Connell's work. According to her theory of hegemonic masculinity, the privileging of masculinity over femininity legitimizes structural inequalities and even direct violence against women. Moreover, the power of ideal forms of masculinity is expressed in inequalities between men that can produce direct violence. In the military context, failure to comply with masculine ideals can lead to physical punishment, which in turn strengthens the hierarchy between punisher and punished. Viewed through Galtung's work, hegemonic masculinities can therefore be seen as forms of cultural violence that legitimize and give rise to structural and direct violence. In the military, direct violence against specific enemies is normalized by the strong, aggressive heroism of ideal military masculinities, even in the GDR, where the rhetoric of peace dominated the NVA's self-presentation. Direct violence as a disciplinary tool is also partially legitimized by hierarchies of masculinity.<sup>14</sup> Yet punitive acts are a noticeable sign of infringements of and deviations from the military's ideals; in Connell's terms, violence renders visible the 'imperfection' of men's individual military masculinities and the limits of the ideal.

Žižek places greater emphasis on the visibility of forms of violence. He distinguishes between 'subjective violence' that is 'performed by a clearly identifiable agent' and 'objective violence', which encompasses Galtung's structural and cultural categories.<sup>15</sup> He emphasizes more explicitly than Galtung the extraordinary visibility of subjective violence compared to the relative invisibility of structural or cultural violence:

when we perceive something as an act of violence, we measure it by a presupposed standard of what the 'normal' non-violent situation is – and the highest form of violence is the imposition of this standard with reference to which some events appear as 'violent'.<sup>16</sup>

In other words, the most serious forms of violence operate within structures and cultures generally viewed as normal. Žižek does not explore gender relations, but his argument suggests that gender is a more insidious form of violence than the visible subjective violence of military discipline. He goes on to insist that 'one should resist the fascination of subjective violence', because it masks violence inherent in the system.<sup>17</sup> However, Connell's analysis suggests that the use of subjective violence to punish deviations from the military's ideals need not mask those ideals. By drawing attention to deviations from gender ideals, subjective violence could even expose the cultural violence of gender and reveal the boundaries of and challenges to gender ideals.

## Screening Violence

The representation of subjective violence on film could therefore be a productive source for exploring the cultural violence inherent in gender ideals. The visual qualities of physical or verbal violence are easily depicted; the physical sensation and affective experience of subjective violence, for both perpetrator and victim, are more elusive. To evoke such experiences, film depends on narrative means. Abrupt editing, loud and sudden use of sound and harsh lighting, for example, can add shock value, while techniques such as hand-cam and extreme close-ups can suggest the disorientation, fear and pain that accompany violence. Films use violence to depict masculinity for various reasons, from glorifying violent masculine cultures to criticizing hypermasculinity. Analysing screen violence as a ‘measure of imperfection’, in Connell’s terms, also reveals violent cultural forces by highlighting moments where potentially violent masculine ideals are challenged.

Film scholars have often agreed with Žižek that representations of subjective violence are fascinating, with on-screen violence commonly criticized as titillation. As Keith Solomon has argued with reference to Francis Ford Coppola’s blockbuster *Apocalypse Now* (1979), all representations of military violence, even those that are deliberately critical, use violence to create a spectacle. Beautiful images, the shock and catharsis of the violent event or the technical prowess of cinematic effects draw viewers in, while establishing the film as an artistic representation that simultaneously distances the viewer.<sup>18</sup> Paul Virilio, in *Guerre et cinéma (War and Cinema)*, (1984), goes even further, arguing that cinema does not just represent violence, but is itself violent, and so is the spectator’s viewing pleasure.<sup>19</sup> Since Laura Mulvey’s ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, the pleasure of the filmic spectacle has been associated with gendered violence, in Mulvey’s case with the violence of the masculine gaze on the feminine object.<sup>20</sup> Yet these writers may be too quick to condemn screen violence. Filmmakers can use representations of subjective violence to reveal the limits as well as the power of ideal forms of masculinity, thereby challenging the cultural violence of the gender order. As I have discussed with reference to *Härtetest*, for example, Kaja Silverman argues that masculinity is unsettled when it becomes objectified by the ‘look’. Perhaps most importantly, Susan Sontag’s *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003) explores how images of suffering can promote critical reflection.<sup>21</sup> Reflecting on violence in military films can challenge our notions of masculinity. Subjective violence on screen draws attention to the cultural violence of gender ideals, so that the ideal and its unattainability become visible in ways that disrupt, if not necessarily subvert, its power.

Filmic images of subjective violence could therefore be used to challenge the invisible forms of violence that Galtung and Žižek describe. Structural

and cultural violence are difficult to represent on film, as they frequently masquerade as what Žižek terms ‘the “normal” non-violent situation’.<sup>22</sup> In my analysis of *Julia lebt*, *Drei Stern rot* and *An die Grenze*, I will explore how the shock and visibility of subjective violence can be used to externalize structural and cultural violence. Military training offers particularly compelling insights, because violence in this environment is related more clearly to the military’s ideals and soldiers’ attempts to negotiate them. Here, acts of subjective violence can foreground ideals of masculinity that remain invisible in other contexts. This technique could encourage critical reflection on cultural and structural violence, which legitimize not only the subjective violence that soldiers suffer during training but also the more serious, lethal violence that they may later commit in the warzone.

### **Violence and the New Border: Frank Vogel (Dir.), *Julia lebt* (1963)**

Like any army, the NVA prepared conscripts for combat, and socialist soldier personalities were distinguished from civilian ‘socialist personalities’ in part through their monopoly on state-sanctioned violence, even though most NVA troops never saw combat. Within the East German armed forces, only the Border Guard was ever engaged in combat, maintaining constant attack readiness with the authorization, at least implicitly, to shoot on sight. In this tense atmosphere, the constant potential for soldiers to have to use violence to police the border strip translates into films and literature that place scenes of violence at the centre of depictions of the border. Yet due to the NVA’s rhetoric of peace and the SED’s emphasis on the protective nature of the fortified border with West Germany, violence committed by NVA soldiers against civilians was not depicted within the GDR. Indeed, few representations of the militarized border were produced by the Militärverlag or DEFA at all. *Julia lebt* is therefore an unusual example in depicting the border defences. The film was made in a moment of cultural liberalization between the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 and the Eleventh Plenum of the Central Committee of the SED in 1965, when a dozen DEFA films and a number of literary works were banned.<sup>23</sup> In this context, and in an attempt to justify both the Berlin Wall and the introduction of conscription in 1962, the film reflects on the violence experienced by NVA soldiers at the border.

*Julia lebt* was DEFA’s first film to portray a conscript and one of very few to focus on the Border Guard. The NVA only drafted a small proportion of conscripts into the Border Guard each year: misgivings about the use of weapons were not tolerated, and training was designed to make violence the automatic response when faced with a breach of the border from either side.<sup>24</sup> This

state-sanctioned use of lethal violence was remarkable in a country during peacetime, particularly because it entailed attacks on unarmed civilians in the vast majority of cases.<sup>25</sup> Fenemore has argued that the border offered the only opportunity for men to assert traditional hegemonic masculinity, framing the lethal violence of the border as a tool in constructing masculinity.<sup>26</sup> However, *Julia lebt* shows border guards not as violent or aggressive, but as physically damaged by the environment at the border, and its civilian victims remain unacknowledged.

Vogel depicts the conscript Gunter Rist attempting to reconcile his love affairs with his commitment to socialism before he is shot in the film's final scenes. Vogel's references to and quotations from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), which underline the film's focus on love, were criticized by reviewers for their dubious relevance.<sup>27</sup> These references ironize Gunter's naive, melodramatic young love. The title also indicates that life goes on for the film's Juliet figure, Penny Berger, an actress from a bourgeois milieu. Reception of *Julia lebt* was ambivalent. Reviewers praised the film's experimental aesthetic, which uses lighting, sound and camerawork reminiscent of films by Ingmar Bergman or the French New Wave.<sup>28</sup> Otherwise its reception was muted, with its plot deemed incoherent or unbelievable, its characterization inadequate and its ending too open.<sup>29</sup> However, Vogel's film deserves greater critical attention, not only for its aesthetic complexity, but also as a rare East German depiction of violence at the border that reveals the cultural violence associated with ideal military masculinity.

Gunter's shooting is mentioned in the opening scene and overshadows the entire film. A prologue opens with Gunter running blissfully through a park. A voiceover introduces him and his love affair, ending 'he was shot at', before the scene cuts to black.<sup>30</sup> The film then narrates Gunter's relationship with Penny, which is punctuated by violence building up to the shooting. First, Gunter quarrels with Penny's brother, Kalle, and her former lover, Bob. Then Gunter and Penny's relationship is interrupted when Gunter is hospitalized following a motorcycle accident. While in hospital, Gunter loses touch with Penny and falls in love with his nurse, Li. However, when he receives a letter from Penny, Gunter abandons Li, unknowingly leaving her pregnant. Soon after Gunter returns to Penny, he is shot whilst on duty. The ending of the film is open: although final close-ups of Penny and Li crying suggest that Gunter dies, no certainty is given and the precise cause of the shots is never explained. As the film progresses from one of these violent incidents to the next, the sources of subjective violence become increasingly abstract. Without the clear aggressor usually associated with Žižek's definition of subjective violence, the film suggests that Gunter's suffering and that of other characters is caused by invisible structures and cultures, particularly ideals of military masculinity in the Border Guard.

Production on *Julia lebt* began in early 1961, but the film's narrative only took its final shape after three events. First, the border around West Berlin was closed in August 1961, an event depicted in several films from the early 1960s.<sup>31</sup> Second, conscription was introduced in early 1962. Third, on 23 May 1962, Peter Göring, a border guard, was firing on a fourteen-year-old boy escaping across the Spandau Shipping Canal when he was shot by West Berlin police. The boy survived, albeit with severe disabilities, but Göring was killed instantly.<sup>32</sup> Only two weeks before Göring's death, the film's draft screenplay had Gunter in a brush with death that made him decide between two women he was involved with.<sup>33</sup> By 7 July, the first full version of the screenplay shows Gunter being shot by Western police at the border.<sup>34</sup> Pertti Ahonen has discussed Göring as a new type of GDR masculine hero: 'the hero-victim of the socialist frontier'.<sup>35</sup> The authorities painted Göring as an innocent victim, and Ahonen relates his posthumous fame to his masculinity. He was not only presented as disciplined and strong, with a background in manual labour, but 'he had also been cultured and sensitive'.<sup>36</sup> Ahonen's exposition of the propaganda around Göring's death stops short of *Julia lebt*, which was developed in the ensuing months as a fictional film drawing on Göring's death.<sup>37</sup> *Julia lebt* shows even less context for Gunter's death than official accounts gave for Göring's: no Western aggressors are shown and there is no escaping boy. In fact, the film's abstraction of the event can easily lead Gunter to appear as a victim of the border's very existence rather than of Western violence.

