



COMRADES

IN ARMS

MILITARY MASCULINITIES

IN EAST GERMAN CULTURE

TOM SMITH

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ABBREVIATIONS

- BArch: Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde – the German Federal Archives.
- BStU: Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin – the federal body responsible for the archive of the former Ministry for State Security.
- DEFA: Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft – the East German state film studios.
- EK: *Entlassungskandidat* – literally ‘candidate for dismissal’, the designation for a soldier in the final six months of military service.
- FDJ: Freie Deutsche Jugend – ‘Free German Youth’, the official youth organization of the East German state.
- FKK: *Freikörperkultur* – literally ‘free body culture’, a term for naturism or nudism most associated with nude beaches, especially in the former East Germany.
- FRG: Federal Republic of Germany, also known as West Germany.
- GDR: German Democratic Republic, also known as East Germany.
- HHA: S. Wolter. *Hinterm Horizont allein – Der ‘Prinz’ von Prora: Erfahrungen eines NVA-Bausoldaten* [Alone beyond the Horizon – The ‘Prince’ of Prora: Experiences of an NVA Construction Soldier]. Halle: Projekte, 2005.
- KVP: Kasernierte Volkspolizei – literally ‘Garrisoned People’s Police’, the militarized branch of the East German police, which was converted into a standing army in 1956.
- MfS: Ministry for State Security – alternative (more bureaucratic) abbreviation for the East German security services.
- NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization – the defence alliance of Western European and North American powers, established in 1949.
- NCO: Noncommissioned Officer – noncommissioned soldier in leadership or command position, usually a sergeant or sergeant major. The German word ‘Unteroffizier’ is also a rank, but a more senior ‘Feldwebel’ is also an NCO.
- NL: I. Schulze. *Neue Leben: Die Jugend Enrico Türmers in Briefen und Prosa herausgegeben, kommentiert und mit einem Vorwort versehen von Ingo Schulze*

[*New Lives: Enrico TÜRmer's Youth in Letters and Prose Edited, Commented and with a Foreword by Ingo Schulze*]. Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2005.

NVA: Nationale Volksarmee – the ‘National People’s Army’, the umbrella term for the GDR’s armed forces, founded in 1956.

NVA: L. Haußmann (dir.). *NVA*. Universum, 2005.

SED: Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands – the ‘Socialist Unity Party of Germany’, the ruling East German party.

Stasi: Staatssicherheitsdienst – a common nickname for the GDR’s Ministry for State Security.

ZTH: B. Fürneisen (dir.). *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla: Eine Geschichte aus dem Jahre 1956* [*To Hell with Harbolla: A Tale of 1956*]. DEFA, 1989.

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INTRODUCTION



In 1988, at the border between East and West Germany, military officers working for the Ministry for State Security (Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, MfS or Stasi) compiled a dossier of single officers aged twenty-eight and over in the East German Border Command South. The documents detail twenty-five soldiers' personal lives: their relationship histories, appearance, hobbies and interests. The dossier's aim is to explain why these soldiers are single:

Approaches to women unsuccessful for various reasons: 4 officers

Unattractive to women: 2 officers

Negative experiences with former partners that have caused reluctance towards new relationships: 3 officers.¹

The document groups all twenty-five officers in this way, before adding: 'no sexually abnormal behaviours by any of the 25 single officers, including signs of homosexuality, were identified'.² The investigations appear motivated by concern about homosexuality in the ranks, but also by a preoccupation with men who deviate from the military's image of masculinity in other ways. This book explores that preoccupation, and this dossier encapsulates many of my arguments about East German masculinity. The document shows the National People's Army (Nationale Volksarmee or NVA) actively seeking to understand soldiers' complex and individual masculinities, with the army command troubled by and suspicious of even minor deviations from its soldierly ideals. It demonstrates that the NVA was not only concerned with

shaping soldiers' bodies through exercises and drill; it also sought to understand, categorize and influence members' feelings and desires. Above all, it shows that masculinities that did not fit easily within military norms were not marginal anomalies. The interplay between disruptive military masculinities and institutional norms sustained investigations like the above, shaped the NVA's self-presentation and had lasting effects on soldiers' identities.

This book analyses portrayals of East German soldiers in film and literature since the introduction of conscription in 1962. By examining a diverse corpus of works, from officially sanctioned publications to literature by an exiled ex-soldier, comic films to post-reunification life-writing, I investigate the variety of identities presented in images of the NVA. These works present military masculinities not as norms imposed from above, but as individually embodied practices negotiated by soldiers alone and collectively. Literature and film suggest that gender, and especially masculinity, was essential to East German citizens' interactions with institutions and the state. Just as individuals' negotiations of gender shaped state institutions, so too did these environments affect citizens' gender identities in lasting ways, prompting continuing engagement with East German institutions long after the state's dissolution in 1990. By centring analysis on disruptive and even queer masculinities, we can gain new understandings of gender in East German society and military organizations.