The film's characters live near the newly fortified border northeast of Potsdam, where the River Havel and its lakes formed the border with West Berlin. Riverbanks and shorelines operate both as liminal spaces away from barracks where Gunter meets with Penny and Li, and as militarized spaces that recall the division of Germany. For example, after Gunter meets Penny, they walk along the river together, while in a subsequent scene Gunter and his comrade Zatopek patrol a different stretch of river (12:52). Even so soon after 1961, the river borders around Potsdam would have been lined with fences.<sup>38</sup> The lack of manmade defences in Gunter's first scene on patrol therefore normalizes the border by associating it with natural boundaries. However, in a subsequent scene, an imposing barbed-wire border fence serves as the backdrop when Gunter and Zatopek are again on patrol, so that the men appear confined between border and camera (13:45–13:55). Gunter only once alludes to the division of Germany when he hears American gunfire on the other side of the river: 'Grunewald. They're playing war again' (14:22–14:26). For the most part, though, the border looms uncommented upon in the background of Gunter's story.

Even though state-sanctioned lethal violence is not shown directly in *Julia lebt*, the depiction of border defences means that the threat of violence is a constant presence, as the background to a range of other forms of violence



experienced during border service. Analysing how the wider brutalizing effects of violence on border guards were represented and conceptualized, particularly at this early stage of the border regime, can help us understand the fear, resentment and even zeal that led to soldiers' readiness to fire on escaping civilians. The variety of manifestations of violence that occurred along the GDR's border with West Berlin and the FRG is evident in the Border Guard's daily reports of so-called 'extraordinary incidents'. In the records from 1984, an example of a typical year without flashpoints at the border, violence against the enemy or escaping citizens appears unusual relative to violence between soldiers, fights with civilians, accidents caused by landmines or mishandling of weapons, and suicides.<sup>39</sup> These reports show that subjective violence was an everyday part of conscripts' lives, including violence between and against soldiers. However, the aim of the reports is explicitly to focus on extraordinary events. Accordingly, structural and cultural violence caused by the military and its constructions of masculinity do not feature, as they were in no sense extraordinary. However, the context and background of outbursts of subjective violence become more visible in narrative films because these acts are embedded in a larger narrative arc. *Julia lebt* centres on Gunter's suffering, with injury and violence an everyday part of his military service, linked through the film's setting and cinematography to combat readiness at the border.

In addition to being a physical environment associated particularly closely in the GDR with violence, the border with the FRG also functions metaphorically in *Julia lebt* and other films. The figurative significance attached to the inner-German border indicates the role of violence in defining and constructing ideal military masculinities that Connell describes. In geopolitical terms, the closing of the Berlin border is inseparable from the introduction of conscription five months later, as conscription was unenforceable as long as GDR citizens could escape to West Berlin.<sup>40</sup> Despite SED rhetoric presenting the Berlin Wall as a defensive measure against sabotage and so-called 'ideological diversion', images of violence have dominated public discussion of the border since 1961. Military service and the border also share a cultural significance, as both defined boundaries within which the East German subject was to move. For example, the common official euphemism for the Berlin Wall, 'antifascist protective barrier' (*antifaschistischer Schutzwall*), and the crime of 'ideological diversion' both refer to the danger of citizens being influenced by bourgeois capitalist values, or indeed by the fascism that SED rhetoric frequently equated with capitalism. Focusing on the border therefore also raises questions about the GDR's ideals more broadly, and especially masculinity due to its close link with violence. Highly visible acts of violence reveal the limits of those constructions of masculinity in the way that Connell implies.

*Julia lebt* repeatedly relates the border to gender boundaries, distinguishing the socialist soldier personality from femininities and bourgeois masculinities. Vogel's film emphasizes the role of violence in defining ideal military masculinity and shows how desire and the feminine threaten Gunter's attempts to emulate the military's ideals. Gunter embraces military service and the NVA's masculine ideals: strength, courage, camaraderie and a measured, responsible approach to violence. His discipline only falters when he falls in love. His fascination with Penny's bourgeois lifestyle means he ignores her self-centredness. Li's emotional reserve is portrayed just as negatively as Penny's melodramatic outbursts, but Li, a working-class nurse, is a more fitting love interest for a socialist military hero. Gunter's overlapping relationships with the two women contradict official entreaties for couples to pursue steady relationships.<sup>41</sup> He continues to love Penny and abandons responsibility for his actions when he leaves Li pregnant. Gunter's desires appear to motivate his transgressions of the boundaries of the military's masculine ideal, and the violence he suffers is related to these transgressions throughout.

Mark Wolfgram has studied the border as a gendered boundary in films from East and West. He argues that in depictions of the German division, the GDR was gendered feminine and the FRG masculine. In these films, '[t]o realize love, characters attempt to cross the border, but the border becomes a location of extreme violence', of which '[w]omen are most often the victims'.<sup>42</sup> Wolfgram briefly discusses border guards in his analysis. He analyses Western films that portray Eastern guards as 'quite brutal and indifferent to human life'.<sup>43</sup> Wolfgram's analysis of DEFA films suggests a contrasting pattern: members of the Border Guard are not perpetrators of lethal violence, which is displaced onto Western guards or other characters. Wolfgram is right to argue that violence during border crossings does not affect men as much as women in GDR films. However, gendered violence at the border in DEFA films is more complex than Wolfgram's account suggests. In *Julia lebt*, with the focus shifted to military violence rather than border crossings, the border becomes a locus of masculine suffering that renders visible the cultural violence of the socialist soldier personality and draws attention, as Connell suggests, to aspects of masculinity that are less compatible with the military's ideal.

Vogel generally avoids directly depicting subjective violence, a technique that contributes to the increasing abstraction of the source of Gunter's suffering. Gunter does appear heroic, but the violence he suffers reveals his failure to live up to the NVA's ideals. Subjective violence results in particular from Gunter's attempts to negotiate the boundary between bourgeois and socialist masculinity, in his brawl with Kalle and quarrels with Bob. These acts therefore render visible the cultural violence associated with these ideals. The film is structured around three instances of violence: Gunter's fight with Penny's

brother, Kalle; his motorcycle accident; and his death. As the source of violence is effaced, Gunter's suffering begins to point to structural or cultural forces. Gunter's inevitable failure to conform, due to physical weakness and uncontrolled desires, results in the gradual destruction of his body. While the camera lingers on minor injuries that enhance Gunter's handsomeness and display his strength and endurance, Vogel avoids direct depictions of serious wounds. Thus, although Gunter's injuries highlight his inadequacy, his ultimately lifeless body remains idealized as an embodiment of the military ideal.

The link between subjective violence and the cultural violence created by ideals of the soldierly body has been theorized by Klaus Theweleit. In *Männerphantasien* (*Male Fantasies*, 1977–78), he uses psychoanalytic readings of literature by right-wing paramilitaries in interwar Germany, the Freikorps, to delimit the character type of the 'soldierly man'.<sup>44</sup> Theweleit's generalized conclusions do not account for the diverse individual experiences involved in the construction of masculinities, and his approach tends to pathologize a small group of violent men rather than scrutinizing the more general, and more complicated, relevance of violence to hegemonic masculinities. However, his analysis assists in understanding weakness and victimhood as part of the formation of military masculinities. For Theweleit's 'soldierly men', violence constructs a psychological and physical boundary that shapes their self-understanding. He draws on Wilhelm Reich's concept of 'character armour' (*charakterliche Panzerung*) constructed by neurotic subjects as protection from the outside world and from their own libidinal energies.<sup>45</sup> Theweleit's concept is more embodied than Reich's: he argues that a 'body armour' (*Körperpanzer*) compensates for anxieties about the boundaries of body and subjectivity caused by the poorly formed ego of the 'soldierly man'. Theweleit conceptualizes this armoured boundary as a dam against dangerous fluidities associated with the enemy and femininity, which threaten the coherence of the masculine self. The body armour is constructed through violence and pain during childhood and adolescence:

The punishments of parents, teachers, masters, the punishment hierarchies of young boys, and the military, have reminded them constantly of the existence of their periphery (shown them their boundaries), until they have 'grown' a functioning and controlling body armor.<sup>46</sup>

Pain and violence alert the 'soldierly man' to his boundaries and threaten to violate them, but withstanding attacks strengthens the body and allows it to substitute for a well-defined self. Senior Freikorps members assert their masculinity by beating their subordinates, which also leads to the construction of 'body armour' by younger members. *Julia lebt* does not glorify violence between soldiers in the same way as Theweleit's Freikorps literature, but



**Figure 2.1** Gunter's scarred face glows as he watches Penny climb the stairs in *Julia lebt* (1963). © DEFA Foundation.

especially towards the beginning of the film, the film does suggest that using and withstanding violence are linked to Gunter's development as an ideal socialist soldier.

The film's first incident of violence is Gunter's brawl with Kalle, who spots Gunter and Penny kissing in a park at night after they first meet. When Kalle accuses his sister of behaving 'like a whore', Gunter stands, slowly and calmly, and walks towards the camera, looking directly into it. He punches towards the camera and the scene cuts to Kalle recoiling and the two men struggling on the ground (5:06–5:12). Despite the men's apparent lack of self-control, Vogel's close-up on Gunter emphasizes his calm resolve, attributing their aggression primarily to Kalle's impulsiveness rather than to a loss of control on Gunter's part. The cut between Gunter punching and Kalle being hit avoids showing the impact of Gunter's blow, diminishing its shock value. After the brawl, Kalle appears uninjured, whereas at Penny's house afterwards, the camera and light linger on Gunter's dirtied face (6:36; see Figure 2.1). The cut on Gunter's cheek displays his vulnerability and his failure to live up to the 'strength and endurance' expected of ideal conscripts.<sup>47</sup> Later, Struppel even links Gunter's weakness to his romantic nature: 'big love, big bandage' (12:33–12:34). Yet in this medium close-up, as Gunter lifts his face and we watch Penny's shadow climb the stairs, a slight low angle ensures that the key lighting makes his face glow and highlights his cheekbones and the scar. As Gunter seemingly appreciates in the next scene when he admires his scar in the mirror, it clearly adds to his distinguished masculine appearance (7:17).

The injury displays Gunter's efforts to achieve ideal military masculinity, by using violence to assert dominance over Kalle. Unlike for Theweleit's 'soldierly men', femininity does not threaten Gunter's masculinity. His defence of Penny's honour shows that his relationship to femininity is in fact central to how forms of idealized masculinity are created in the film. The film

reflects the emphasis in military publications on conscripts' duty to protect women, in contrast with representations of capable, independent women in other official publications.<sup>48</sup> In this regard, the NVA's military masculine ideals have more in common with bourgeois masculinity than the SED or DEFA may have intended: the fight breaks out because of minor differences over how to defend Penny's honour. Only Gunter's control separates his behaviour from Kalle's impulsive insults. Moreover, the brawl is coextensive with Gunter's border service. When he notes that he has seen Penny's house while on patrol, she replies: 'Then you are doubly a guardian of my virtue' (5:38–5:42). Penny's comment with its exaggerated register is ironic, but as in Wolfgram's analysis, Vogel represents the border as a boundary that exists to protect and control the sexuality and 'virtues' of East German women. Gunter's violence is shown as defensive. When Penny later compliments his bravery by calling the fight 'truly rugged [*urwüchsig*]', he objects: 'I don't like fighting,' Penny's reply encapsulates the film's approach to violence as part of ideal military masculinity: 'Of course not, but you are so reliable. You *can* fight; that's nice' (9:36–9:49). The film thus emphasizes the capable but reluctant way in which Gunter uses subjective violence to assert not just his dominance over Kalle, but also his supposed duty to protect Penny.

Although it is impossible to generalize from Theweleit's analysis to the GDR context of *Julia lebt, Männerphantasien* helps conceptualize the role of violence in constructing and enforcing boundaries between masculinities. In the brawl, Gunter's violent act asserts an ideal of socialist military heroism against Kalle's bourgeois masculinity, and a link is therefore suggested between the portrayal of the brawl and the wider cultural violence of the socialist soldier personality. Violence in the film, as in Theweleit's analysis, is central to constructing military masculinities. However, Gunter's violence does not just crystallize the military's ideal masculinity, but reveals its limits and boundaries through his repeated struggle against the bourgeois decadence of Penny's family. The film suggests that violence by no means results in the unified troop of 'soldierly men' that Theweleit implies. Gunter's and Kalle's masculinities are shaped through their violent encounter, but in opposite ways that strengthen the film's opposition between socialist selflessness and bourgeois self-indulgence. In the context of Connell's work on violence, this scene demonstrates how violence exposes the imperfections of masculine ideals, and shows the repeated acts of conflict that construct and generate these ideals.

The next violent incident in *Julia lebt* complicates this discussion by forcing us to consider acts of subjective violence when there is no clear aggressor, a technique that draws attention to the abstract nature of cultural violence. In an earlier draft screenplay, Gunter is hospitalized after being deliberately run over while on patrol by Penny's former lover, Bob.<sup>49</sup> In this version, Gunter's

serious injury and long convalescence are clearly related to Bob's jealousy and to the contrast between Gunter's controlled, responsible masculinity and the impulsive violence of bourgeois characters. The hit-and-run emphasizes Bob's dishonourable behaviour and shows Gunter under assault from forces within the GDR as well as from without. However, Vogel's final version replaces the hit-and-run with an accident while Gunter is riding on Struppel's motorcycle. The accident is not shown: its consequences are revealed by an abrupt cut to Gunter lying in hospital with his head bandaged (43:39). Only when Gunter's commanding officer and Struppel visit does the viewer learn that Gunter was injured when Struppel swerved to avoid a child, hitting a tree and injuring Gunter (44:14–44:49). In the final edit, Gunter's injuries are no longer the result of violence with an identifiable agent, but a sacrifice to protect a child.

Lilya Kaganovsky's work on Soviet masculinities in films of the Stalin era helps to contextualize Gunter's injury at the hands of abstract forces in this incident. Kaganovsky describes how male bodies are gradually dismembered as characters sacrifice themselves to the socialist cause and an unattainable masculinity. Death eventually allows these men to be elevated to hero status, as the conflict between ideal and really existing masculinities is resolved by the body's destruction.<sup>50</sup> There are clear connections between Kaganovsky's sources and *Julia lebt*, particularly Vogel's framing of the whole narrative around Gunter's eventual death. Drawing on Silverman's work, Kaganovsky argues that stoic, muscular, Soviet ideals are a dominant fiction that sets the limits of acceptable Stalinist subjectivity. These ideals are a source of violence and suffering, but visible marks of men's failure to live up to them are nonetheless proudly displayed as a badge of their heroic efforts, just as with the scar that makes Gunter more handsome after his brawl with Kalle. Kaganovsky's analysis reveals, even more clearly than Theweleit's, the potential for subjective violence to externalize the cultural violence of ideal masculinities, forces that legitimize and demand men's violence, suffering and self-sacrifice. Her analysis also suggests the potential for film to exploit the visibility of subjective violence that Žižek identifies in order to expose rather than mask structural and cultural violence. In *Julia lebt*, as in films of the Stalin era, soldiers are damaged on screen as martyrs to the impossibility of masculine ideals, even as their destruction exposes that impossibility and the work that goes into constructing military masculinities.

Even without an identifiable aggressor, Gunter's accident is part of the film's trajectory of violence and his increasing physical injury. His head wound is severe, with a bandage restricting his movement and eyesight, although he appears otherwise unscathed. When the bandage is removed, Gunter's scar remains a permanent reminder of his suffering. Scars are left when the skin, the body's physical boundary, has been broken and healed:

they display the body's vulnerability while showing its power to heal and thus withstand violence.<sup>51</sup> Gunter's scar demonstrates the ambivalent place of violence, which can break the boundaries of the soldierly body while affirming the strength of these boundaries. Without an aggressor, Gunter's abstract suffering resembles that of the characters analysed by Kaganovsky, whose injuries she attributes to attempts to attain a hegemonic but unachievable masculine ideal. The child in Struppel's story links Gunter's injury to their duty as soldiers to protect children, which his commanding officer views as brave and masculine. The final version of this scene renders Gunter a passive victim of the need to uphold his honour and responsibility as protector. Gunter's suffering should therefore be construed as part of a wider trajectory of violence in the film. In the absence of an agent of violence, ideals of masculinity appear more visibly, as in Kaganovsky's analysis, as a force of structural and cultural violence.

The film's final violent event is Gunter being shot. As anticipated in the prologue by the voiceover's passive construction with no agent, 'he was shot at', the aggressor is not shown and nor is the moment of violence (1:16–1:18). The prologue therefore frames the whole film in reference to this act of violence, but also in relation to its unexplained nature and lack of clear aggressor. The scene from the prologue is repeated in its original dramatic context later in the film, after one of Gunter and Penny's rendezvous. Because the prologue ends by announcing that Gunter is shot, the viewer expects the gunshots to follow this scene's recapitulation, but Vogel frustrates this expectation (33:20–34:03). Similarly, with the knowledge that Gunter will be shot, the cut to Gunter in hospital tempts the viewer to suspect a shooting, until Struppel explains the accident. Finally, once Gunter returns to Penny, characters' lines unknowingly foreshadow Gunter's death. Soon after Gunter's return from hospital, Struppel asks 'is it too late to save you?' and Penny's remark immediately before the gunshots, 'we have so much time', appears to tempt fate (1:09:43–1:09:45; 1:18:24–1:18:26). These framing devices make Gunter's death seem inevitable, even though the context of the shooting is never revealed. Gunter's victimhood becomes associated with abstract forms of violence, including the cultural violence of a military masculine ideal that encourages a desire to conform and rewards self-sacrifice.

The cinematic representation of the shooting departs from Vogel's previous narrative mode, highlighting the abstract source of Gunter's suffering. The first gunshot is heard as the scene abruptly cuts to black. A second and third follow as a border fence fades into view with the West Berlin Radio Tower in the background (1:18:27–1:18:31). This dark, murky shot of the menacing border is far from the natural beauty of the river Gunter was patrolling earlier. The source of the bullets is unknown; the border and Radio Tower suggest only that they emanate from West Berlin. The sudden, loud

sounds, the cut to black and the visual interjection of a still of the border disrupt the narrative, which loses all coherence from this point: the film ends with a series of ten-second close-ups. First Gunter is shown motionless in an ambulance, then Struppel watching over him with the suggestion of tears on his face. Then four close-ups alternate between Li weeping and Penny looking sad but increasingly resolute. There is no dialogue or sound except for the ballad music from Penny and Gunter's earlier rendezvous; instead, Vogel's close-ups foreground expressions and emotions and permit a range of interpretations.<sup>52</sup> Even though the film strongly implies that Gunter is killed, the studio told the press that he survives.<sup>53</sup> This announcement probably reflects last-minute complaints by the NVA and the Culture Ministry that the death 'does not necessarily fit with the film's message'.<sup>54</sup> Rather than reshoot, it seems that the studio used sleight of hand to satisfy the objection. Yet whether Gunter dies is perhaps less important than his increasing physical destruction, which is shown as the result less of subjective than of cultural violence and his attempts to assume and defend an impossible form of military masculinity.

The shooting should be understood as the endpoint of a trajectory of violence: Gunter's injuries increase in severity due to his failure to conform to the military's masculine ideals. His desires play an important role in this failure. The film's publicity emphasized that the shots are directed not just at Gunter personally, but more symbolically 'at his love', a curious formulation that is not explained in the film.<sup>55</sup> The idea presumably relates to Gunter's insistence that 'the Oberleutnant, he's always talking about protecting the achievements of socialism, our factories, our universities, and so on. Why doesn't he also say our love?' (37:14–37:25). The film implies that real love is only possible under socialism and is threatened by Western aggression.<sup>56</sup> Yet Gunter's love is far from any idealized socialist relationship: he is impulsive and thoughtless towards both Penny and Li and fails to achieve the ideal partnership desired by the military. In one enigmatic scene that shocked audiences, Gunter even slaps Penny when she appears to lose control of her emotions (1:16:02).<sup>57</sup> The camera lingers on Gunter's expressionless face and Penny's distraught reaction (1:16:02–1:16:48), inviting criticism of Gunter and potentially suggesting that the pressures on him result not only in his victimhood but also in an increased propensity to commit subjective violence. Moreover, by leaving Li when she is pregnant, Gunter shows himself to be complicit in structural violence that disadvantages women who cannot walk away from such a situation, at least in the GDR of the early 1960s where contraception was scarce and abortions were illegal.