The East German example also has important implications for our understanding of masculinity in contemporary society, and especially the impact of masculine ideals and institutional structures. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, images of masculine bodies in advertising, magazines and social media are more prevalent and noticeably more muscular than in previous decades. In 2014, Mark Simpson identified a shift from the age of the 'metrosexual' to that of the 'spornosexual', a body type that merges professional sports with pornography.³ Male bodies in the 2010s have been on display topless, open-shirted or in clothes that hint less than coyly at the musculature beneath. The spornosexual body is also linked with less normative masculinities, showing the pervasiveness of this ideal, but also gesturing to potentially queer dynamics that underpin this fascination with hardened masculine bodies. In Luca Guadagnino's blockbuster *Call Me by Your Name* (2017), for example, Armie Hammer plays the gay Jewish American Oliver as a 1980s-revival pin up in a distinctly contemporary muscled, open-shirted mode and in infamously revealing shorts.⁴ Alongside these more visibly muscled masculine bodies, news coverage has also focused on men's mental health and the punishing effects not just of body-image standards, but also of wider societal shifts.⁵ Since the financial crisis of 2008, people of all genders have been exposed to precarity and increased competition in education and the workplace. Austerity regimes and constitutional upheavals have placed

social and political institutions under strain, with these pressures mirrored in the insecurity and intense self-scrutiny of contemporary subjects. These trends are by no means most severe in their impact on men; standards of masculinity have detrimental effects across what Raewyn Connell terms the 'gender order'.⁶ This impact is not merely abstract. Masculinity shapes the assumptions and expectations of institutions, as well as our interactions with institutional cultures from schools and the workplace to job centres and medical services.⁷ The more we understand of the relationship between standards of masculinity, institutions and the lives of individuals, the better we can make sense of inequalities in contemporary society.

Literature and film depicting the German Democratic Republic (GDR) have important roles to play in conceptualizing the relationship between the individual self, cultures of masculinity and the institutions that sustain them. Around the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 2009, GDR scholars began asking about the relevance of their work so long after the state's collapse.⁸ Ten years later, amid renewed scholarly and popular interest in East Germany across the world, the question is different: the GDR clearly speaks to our contemporary concerns, but how and why? Recent representations of East Germany have flourished: from the television series *Deutschland 83* and *Deutschland 86* (2015–18), which have been especially successful outside the German-speaking world, or novels like Simon Urban's *Plan D* (2011) and David Young's *Stasi Child* (2015), to Hollywood blockbusters like *Bridge of Spies* (2015) and *Atomic Blonde* (2017).⁹ The works in this transnational reimagining of East Germany do not always fit within other trends in post-GDR film and literature. They move away from autobiographical or family narratives into the extravagantly fantastical, and are interested in the seediness or retro potential of 1980s East Berlin rather than historical fidelity. Yet they are linked with other portrayals of the GDR by their interest in the interplay between repressive institutions, cultural norms and ideals, and individual values and agency. It is no accident that spy films and crime thrillers have proliferated: at a time when concepts of masculinity are debated so openly, literature and film invent characters who negotiate the masculine-dominated institutions involved in espionage, policing, international relations and defence.

Representations of East German soldiers thus offer a compelling model for exploring the relationship between individual subjectivities and wider socio-political institutions. Military institutions are closely connected to a society's ideals of masculinity. Where conscription is the norm, as it was for the overwhelming majority of young East German men, military service highlights the negotiations required to navigate conflicting personal, institutional and societal values and expectations. For many men, military service may be the only time in their lives that they become conscious of their practice of

masculinity. Literary and filmic depictions of East German military masculinities can therefore reveal much about how we conceive of, regulate, imagine and invest in certain versions of masculinity.

Of the institutions that feature in the recent revival of portrayals of the GDR, the Stasi has received substantial and illuminating scholarly attention.¹⁰ Soldiers have been largely overlooked, despite their prominence in literary, filmic and even scholarly works. The NVA was considered the Warsaw Pact's most efficient army after the Red Army, even by its West German adversaries, and conscription made it part of almost all young men's lives.¹¹ It was involved in the GDR's most repressive episodes, from the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 to the policing of protests in the autumn of 1989.¹² Yet the wider implications of the NVA's culture of masculinity for GDR and contemporary societies have yet to be fully explored. While soldiers do stand as 'the sign, the representation of the state' in some works, to use Andrew Bickford's phrase, the complexities of what are often ambivalent portrayals deserve closer attention.¹³ As I will show, military service and the NVA's system caused serious conflicts in conscripts' self-understandings, so that more performative or even theatrical sides of military masculinities cannot be separated from young men's embodied and emotional experiences.