Despite Gunter's deviations from the socialist soldier personality through his vulnerability and his uncontrolled desires, his body is converted into an attractive embodiment of the military's ideal. After the shooting, Gunter is



unconscious but physically unharmed, except for the scar from the motorcycle accident. Through his presumed death, he is absolved of an impending decision between two imperfect relationships and prevented from further lapses into irresponsible or disobedient behaviour. In keeping with the NVA's paternalistic approach to women, Gunter's death also helps Penny and Li address their failings. Li shows emotion for only the second time in the film, and Penny appears resolute, perhaps inspired to renounce her selfish decadence. Gunter's unscathed physicality indicates that the ideal of military masculinity remains intact not despite, but because of, his sudden death. His death is in effect required for the film to present an ideal masculine figure at the end, since any ideal must remain deferred and unattainable. Yet the narrative itself is driven not by the maintenance of this ideal, but by Gunter's transgressions and by the characters of Penny and Li.

*Julia lebt* thus places Gunter's negotiations of his relationships and of the distinctions between bourgeois and socialist masculinity in the context of his presumed death at the border. Gunter is gradually marked by increasing violence, his scars paradoxically a sign both of his endurance and of his weakness. Unlike the mostly feminine victims of the border identified by Wolfgram, *Julia lebt* associates violence at the inner-German border with negotiations between socialist and bourgeois capitalist masculinities. Even though Gunter becomes increasingly passive, he is not feminized, but is presented as a martyr to the military masculine ideal. As the source of violence becomes more abstract, Gunter's suffering externalizes the otherwise invisible cultural violence associated with the socialist soldier personality. This cultural violence compels Gunter to emulate the military's hegemonic masculinity, which entails self-sacrifice and self-control in the face of potentially lethal violence. On screen, subjective violence, in line with Connell's discussion of violence revealing the imperfections of hegemonic masculinity, betrays Gunter's failure to attain the military's ideal, and fascination with these failures – his uncontrolled desires and physical vulnerability – drives the narrative.

### **Reassessing Violence and Victimhood: Post-reunification Border Films**

While the interest in *Julia lebt* comes from the violent effects of ideal military masculinity on Gunter, the film is unambiguous about the positive influence of Border Guard soldiers on civilian populations. Unsurprisingly for a film produced so soon after the closing of the border around West Berlin, the sudden violence of this event and its effects on civilian populations are bracketed out entirely. In other films of the period, the trends are similar: in

Vogel's film from the previous year, ... *und deine Liebe auch* (... *And Your Love Too*, 1962), for example, escaping characters are also killed by shots fired from the West.<sup>58</sup> Equally unsurprisingly, representations of the border in the subsequent decades of the GDR were rare. Wolfgram points to Konrad Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel* (*Divided Heaven*, 1964), Vogel's collaboration with three other directors on *Geschichten jener Nacht* (*Stories of that Night*, 1967) and Roland Gräf's *Die Flucht* (*The Escape*, 1977).<sup>59</sup> Of these, only *Geschichten jener Nacht* explores the role of soldiers and the film's violence occurs mostly in flashbacks to Nazi Germany. Even *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* (*To Hell with Harbolla*, 1989), set in Oranienburg before the Berlin Wall, depicts the pre-Wall border in a largely slapstick mode.<sup>60</sup> Only after reunification did representations of the border begin to proliferate, picking up from *Julia lebt* the question of violence and military masculinity at the border.

Yet the blind spot in GDR-era representations around civilian casualties of the border regime has still not been adequately redressed in post-reunification films and literature. *Deutschland 86* includes a storyline that foregrounds the complicated cross-border networks of persecution and sympathy that led to so many civilian casualties. Episode 7 uses a moving and uncomfortable filmic language of extreme close-ups, tight framing and alternating long, still shots with more frenetic hand-cam shots to give a sense of the fear, claustrophobia and paranoia as the Fischer family become increasingly alienated and desperate, culminating in their escape attempt.<sup>61</sup> However, in representations of border soldiers, the focus has largely remained on the suffering of East German conscripts and their own psychological struggles with guilt rather than on the violence committed against civilians at the border. Even in Jan Ruzicka's *Der Mauerschütze* (*The Border Guard*, 2010), which revolves around the repercussions of a civilian death at the border, the experiences of the bereaved family receive less space than the ex-soldier's guilt, and the drama's final resolution has the family effectively exonerate him.<sup>62</sup> *Drei Stern rot* and *An die Grenze* offer two contrasting examples of this revived interest in the effects of the pervasive violence at the inner-German border on young men drafted into the Border Guard. As with *Julia lebt*, these works lend themselves to further investigation of the relationship between subjective violence and the military's values and ideals, which helps explain the continuing interest in the effects of violence on soldiers.

*Drei Stern rot* and *An die Grenze* respond to broader debates around the border in post-reunification culture, as the border guard trials between 1991 and 2004 focused popular attention on the Border Guard. Combined with the opening of the Stasi files, public debate initially focused on the GDR's most violent and repressive sides. Yet as the trials unfolded, media scandals created the image of a justice system incapable of properly or fairly trying those responsible. The first trial especially, of four men accused of

manslaughter against Chris Gueffroy, the last person to be shot at the border in February 1989, was the focus of scandal.<sup>63</sup> By investigating physical and psychological violence suffered by border guards, post-reunification films respond to the trials' focus on the perpetrators and perhaps deliberately move away from the complicated scandals around guilt and justice surrounding the trials. *Drei Stern rot* and *An die Grenze* show the psychological difficulties affecting soldiers, which in the former last long after the protagonist's military service. *An die Grenze* adds a representation of an officer's suicide and a dramatization of a real event in 1975, in which two border guards were shot by Werner Weinhold, an NVA deserter fleeing the GDR, and which screenwriter Stefan Kolditz (b. 1956) experienced first-hand during his own service.<sup>64</sup> Both films proceed from an attempt to understand the experiences of border guards, drawing on Kolditz's and *Drei Stern rot* screenwriter Holger Jancke's (b. 1966) biographies, but the result risks making border guards appear the victims of violence at the border. Despite their different contexts and motivations, then, these two films thus have much in common with *Julia lebt*. All are interested in understanding violence at the border more broadly than just the shooting of civilians, and all three tend to downplay the state-sponsored violence of the GDR border regime, albeit for very different reasons.

### **Olaf Kaiser (Dir.), *Drei Stern rot* (2001)**

Whereas *Julia lebt* uses physical violence to depict the cultural violence suffered by Gunter, *Drei Stern rot* uses fantasy violence to highlight the psychological effects of cultural violence on its protagonist, Christian Blank. Subjective violence highlights Christian's negotiations of metaphorical boundaries between his dissident civilian identity and the ideal military masculinity of the Border Guard. The film depicts his ongoing use of narrative to redefine his masculinity in response to violent memories and fantasies, using humour and hyperbole to resist pathologizing his response to violence at the border. As remembered and fantasy violence blur, the most profound violence done to Christian appears to be cultural, caused by the demands and hardships of military service.

Kaiser's film was the first film to deal with GDR military service after reunification; the eleven-year delay perhaps reflects the continued controversy around representing violence at the border in the context of the ongoing border guard trials.<sup>65</sup> The film is a tragicomedy loosely drawing on Jancke's own border service.<sup>66</sup> The title's 'three red stars' refer to the red flares that signalled a breach of the border, and the film opens with these flares going off as a man in punk clothing runs towards a stylized recreation of the

border. A guard aims a gun and shouts, at which point the camera cuts to reveal a film crew.<sup>67</sup> Christian, the actor playing the border guard in the film-within-a-film, is rebuked by the director, his friend Schrubber, for changing the script. Christian suddenly begins to hallucinate, assaults a co-star and blacks out. He comes to in hospital, where a psychiatrist, Dr Wehmann, discerns that Christian has mistaken his co-star for a man called Nattenklinger, whom Christian now believes he has killed. Christian narrates his childhood and military service in flashback in response to Wehmann's questions. His flashbacks place Nattenklinger in various positions of authority, including as Christian's sports teacher and employer, and imagine Nattenklinger's violent death. It finally emerges that Major Nattenklinger was Christian's commanding officer in the Border Guard. Christian's narrative alternates between his military service and his dissident adolescence with his girlfriend, Jana. The film ends with Wehmann diagnosing Christian with Borderline syndrome, a personality disorder associated with an unstable sense of identity. The film was greeted by some reviewers as too maudlin and by others as too farcical.<sup>68</sup> Generally, however, the film's mixture of irony and psychological drama was well received.<sup>69</sup>

Christian's surname, Blank, might suggest that he is an 'empty' or 'bare' projection screen for forms of military and dissident masculinity, and indeed for the film's confusing and conflicting narratives. The projection of ideal military masculinity onto Christian begins immediately after he arrives for training. In Christian's memories, he is first singled out by Nattenklinger for failing to salute. Nattenklinger orders Christian to practise saluting, which entails walking past Nattenklinger, saluting and running around him to repeat the movement again. Christian's voiceover describes this absurd behaviour as a sudden break with a civilian identity built around his girlfriend Jana: 'Since 4 February 1986, my life has no longer revolved [*kreist*] around Jana, but around Major Nattenklinger' (32:13–32:18). The script plays on the figurative and literal meanings of 'kreisen', to circle or revolve, and the tense of the verb makes it clear that Nattenklinger still influences Christian's psyche in the post-reunification present of the frame narrative and voiceover.

Christian describes the cultural violence created by the military's constant targets, in German 'Normen' or 'norms', which dictate the daily routine and skills expected of ideal conscripts, including skills in the use of violence:

There are norms for hand-to-hand combat and for shooting, protection norms, grenade throwing norms, sporting norms, tactical norms, 3A, 2B, various norms for border service, general norms of socialist community. (33:07–33:31)

Christian's voiceover lists these norms, but the film does not explain them further; instead, the camera shows the conscripts being bellowed at and

forced to stand up repeatedly in the canteen. None of the young men resembles the strong, disciplined man that the military's norms prescribe, and Christian jokes that 'I is an other or whatever. We are all others' (33:46–33:50). Christian appears to use this quotation from Arthur Rimbaud, 'je est un autre', to emphasize the chaos in the ranks, but the third-person verb also shows distance from himself and comments on the role of others' demands and assumptions in people's self-image.<sup>70</sup> Christian's reference to Rimbaud also suggests a lack of identification with the men's current roles as border guards. Their negotiations of military and civilian ideals are emphasized by the contrast between the voiceover's description of the men's civilian lives and the image of the men in uniform.

These negotiations of identity, amidst paranoia and anticipation of violence at the border, exert a cultural violence that affects the soldiers in *Drei Stern rot* psychologically. The psychological effects of border service are depicted using absurdity and references to madness. Christian tells Wehmann how he became known as 'Mad Bianco' during military service (43:29), a reference to his surname 'Blank', the 1980s pop group Matt Bianco and to what Christian's comrades call his 'madness' in braving landmines to pick up litter from the death strip. Christian insists to Wehmann: 'There's no one left without a screw loose. Although the fence doesn't have any screws, just rivets' (42:03–42:09).<sup>71</sup> He extends the idiom 'nicht alle Latten im Zaun haben' (*to have a screw loose*; literally, *not to have all the boards in the fence*) to the border itself, suggesting that the pervasive insanity is fostered by a border fence that itself has a screw loose. Nattenklinger exemplifies the brutalizing madness of the border during political education when he brandishes weapons allegedly used by escaping citizens against guards (36:36–38:06). Kaiser artificially enhances the metallic sounds of the weapons against a dramatic diminished seventh chord that heightens the tension. The exaggerated sounds, apparently in Christian's memory, give Nattenklinger's absurd actions a menacing rather than simply humorous character, and show how the absurdity of violence at the border distorts Christian's memories.

The border's pervasive brutality influences conscripts' behaviour, with this cultural violence expressing itself in their readiness to use subjective violence against one another with little provocation. When Christian's leave is cancelled and given to another comrade, Christian tackles the other conscript to the ground and aims his gun at him (48:31–48:57). Another comrade steps in, directs Christian's barrel skywards and a shot goes off. This shot, a release of emotional energy with no fatal consequences, nevertheless requires the conscripts to account for the missing bullet. Their report renders the violence comic rather than threatening: they falsify a story involving an armed woman on horseback who had strayed into the border and had to be alerted to her

danger with a warning shot. Their fantasizing about the imaginary woman produces an absurd amalgamation of clichés of femininity, including her ‘long blonde legs’ (49:49–50:31). Christian’s report uses narrative to negotiate the requirements of ideal military masculinity: his threatening violence towards a comrade and the waste of a bullet go against the military’s requirements of self-control and camaraderie, yet the conscripts play on their role as protectors of femininity to avoid punishment for loss of control in the violent incident. Above all, Christian’s violent outburst shows his inability to withstand the tense environment at the border. As Connell’s analysis suggests, this act of violence centres the portrayal on the limits and imperfections of the military masculine ideal.

The film does not depict severe examples of subjective violence during Christian’s military service. However, his violent fantasies and repeated retelling of his story reflect the psychological impact of the border’s cultural violence, in the form of an omnipresent threat and pressures on his masculinity. Christian’s story as told to Wehmann explains the first incident of violence in *Drei Stern rot*, his attack on his co-star in the opening scene, as a result of the ongoing psychological effects of military service (3:53–4:01). The attack in turn provides the impetus for Christian’s narrative when Wehmann enquires into his relief at killing Nattenklinger. The narrative thus contextualizes Christian’s attack on his co-star as a manifestation of recurring fantasies caused by ongoing psychological pressures that point to the lasting nature of structural and cultural violence at the border.

Christian’s conversation with Wehmann juxtaposes his civilian life with his military service, blurring the separation between them by showing the military’s lasting effects on Christian’s identity. The pressure of the threat of violence at the border and his frustration at his dwindling relationship with Jana manifest themselves as psychological violence. Christian’s story demonstrates his recurring fantasy of killing or injuring Nattenklinger, who has replaced all figures of authority from his childhood and adolescence. Although the sociologist Norbert Elias suggests that fantasies of violence are a common reaction to prohibitions on violence in societies where the state has a monopoly on violent force, Christian’s fantasies are presented as pathological and as the result of the psychological violence he suffered during military service.<sup>72</sup> The fantasies always occur at points in Christian’s narrative when he is at risk of being punished. In his work on adolescent violence, Alan Krohn suggests that such a fascination with perpetrating violence can result from having been a victim of violence in adolescence.<sup>73</sup> Christian’s extreme fantasized violence is coupled with flashes of images of Nattenklinger during military service, suggesting that the fantasies relate to instances where Christian was subject to violent punishments that remain repressed in his narrative to Wehmann.

The absurd goriness of Christian's violent fantasies emphasizes, and perhaps ironizes, the tendency for violence to be distorted in memories and other mediations. Nattenklinger appears several times before it emerges that he was Christian's company commander, and he is violently killed twice. As Christian's sports teacher during a shot-put lesson, Nattenklinger confiscates a Barbie that Christian obtained for Jana from his Western grandmother. Christian retaliates by throwing a shot at Nattenklinger's head, which explodes, with blood spurting everywhere (17:00–17:20). This scene is exaggerated, grotesque and comic, which reduces violence to an implausible spectacle and leads Wehmann to doubt Christian's sincerity. In German, though, the word for 'shot', *Kugel*, also means bullet, relating the scene to Christian's military service. The shot-put scene also establishes an opposition between Nattenklinger and Jana, beginning Christian's juxtaposition of civilian masculinity with his masculinity after conscription. Like Gunter in *Julia lebt*, Christian casts himself as a potentially violent lover and protector, although he is never violent to Jana herself.

In a similar murder fantasy, Christian attempts to impress Jana by writing 'I love you, Jana' on a magazine before it goes to press, which leads to his employer, again as Nattenklinger, being taken away by the police and shot (21:04–21:16). This time, the violence is concealed by the camera, which cuts away. Christian hears the gunshot echoing through the corridors and the camera only shows the body lying in a pool of blood. In these fantasies, Nattenklinger is projected into other positions of authority and Christian imagines violently breaking the rules of his subordination to Nattenklinger in the military hierarchy. The fantasies might be viewed as an externalization of psychological damage caused by the pressure on Christian's sense of self during his border service. This pressure appears to result from a violent culture of masculinity that required soldiers to prove their resilience, self-control and willingness to use aggression.

Hand-to-hand violence against Nattenklinger occurs only once in Christian's fantasies. During training, Christian draws attention to himself by whispering answers to a comrade. When Nattenklinger reprimands him, he imagines himself kicking Nattenklinger to the floor in martial arts combat (39:56–40:23). Christian might have expected to be punished for his indiscretion, and yet his fantasy shows him beating Nattenklinger with no disciplinary consequences. Experiences of subjective violence represent a lacuna in Christian's memories; he does not describe sufficiently serious incidents to explain his grotesquely violent fantasies. However, his martial arts fantasy, more obviously than previous fantasies, takes the place of a punishment in which Christian was presumably the victim. Christian's memory apparently erases his suffering by substituting spectacular but implausible fantasy violence where he is the perpetrator. Consequently, the scene suggests that

Christian's other fantasies stand in for instances where Nattenklinger brutalized him, reversing the victim-perpetrator constellation by compulsively reimagining himself as an active perpetrator of violence. Like Theweleit's 'soldierly men', whose violence reflects a poorly defined ego, Christian tries to reconstruct a biographical self that erases his own victimhood. Even though Christian's fantasies of violence assert his dominance over Nattenklinger, they often expose Christian's vulnerability to cultural and subjective violence.

The film suggests, on the one hand, that Christian's fantasy violence reflects psychological damage associated with the military's masculine culture and the pervasive threat of subjective violence at the border. On the other hand, the fantasies exploit the spectacular nature of violence to repress his victim status. However, having set up an apparently clear relationship between fantasy and diegetic reality, the end of the film disrupts this relationship. Christian takes out a photograph of Jana, whose punk make-up, white skin and spiked blonde hair contrast with the darker hair and skin of Meriam Abbas who plays Jana in the film. Dr Wehmann enigmatically says: 'I imagined her quite differently' (1:24:54–1:24:58). This moment destabilizes the flashbacks by presenting an image of Jana that conflicts with her portrayal in the film so far. In itself, this conceit casts doubt on Christian's fantastical account of his military service. Yet Wehmann's comment goes further, suggesting that she, not Christian, imagined the cinematic images. The assumptions and interpretations that the film has so far invited are instantly destabilized. The photograph of Jana even resembles Wehmann, a coincidence that is not explained in the film. The resemblance is not strong enough to suggest either that she is Jana or that Wehmann is simply a projection of Christian's fantasy, with her improbable name that highlights her professional interest in pain. Nonetheless, the resemblance adds to the destabilizing effect of this scene, mirroring the instability of Christian's self.

With the lines between reality and fantasy finally erased, Wehmann diagnoses Christian with Borderline syndrome, again relating the lack of boundaries of reality or identity to the border (1:25:58). The disorder's name re-emphasizes with wry humour the continuing disruption to Christian's self-image caused by the military culture at the border. The diagnosis adds to the film's saturation of Christian's life with border references: for example, he was born on the 'Day of the Border Guard' on the border between Berlin-Mitte and Berlin-Friedrichshain (8:09–8:15). Christian's mention of these facts and his diagnosis with Borderline syndrome demonstrate that he now interprets his whole life in relation to his border service. Violence is central to this interpretation, with fantasies provoked by his psychological suffering during and after border service extending into his present: when he returns to the film set with Wehmann in the final scene, he imagines Nattenklinger once again and the final frame freezes as he launches himself at him. The final scene therefore



denies any closure, instead creating further ambiguities as to the relationship between diegetic reality, Christian's fantasies and the image on screen.

One of the primary differences between *Julia lebt* and this first post-reunification film about the Border Guard is that soldiers in *Drei Stern rot* make little effort to embody the military's masculine ideal. Christian and his comrades attempt a balancing act between civilian and military masculinities that is reflected in the film's oscillation between civilian and military milieus. Military's ideals are depicted more directly as a source of cultural violence that normalizes the intense psychological pressure at the border and the constant threat of violence. Just as in *Julia lebt* the source of violence becomes more and more abstract, the fantasized violence of *Drei Stern rot* also focuses on Christian's vulnerability, although his vulnerability is primarily psychological and is associated directly, even excessively, with his border service. Christian's negotiations of military ideals continue after reunification as he comes to terms with the border's lasting effects. His therapy session is the impulse for his narrative, but Wehmann's diagnosis operates on an ironic level and therefore avoids pathologizing Christian's suffering. The serious consequences of military service are always presented with distance and black humour, preventing Christian's account from becoming either self-pitying or trivializing and perhaps commenting on the pleasurable and titillating quality of extreme violence on film. Ultimately, the film breaks down boundaries between reality and fantasy, between civilian and military masculinities, and between physical, psychological and cultural violence.