Representations in literature, film and television are not only echoes of lived masculinities in East Germany; rather, they have been central to their construction and their changing forms in the GDR and the contemporary world. As Kaja Silverman argues in her discussion of the 'dominant fiction' of unimpaired and impervious masculinity, representations create the images of masculinity through which men and women come to understand themselves, while retaining the potential for limited challenges:

Although I have defined [the dominant fiction] as a reservoir of sounds, images, and narratives, it has no concrete existence apart from discursive practice and its psychic residue. If representation and signification constitute the site at which the dominant fiction comes into existence, then they would also seem to provide the necessary vehicle for ideological contestation – the medium through which to reconstruct both our 'reality' and 'ourselves'.¹⁴

For Silverman, literature and film are essential to understanding gender. These representations do not just mirror society, and their fictionality, wilful construction or artistry do not render them irrelevant to lived experience. Rather, these images are part of our negotiations of gender in two senses: as an attempt to find a path for ourselves among competing gender ideals and, simultaneously, as a means of rearticulating and recasting those ideals.

Silverman perhaps places too much importance on images of unimpaired masculinity; as Julia Hell and Lilya Kaganovsky have shown, masculine

power in the Stalinist cultures of Central and Eastern Europe draws primarily on images of impaired, even broken masculinity.¹⁵ Writing and film in these contexts present flawed characters negotiating gender within the limitations of genre and circumstance. These characters can promote or challenge dominant masculinities, and sometimes both, but above all they explore ways of negotiating gender in our own lives. As Rita Felski argues in *The Limits of Critique* (2015), representations have agency in their responses to and influence on our understandings of ourselves and the world:

No doubt we learn to make sense of literary texts by being schooled in certain ways of reading; at the same time, we also learn to make sense of our lives by referencing imaginary or fictional worlds. Works of art are not just objects to be interpreted; they also serve as frameworks and guides to interpretation.¹⁶

Given the strict censorship that influenced East German film and literary production, the makers of cultural policy clearly shared Felski's belief that representations are 'guides to interpretation'.¹⁷ Recent work by Stephen Brockmann, reviving scholarly interest in socialist realist literature of the early GDR, has emphasized literature's role in the lively political, social and cultural debates of the postwar period, which amounted to a 'large-scale attempt to use literature to shape the German future'.¹⁸ Yet Brockmann's argument does not account for the continued preoccupation with GDR culture after the state's collapse. Silverman's argument that engagement with such works shapes our self-understanding and subjectivity helps conceptualize this enduring interest. In many of the cases in this book, writers and filmmakers are candid about the lasting influence of the GDR, and specifically military service, on their identities, and about the urgency of rearticulating the East German past in order to understand it and themselves better. In others, recasting the GDR after reunification places it in dialogue with debates and concerns around masculinity in the present.

Seeing literature, film and television as active forces in shaping GDR masculinity means paying heed to the complex masculinities that they construct, which exist less in an ideal form than in the embodied negotiations of individuals. The interest especially in uniformed East German masculinity highlights a trend that has existed since the first depictions of conscription in the 1960s. These works resist the idea that soldiers simply represent the GDR's normative understanding of masculinity. Images of East German soldiers encourage us to challenge and break down ideas of conformity and resistance to norms or to the GDR state. The literature and films that I analyse in this book explore the instability of masculine institutions and their dependence on conflicts between individual identities, institutional cultures and mediated depictions of masculinity. This book focuses on the fraught relationship

staged by texts and films between individuals' identities and their conflicting loyalties: to personal values, to institutions, and to norms and ideals. Literature and films present the effects of such negotiations in physical and emotional terms, and these representations affect the form and importance of the GDR's ideals. This image of identity, as a shifting product of embodied negotiations among the requirements of institutions and wider values, helps us understand masculinities today, when men's bodies and feelings are a focus for the conflicts and precariousness of twenty-first-century society.

The well-worn phrase *Comrades in Arms* exemplifies my central arguments. It describes military comrades or other colleagues with whom one has worked closely in pursuit of a cause. The currency of the phrase in civilian contexts demonstrates the pervasiveness of military values of common purpose and togetherness across society. The phrase's martial metaphor underlines the gendered connotations of these values, yet it shifts the emphasis in military masculinities from violence or aggression to the intimate bonds between men that shape soldiers' and ex-soldiers' lives. The term 'arms' links military arsenals to the bodies that make up the ranks, resonating with the vulnerability of the phrase 'babe in arms' or the close physical intimacy of holding someone in one's arms. The phrase signals that military communities depend on close physical, psychological and emotional bonds between men, and even shared desires and intimacies. In the East German context, the word 'comrade' takes on particular nuances that highlight the disruptive nature of military service and its challenge to conscripts or recruits to reimagine their masculinities and identities. While the term 'comrade' (*Genosse*) was used in civilian society only for members of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands or SED), young men were uniformly identified as 'comrades' on conscription, forcing on them an identification with the state and its repressive structures. In this book, I argue that conscription forces soldiers to become conscious of how they negotiate identities within the military institution and GDR state. The reshaping of soldiers' identities is embodied, psychological and emotional, which helps explain the ongoing negotiations of military service and of the East German state that remain fraught to this day. Above all, the vulnerability, intimacy and emotions of these 'comrades in arms' place marginalized and even queer masculinities at the centre of military institutions and shape the norms they promote, with implications for understandings of military communities worldwide.