### Urs Egger (Dir.), *An die Grenze* (2007)

Like *Drei Stern rot* and with surprising similarities to *Julia lebt*, *An die Grenze* is interested in abstracting violence at the border to raise questions about violent cultural forces in the Border Guard. This television film portrays lethal violence by an invisible aggressor against border soldiers. *An die Grenze* was not released in cinemas, but premiered on Arte and ZDF in the autumn of 2007. Mary-Elizabeth O'Brien has suggested that television productions on historical themes reach millions more viewers than cinema releases.<sup>74</sup> The viewing figures for *An die Grenze* support this: the film's premieres alone reached 5.81 million viewers.<sup>75</sup> Reviewers praised the film's sober, reflective portrayal of the Border Guard; Sven Felix Kellerhoff even compared it favourably to the depiction of Stasi surveillance in *Das Leben der Anderen*.<sup>76</sup> The film's title uses the accusative, meaning 'to the border', instead of the more usual dative 'at the border', which, critics have suggested, expresses the importance of movement to, from and over the border throughout Egger's film.<sup>77</sup> More interestingly, the title resonates with expressions such as 'an die

Grenzen stoßen' or 'an die Grenze rühren', which describe actions or utterances that 'come up against', test or challenge metaphorical boundaries.

Egger's film emphasizes the physical vulnerability of border soldiers more than *Drei Stern rot* and expands on the theme of violence between soldiers, counteracting the NVA's official image of resilient, comradely socialist soldier personalities. To achieve this effect, Egger uses shots of wounds and other narrative means to enhance the shock value of subjective violence, so that the film comes closer than *Julia lebt* or *Drei Stern rot* to exploiting the potentially pleasurable and spectacular nature of violence. Nevertheless, subjective violence at the border is portrayed in Egger's film as pervasive, destructive and often intangible, suggesting its roots in wider structural and cultural forces.

Kolditz's screenplay describes Alexander Karow's defiant enlistment as a border guard when he learns that his father, a prize-winning chemist, has intervened to exempt him from conscription. Military recruiters even claim they will help Alex realize his goal of becoming a photographer. The film cuts to Alex's arrival at the border and is punctuated by violence, including the death of two conscripts shot by a deserter, the suicide of the political officer Hauptmann Dobbs, and the hostility and violence between Alex and an older soldier named Kerner. Violent episodes are interspersed with depictions of Alex's relationship with a local farmer, Christine. With a camera given to him by Christine, Alex photographs the landscape and border defences, particularly the new spring guns, devices mounted on the fence that fire automatically when a wire is triggered. Christine's brother, Knut, finds a photo of a spring gun and sends it to the FRG's new permanent representation to the GDR. To escape punishment, Knut and Christine have to flee the country and Alex arranges for them to escape over the border.

As in *Julia lebt*, *An die Grenze* introduces violence in a prologue: Alex aims a gun at an escaping man, an image that freezes as figures are displayed for the number of dead at the border.<sup>78</sup> The next scene cuts back to Alex at the local military command office declaring his readiness to shoot (3:31–4:07). Despite this opening, Alex, like Gunter and Christian, is depicted primarily as a victim of violence in the film as a whole. Violence has two primary effects on Alex's masculinity during military service. First, witnessing violence reinforces Alex's resistance to the military's ideals, so that he is caught between civilian values, associated with the nonmilitary setting of his relationship with Christine, and the military's ideal imposed through chores and patrols. Second, Alex falls victim to violence by EKs that enforces obedience and subordination, while also contradicting values of camaraderie and self-control and drawing attention to masculinities deemed weak or incompatible with the military hierarchy, just as Connell has suggested.

Like Gunter, Alex sustains an injury and his scar is presented as a badge of masculinity that demonstrates his heroism. Yet Alex gains his scar not

in striving to achieve ideal military masculinity in the way Kaganovsky describes, but in an attack by Christine. After meeting her at a bar, Alex follows her into the woods, apparently out of curiosity rather than aggression. Mistaking him for Kerner, who is infatuated with her, she hits him with a tree branch. Christine is outside the frame when she hits Alex, but the blow itself is shown centre-screen (28:44). Alex's scar from this attack, like Gunter's, displays his vulnerability when desire causes him to transgress military regulations by sneaking off to follow Christine. Alex later remarks that the Border Guard would be unimpressed that he was attacked by a woman, revealing the dependence of ideal military masculinity on stereotypes of feminine weakness. However, Christine later admires the heroic connotations of the scar, albeit ironically: 'There'll be a nice bruise. The girls will think you're a hero' (46:42–46:50). Here, the gender dynamics of violence described by Wolfgram are reversed. Christine is never a passive victim of the border: she is resilient and ready to use violence in self-defence when she feels threatened. Alex, by contrast, is established as a relatively passive victim of subjective violence and of the cultural violence of the border environment that legitimizes it.

In its depiction of the abusive EK movement, *An die Grenze* focuses more than the two earlier films on subjective violence between soldiers. In line with Connell's argument, such incidents are shown to punish, but also draw attention to conscripts who violate the acceptable limits of the military's ideals. *An die Grenze* shows Kerner and fellow EKs bullying Alex and his cohort. In a manner reminiscent of Theweleit's analysis of beatings among 'soldierly men', Kerner claims that such beatings pass on the violence that he experienced as a new conscript, saying sardonically: 'Socialism: equal rights for all' (52:30–52:33). His attitude corresponds with research into hazing in military training, which has confirmed that many former victims believe hazing to be important for eliminating those unfit for the military.<sup>79</sup> Although Kerner's violence clearly transgresses the military's emphasis on control and camaraderie, he emphasizes its importance in constructing his own and others' masculinities. More explicitly than in the last two films, then, Egger relates subjective violence directly to the culture of masculinity in the Border Guard.

The most disturbing incident of such violence befalls Alex in his dormitory (1:23:12–1:25:26). Alex returns to find Kerner and other EKs drinking on the bunks. They pin Alex down, put a gas mask on him and demand that he sing to exacerbate the difficulties in breathing through the mask.<sup>80</sup> When he refuses, they hold the mask's air intake in cigarette ash and kick him to force him to inhale. When Alex's roommate enters, Kerner stops and dismisses his actions ironically as 'socialist education [*Erziehung*]'. Kerner implies that the violence is a response to privileges Alex receives from his



**Figure 2.2** Light and camera angles increase Alex's vulnerability in *An die Grenze* (2007). © Colonia Media.

father's interventions, such as extra leave. However, this scene immediately follows one of Alex's rendezvous with Christine, suggesting through editing that Kerner's violence stems from jealousy of Alex's romantic success or from his own uncontrolled desires. Kerner's violence asserts a counter-hierarchy to military rank, which nevertheless still demands obedience, strength and the ability to withstand violence. Instead, the pain in Alex's face, intensified by the harsh light in the final close-up of him sobbing and spluttering on the floor, shows that he is vulnerable and exposed (1:25:22; see Figure 2.2). By filming the close-up at ground level and directing a white light directly downwards at Alex, the film intensifies his suffering, drawing attention to his victim status and deviation from the military's masculine ideals.

Scenes of violence in the barracks contrast with Alex's idyllic meetings with Christine in the woods, and the film frequently associates violence with the contrast between the border and its picturesque rural surroundings. In stark contrast to the naturalization of the border in *Julia lebt*, Egger's lingering shots of countryside and wildlife render the border alien and artificial, in line with post-reunification debates emphasizing the illegitimacy of the border regime.<sup>81</sup> The film's first casualty emphasizes the border's unnatural status. Alex and his comrade Gappa, an EK who often protects him from Kerner, hear a shot while on duty (30:42). They find a stag, which has tripped a spring gun and is lying bloodied and dying up against the fence. The camera alternates in close-up between the stag dying and Alex's expression as he chokes back tears (31:06–31:39). Thus, the pervasive cultural violence in the Border Guard emerges through images of the violation of nature, in contrast to Kaiser's use of madness for the same purposes in *Drei Stern rot*. The spring guns function as a symbol of this inhumane atmosphere and the mechanized, impersonal brutality that it legitimizes. The storyline with the spring guns seems to respond to the final border guard trial in 2004, in which four men were convicted of conspiracy to murder and attempted murder in five cases of civilians being shot by spring guns.<sup>82</sup> The impersonality of these weapons in *An die Grenze* directs focus to

the indirect nature of such a murder, showing lethal subjective violence as a feature of an oppressive, mechanized environment shaped by a wide variety of structural and cultural violence.

Alex never commits lethal violence: when the scene from the prologue returns and Alex aims menacingly at Knut, Christine persuades Alex to let them escape. The film does not show border soldiers using violence against escaping civilians; instead, it focuses on lethal violence directed at soldiers. Like the foreshadowing of Gunter's shooting in *Julia lebt*, suspense and the expectation of violence are created in *An die Grenze* when, referencing the case of Werner Weinhold, an armed deserter is said to be approaching the border and Alex's company is put on alert. When Gappa's patrol partner gets cramp, he stands up and shots ring out, suggesting that he is killed (1:03:15). The sudden sound is enhanced by an abrupt cut to Alex and Kerner hearing the shots. They find Gappa's partner with a bloody wound in his back and Gappa lies dead next to him (1:03:55–1:04:56). Unlike the transcendence suggested by Gunter's dead but unscathed body, the physical destruction shown in *An die Grenze* contests the cultural violence of the NVA's ideals that legitimized such sacrifice. Alex responds with anger and frustration, screaming and spraying his rounds towards the fence, an image which resonates with Theweleit's concept of violence as a libidinal release and with similar scenes in films such as *Jarhead*.<sup>83</sup> In the absence of any identifiable attacker, Alex directs violence at the border as the abstract source of lethal violence. The deaths are then followed by a depressed silence in barracks (1:05:06–1:05:35). Subjective violence here does not reinforce the boundaries of ideal military masculinity, but threatens them, showing how conscripts' masculinities are defined by grief, fear, frustration and anger.

The psychological consequences of cultural violence at the border are more drastic in *An die Grenze* than *Drei Stern rot* and manifest themselves in lethal subjective violence. From his window, Hauptmann Dobbs sees his wife kissing Hauptfeldwebel Kramm. Throughout the film, Dobbs is visibly irritated by rumours of his wife's infidelity, as well as by a lack of respect from conscripts that only intensifies following the two deaths. When he makes eye contact with his wife as she embraces Kramm, Dobbs turns back into his room and shoots himself (1:15:12–1:15:32). The moment of violence is again concealed as the camera cuts to Alex's surprise when a shot rings out. The viewer sees only the blood-spattered walls when Alex and his comrades are forced to clean Dobbs's office (1:15:46–1:17:18). Dobbs's suicide is a rare portrayal of a common phenomenon, although it is neither possible nor ethical to generalize about the causes and significance of suicides in the NVA.<sup>84</sup> In Dobbs's specific fictional case, although presented as a reaction to his wife's infidelity, his suicide draws attention to his loss of control. The film suggests that his sense of self is violated, not just by his emotional suffering,

but also by his inability to maintain order and respect. His suicide is thus related in part to the military's cultural violence; in this case, the expectations on officers as representatives of the NVA's ideals.

In *An die Grenze*, the cultural violence of ideal military masculinity and the pressure of the constant threat of violence express themselves in stark visualizations of subjective violence. Egger's cinematography takes a more vivid and direct approach to representing these violent incidents than *Julia lebt* or *Drei Stern rot*. Alex's beatings are shown on screen, for example, as is the death of the stag, with lighting, sound, camera and editing being used to enhance the shock of the image. The wounds of the dead conscripts and the gore following Dobbs's suicide are also depicted more graphically than the idealized images in *Julia lebt* or the cartoonish fantasy violence in *Drei Stern rot*. *An die Grenze* shows vulnerable bodies exploited by the GDR border regime in the name of a culturally violent masculine ideal. Egger's realist aesthetic uses gore and stark images of violence to encourage sympathy with Alex and his comrades. However, such images could easily become pleasurable and the film as a whole could be cathartic, given that it ends with Christine and Knut's safe escape and gives no impression of the consequences of Alex's actions. Most problematically, the film shifts its focus away from the disproportionate number of civilian deaths at the border in favour of depicting the violence suffered by Border Guard soldiers. Nonetheless, the viewer's discomfort with Egger's stark and often vivid depictions of violence could also encourage critical reflection on the wider context of violence at the border: the pervasive brutality of the border appears to signal structural and cultural violence associated with the military's masculine ideal.

## Conclusion

Although the representation of cultural violence differs between the films, they challenge Žižek's assertion that subjective violence necessarily conceals more serious and insidious forms of violence. These films suggest that narrative techniques and images of subjective violence, when clearly associated with cultures and structures, can make structural and cultural violence visible *as* violence. In these films, this approach highlights a generalized culture of violence that gives little attention to the specific suffering of hundreds of civilian victims of the border regime, by far the largest group of those killed. Unsurprisingly, the motivation differs between *Julia lebt* and the post-reunification works. The presentation of border soldiers as victims in *Julia lebt* corresponds with rhetoric emphasizing the border's defensive nature, and control is shown to be preferable to violence in an ideal border guard. By

contrast, in *An die Grenze*, as in *Drei Stern rot*, military violence is rendered illegitimate in light of the violence done to the GDR's own citizens and conscripts.

These filmmakers and screenwriters show ideals of masculinity in the Border Guard supporting, entrenching and legitimizing a prevailing culture of violence and brutality that went largely unchallenged. Each film shows the military's masculine ideals to some extent as a form of cultural violence that normalizes the border regime and the violent abuse of conscripts. Ideals of masculinity impose hierarchies and legitimize punishments and beatings to reinforce them. The emphasis on bravery, strength and skill in using weapons further normalizes the idea that conscripts should be exposed to lethal violence and constantly threatened with the imminent potential of an attack. The pressure on soldiers to conform is a feature of all three films. Whereas *Julia lebt* presents the socialist soldier personality in aspirational terms that Gunter simply cannot live up to, *Drei Stern rot* and *An die Grenze* show soldiers in more ambivalent relationships to the NVA's masculine ideals, often focusing on avoiding punishment or on competition with other soldiers more than on ideal constructions of masculinity.

In *An die Grenze*, all violence manifests itself visually as acts of subjective violence, even though in cases such as Dobbs's suicide, the structural pressures of the military hierarchy and the cultural force of the socialist soldier personality that demands order and control are important motivating factors for violent acts. The film's representation of violence is deliberately graphic, presumably designed to shock viewers into considering the abuses of the border regime, although this strategy risks reducing violence to its shock value as spectacle. *Julia lebt* focuses less on acts of violence and more on its physical consequences, with the moment of violence itself generally obscured or absent. Violence is even more abstract in *Drei Stern rot*, which blurs the lines between memories and fantasies, so that all acts of subjective violence appear as externalizations of psychological damage caused by the pressures and hardships of military service. Kaiser depicts violence in exaggerated and stylized ways, which invite a critical engagement with the structural and cultural forms of violence that cause and legitimize the psychological damage done to Christian.

Although the films' approaches to violence are substantially different, they relate it to the cultural violence of the military ideal in three ways, which recall Connell's discussion of violence with which I began. First, violence is used to establish the boundaries of ideal military masculinity. Soldiers use subjective violence to assert dominance over one another and to develop strength and endurance, as Theweleit described in his examples from Freikorps literature. Similarly, military masculinities are distinguished from civilian masculinities through training in the obedient and measured use of

violence. Second, violence can be used on screen to disrupt the boundaries of ideal military masculinity, particularly by showing the fragility of camaraderie and of 'socialist relationships' between soldiers and by revealing the vulnerability of the soldierly body. Third, acts of violence are used to draw attention to the importance of masculinities that violate these limits. The power and coherence of the ideal itself are potentially destabilized by exposing its unattainable and constructed nature in this way, just as Silverman shows Fassbinder's films destabilizing the dominant fiction by revealing its contingency. Thus, subjective violence not only exposes cultural violence that otherwise remains hidden, as Žižek and Galtung suggest. Violence in the military also highlights moments of imperfection, violation and challenge within the military's gender order, resulting in a more complex picture of negotiations of gender in the GDR.

Two aspects of masculinities can be identified here that are closely associated with outbursts of subjective violence, and the two remaining parts of this book investigate each of these aspects in detail. The construction of masculinity through embodied performances as part of the military's repetitive training regime appears to be particularly tied to violent methods. Sara Ahmed has argued, building on Judith Butler's work, that 'the labor of such repetition disappears through labor: if we work hard at something, then it seems "effortless"'.<sup>85</sup> Violence in these films reveals not only the effort of masculinities, but also the unattainable and even damaging nature of ideals like the socialist soldier personality. The centrality of wounds and scars in *Julia lebt* and *An die Grenze* reveals the tensions in these representations between bodies' physical vulnerability and the requirement that they display a hard, invincible exterior. At the same time, these films present violence as part of a military masculine ideal that is theatrical and performed rather than natural or essential. For example, exaggerated violent fantasies in *Drei Stern rot* parody the assertion of hegemonic masculinities through violence and appear to be caused by violent punishment during training. The vulnerability and theatricality of soldiers' embodied performances of masculinity are the focus of Part II.

The second aspect of masculinity that *Julia lebt*, *Drei Stern rot* and *An die Grenze* relate to acts of violence is no less embodied, but more interiorized: namely, emotions and desires. Displays of emotion appear incompatible with ideal military masculinity in all three films. *Drei Stern rot* describes a pervasive fear of violence during border service that disrupts Christian's sense of self, while Alex responds to the tension at the border in *An die Grenze* with a violent outburst of frustration. Such emotions are carefully regulated in *Julia lebt*: when Gunter slaps Penny, he punishes her for exaggerated displays of emotions, and her development at the end suggests the value of a steely resolve. Regulation of emotions plays an important role in the two



post-reunification films too, with psychological distress and shame placed in the context of prohibitions on certain feelings and emotions in military contexts. Desire also troubles ideal military masculinity in all three works. Gunter's love for Penny and Li leads to increasing disobedience and ultimately to a form of censure when the enemy shoots 'at his love'. Christian's pursuit of Jana is a crucial part of his negotiation between civilian and ideal military roles, while Alex's feelings for Christine cause him to transgress against military order by sneaking out and even facilitating Knut and Christine's escape. Part III explores emotions and desire, which are essential for understanding military masculinities, even though military ideals so often suppress and sideline them.

Although the films analysed here use violence to denaturalize and highlight the limits of ideal masculinities in the Border Guard, none is optimistic about the potential for such ideals to be subverted. In the case of *Julia lebt*, which aims to bolster the socialist soldier personality, Gunter dies a martyr to his attempts to attain this ideal. *Drei Stern rot* ends cyclically, with Christian still obsessed by the figure of Nattenklinger. And *An die Grenze* ends before we see the inevitable violent punishment that would await Alex once Christine and Knut's escape is discovered. However, these works do suggest that masculinities that challenge or contradict the military's ideals are at the centre of soldiers' experiences of military service, destabilizing and contesting the value of those ideals in the process. Such works cast new light on the complex relations in GDR society between masculinity and femininity and among masculinities. Unattainable gender ideals were not limited to the military: gender ideals were promoted through a range of institutions, which cemented the association between masculinity and violence early on, perhaps as early as the war games played by children in the Young Pioneers.<sup>86</sup> The military example, where gender ideals are enforced explicitly, offers an unusually clear demonstration of the cultural violence that accompanied these ideals. However, violence centres representations of the Border Guard on soldiers' imperfect embodiments of gender norms, so that weak, vulnerable or emotional masculinities become essential to understanding the place of gender in GDR institutions.

## Notes

1. J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (London: Granta, 1999), 43.
2. Connell, *Masculinities*, 213.
3. *Ibid.*, 214.
4. *Ibid.*, 83.

5. E.g. H. Nuwer, 'Military Hazing', in H. Nuwer (ed.), *The Hazing Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 141–46; R. Branche and F. Virgili (eds), *Rape in Wartime* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); A. Kronsell and E. Svedberg (eds), *Making Gender, Making War: Violence, Military and Peacekeeping Practices* (New York: Routledge, 2012); F.W. Twine, *Girls with Guns: Firearms, Feminism and Militarism* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
6. Connell, *Masculinities*, 84.
7. Wenzke, *Ulbrichts Soldaten*, 36–37.
8. Wenzke, *Die NVA*, 9; M. Wilke, R. Gutsche and M. Kubina, 'Die SED-Führung und die Unterdrückung der polnischen Oppositionsbewegung 1980/81', *German Studies Review* 17 (1994), 105–52 (at 121–33); N. Leonhard, *Integration und Gedächtnis: NVA-Offiziere in vereinigten Deutschland* (Cologne: Halem, 2017), 109–12.
9. J. Fuchs, *Fassonschnitt* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1984). See my discussion of vulnerability in Chapter 3.
10. F. Vogel (dir.), *Julia lebt* (DEFA, 1963); O. Kaiser (dir.), *Drei Stern rot* (Epix, 2001); U. Egger (dir.), *An die Grenze* (Colonia, 2007).
11. J. Galtung, 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research', *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (1969), 167–91.
12. J. Galtung, 'Cultural Violence', *Journal of Peace Research* 27 (1990), 291–305.
13. *Ibid.*, 296.
14. On the complexity of masculine hierarchies in the military, see Higate, "Soft Clerks".
15. S. Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London: Profile, 2008), 1.
16. *Ibid.*, 55.
17. *Ibid.*, 10.
18. K. Solomon, 'The Spectacle of War and the Specter of "The Horror"', *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 35(1) (2007), 22–31; F.F. Coppola (dir.), *Apocalypse Now* (United Artists, 1979).
19. P. Virilio, *Guerre et cinéma* (Paris: Etoile, 1984).
20. L. Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16(3) (1975), 6–18.
21. S. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003), 105 and 117.
22. Žižek, *Violence*, 55.
23. Berghahn, *Hollywood behind the Wall*, 134–46; W. Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR: Erweiterte Neuauflage* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1996; repr. Berlin: Aufbau, 2007), 55–57.
24. Lapp, 'Die Grenztruppen', 225–28.
25. Debates remain heated over the exact numbers of victims of the border regime, sometimes at the price of reflection on personal tragedies and lived experiences, but there is widespread agreement that civilians constituted the overwhelming majority. See H.-H. Hertle and M. Nooke, *The Victims at the Berlin Wall 1961–1989: A Biographical Handbook* (Berlin: Links, 2011); G. Probst, 'Grüters distanziert sich von Studie zu Grenztoten', *Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg*, 10 April 2019. Retrieved 30 May 2019 from <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2019/04/gruetters-kulturstaatsministerin-studie-mauertote-ddr-schiessbefehl-grenze.html>; Forschungsverbund SED-Staat, 'Neue Zahlen von der Staatsministerin', *Freie Universität*, 11 April 2019. Retrieved 30 May 2019 from <https://www.fu-berlin.de/sites/fsed/aktuelles/190411Gruetters.html>.
26. Fenemore, *Sex*, 127.
27. C. Funke, 'Julia lebt', *Filmspiegel*, 15 November 1963.
28. E.g. H. Knietzsch, 'Julia lebt', *Neues Deutschland*, 18 October 1963.

29. E.g. G.A., 'Der Schlußakkord fehlt', *Neuer Weg*, 7 October 1963; G. Sobe, 'Julia lebt: Ein DEFA-Film', *Berliner Zeitung*, 23 October 1963; M. Schröder, 'Ein Romeo ohne Rückgrat', *Junge Welt*, 24 October 1963, 5.
30. Vogel, *Julia lebt*, 1:16–1:18: hereinafter referenced in the text. 'Auf ihn wurde geschossen'.
31. Most notably H. Thiel (dir.), *Der Kinnhaken (The Punch to the Jaw)* (DEFA, 1962). See M.A. Wolfgram, 'Gendered Border Crossings: The Films of Division in Divided Germany', *symploke* 15 (2007), 152–69.
32. See Ahonen, *Death at the Berlin Wall*, 65–68.
33. Berlin, Bundesarchiv (BArch), DR 117/3803, *Morgen vielleicht*, draft screenplay by K. Schwalbe, M. Freitag and J. Nestler, 10 May 1962.
34. BArch, DR 117/3801, *Und Julia lebt*, screenplay I by K. Schwalbe, M. Freitag and J. Nestler, 7 July 1962.
35. Ahonen, *Death at the Berlin Wall*, 74.
36. *Ibid.*, 75–76.
37. Reviewers at the time highlighted this connection, e.g. R. Rehahn, 'Julia lebt: Ein DEFA-Film, über den man streiten kann', *Wochenpost*, 26 October 1963.
38. Patrick Major describes the hurried fortification of the border in 1961: *Behind the Berlin Wall: East Germany and the Frontiers of Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 149.
39. BStU, MfS HA I/17311, daily reports of the Border Guard, 1984.
40. C.D. Ross, "'Wird der Frieden nicht an der Werkbank verteidigt?'" Die Soldatenwerbung in der DDR in den 50er und frühen 60er Jahren', in Ehlert and Rogg, *Militär, Staat und Gesellschaft*, 439–57 (at 450).
41. C. Eifler, "'Ewig unreif'": Geschlechtsrollenklischees in der *Armeerundschau*', in S. Barck, M. Langermann and S. Lokatis (eds), *Zwischen 'Mosaik' und 'Einheit': Zeitschriften in der DDR* (Berlin: Links, 1999), 180–88 (at 185).
42. Wolfgram, 'Gendered Border Crossings', 154.
43. *Ibid.*, 157.
44. K. Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 1977–78).
45. W. Reich, *Charakteranalyse: Technik und Grundlagen für studierende und praktizierende Analytiker* (Vienna: The Author, 1933), 92. See also Chapter 5.
46. K. Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, 2 vols, trans. by E. Carter and C. Turner in collaboration with S. Conway (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), vol. 2, 164 (translation amended); Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, vol. 2, 164.
47. *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins*, 57.
48. Eifler, "'...es schützt Dich'", 176.
49. BArch, DR 117/3803, *Morgen vielleicht*, 64–65.
50. Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade*, 3–7.
51. See V. Burr and J. Hearn (eds), *Sex, Violence and the Body: The Erotics of Wounding* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); B.J. Steele, "'The Damage Was Permanent, There Would Always Be Scars': Vulnerability and Accountability in a Post-rational World', in A.R. Beattie and K. Schick (eds), *The Vulnerable Subject: Beyond Rationalism in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 113–32 (at 117–18).
52. On emotions and military masculinity, see Chapter 5.
53. Knietzsch, 'Julia lebt'.
54. BArch, DR 117/25738, memo on the screening of the rough cut of *Und Julia lebt*, 11 June 1963.
55. *Ibid.*

56. *Julia lebt* takes up a discussion of love under socialism being threatened by Western violence that Vogel had also addressed in ... *und deine Liebe auch* (DEFA, 1962).
57. BArch, DR 117/25738, 'Publikumswirkung des Filmes "Julia lebt"', 7 January 1964, fol. 7.
58. Vogel, ... *und deine Liebe auch*.
59. K. Wolf (dir.), *Der geteilte Himmel* (DEFA, 1964); K. Carpentier, U. Thein, F. Vogel and G. Klein (dirs), *Geschichten jener Nacht* (DEFA, 1967); R. Gräf (dir.), *Die Flucht* (DEFA, 1977).
60. B. Fürneisen (dir.), *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla: Eine Geschichte aus dem Jahre 1956* (DEFA, 1989). See my discussion of this film in Chapter 4.
61. Winger and Winger, *Deutschland 86*, Episode 7.
62. J. Ruzicka (dir.), *Der Mauerschütze* (ARTE/NDR, 2010).
63. R. Frenkel, 'Die DDR vor Gericht', *Die Zeit*, 21 January 1994. See Ahonen's discussion in *Death at the Berlin Wall*, 256–57.
64. M. Zschiek, 'Schießbefehl und Schikane', *Potsdamer Neuste Nachrichten*, 23 June 2011. See P. Ahonen, 'The Curious Case of Werner Weinhold: Escape, Death, and Contested Legitimacy at the German-German Border', *Central European History* 45 (2012), 79–101.
65. Kaiser, *Drei Stern rot*: hereinafter referenced in the text.
66. See H. Jancke (dir.), *Grenze: Lebensabschnitt Todesstreifen* (Salzgeber, 2003).
67. This device was previously used in W. Luderer (dir.), *Der Reserveheld* (DEFA, 1965); see Chapter 3.
68. M. Mund, 'Überall Nattenklingers', *Neues Deutschland*, 23 May 2002; T. Wahl, 'Liebe am Minenfeld', *Berliner Zeitung*, 7 September 2007.
69. M. Kohler, 'Nachts sind alle Zäune grau', *Berliner Zeitung*, 23 May 2002; C. Peitz, 'Immer wieder Nattenklinger', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 25 May 2002.
70. A. Rimbaud, letter to G. Izambard, 13 May 1871, in R. de Renéville and J. Mouquet (eds), *Arthur Rimbaud: Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), 267–68 (at 268).
71. 'Es gibt keinen, der noch alle Latten im Zaun hat. Obwohl der Zaun ja keine Latten hat, sondern Drähte.'
72. N. Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*, 2 vols (Basel: Falken, 1939), vol. 2, 330–32.
73. A. Krohn, 'The Anatomy of Adolescent Violence', *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society* 5 (2000), 212–16 (at 214).
74. M.-E. O'Brien, *Post-Wall German Cinema and National History: Utopianism and Dissent* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012), 149–50.
75. Arte, 7 September 2007, 20.40, 710,000 viewers (2.6% share); ZDF, 29 October 2007, 20.15, 5.1 million viewers (15.3% share): figures provided by the ZDF press department.
76. S.F. Kellerhoff, 'Das Leben der Anderen an der Mauer', *Die Welt*, 7 September 2007.
77. Wahl, 'Liebe'; O'Brien, *Post-Wall German Cinema*, 153.
78. Egger, *An die Grenze*, 0:54–2:08: hereinafter referenced in the text.
79. J. Pershing, 'Men and Women's Experiences with Hazing in a Male-Dominated Elite Military Institution', *Men and Masculinities* 8 (2006), 470–92.
80. For closer analysis of the effects of the NVA's gas suits, see Chapter 3.
81. See Lapp, 'Verwirrung um den "Schießbefehl"'
82. E. Frenzel, 'Die Grenze des Rechtsstaats', *Spiegel Online*, 7 November 2014. Retrieved 30 May 2019 from <http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/mauerschuetzen-prozesse-brachten-den-rechtsstaat-an-seine-grenzen-a-1000949.html>.

83. Mendes, *Jarhead*, 1:46:10–1:49:00.
84. J. Stadt, 'Suicide in den DDR-Grenztruppen', *Zeitschrift des Forschungsverbundes SED-Staat* 41 (2017), 146–53.
85. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 56.
86. Bickford, 'The Militarization of Masculinity', 160.