The National People's Army

The NVA offers an illuminating case study for investigating East German masculinities more broadly, as young men were confronted most strongly

with the state's ideal masculinity during military service. After 1962, when conscription came into force, the overwhelming majority of young East German men were conscripted. Although in post-reunification interviews many ex-conscripts emphasize their individuality and agency within the NVA's system, the everyday brutality of military service had profound physical and psychological effects on many.¹⁹ As I will argue, young East Germans from the 1960s onwards developed a mix of passive conformity and inward scepticism, so that most conscripts had a complex relationship between military and civilian conceptions of themselves. Understanding East German soldiers helps conceptualize the different ways in which men over the GDR's forty-year history incorporated institutional experiences into their identities. Literature and films even show individual embodied performances influencing the military's ideals and self-presentation. The NVA is also illuminating as a way of placing the East German state in a global postwar context. Although the NVA was exceptional for its use of violence in peacetime and its support for a repressive surveillance state, it was unremarkable in its approach to training and military rhetoric.²⁰ Through its military, East Germany can therefore improve our understandings of military institutions and the place of masculinities in contemporary society more broadly.

Although the NVA was only officially constituted in 1956, seven years after the GDR's foundation, the state's development after 1945 had been closely tied to militarization. Rearmament in Germany began soon after the war as tensions escalated between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies. As Detlef Bald has argued, fear of the other side's rearmament quickly transformed perception into reality as each side increased its military capabilities in Germany.²¹ During the Berlin Blockade in 1948, Soviet occupying forces on Stalin's orders added militarized police units to their expanding police force.²² With these units began the SED's efforts to fashion a specific socialist variety of German military masculinity focused around the 'working-class officer', which laid the groundwork for later pronouncements on the 'socialist soldier personality'.²³ Initially, the GDR's militarization occurred largely in secret, as it conflicted with the SED's protestations about rearmament in the Western zones and with Stalin's stated aim of uniting Germany under Communist control.²⁴ However, as the incorporation of the Federal Republic (FRG) into Western alliances appeared increasingly inevitable, the GDR leadership received orders in 1952 to 'create a People's Army – without a to-do'.²⁵ The Garrisoned People's Police (Kasernierte Volkspolizei or KVP) was formed in July. However, its subsequent failure to control the workers' uprising on 17 June 1953 led the SED to purge the KVP of 'unreliable elements' and prepare for the foundation of the NVA in 1956, although the timing was delayed until after the official establishment of the West German Bundeswehr.²⁶ The importance of the 1953 uprising for the NVA's development cannot be

overstated, and the memory of the uprising was central to the SED's concern with promoting the right kind of socialist masculinities that were committed to the state and to protecting its form of socialism.

Conscription, which further developed the NVA as a training ground for socialist masculinity, was introduced soon after the closing of the border with West Berlin in 1961, before which point such a measure would have been unenforceable. The 1962 Conscription Law introduced compulsory eighteen-month military service for men aged eighteen to twenty-six, and reserve service for men under fifty.²⁷ To meet recruitment targets, men were frequently pressured to enlist as noncommissioned officers (NCOs) for three years or as officers for four, and doing so could dramatically improve educational or career prospects.²⁸ In addition to service in the navy, air force or army, men with no known links to the West who declared themselves willing to fire a weapon could be conscripted to the Border Guard, where conscripts were subject to enhanced scrutiny and surveillance.²⁹ The Stasi could also foreshorten service or ensure better conditions for informants.³⁰ Well-connected men could complete alternative military service in police units, although the basic structure of this service differed little from conscription into the army.³¹ Rising numbers of conscientious objectors and pressure from churches led to an ordinance in 1964, which permitted men 'who object to armed military service due to religious beliefs or for similar reasons' to be conscripted into construction units as so-called *Bausoldaten*.³² However, *Bausoldaten* were still part of the NVA, and their work was gruelling and humiliating, despite brief improvements between 1975 and 1982.³³ The structures of military service and forms of conscription changed little before 1990; a further 1982 law mostly legislated for already established features such as the oath and conditions of eligibility.³⁴ Even this brief exposition indicates overarching commonalities – harsh discipline, rigid hierarchies, a stark change from civilian life – that were shared between men with otherwise substantially different experiences of military service, including conscientious objectors.

Since reunification, many ex-conscripts have emphasized these universal aspects of military service.³⁵ Historical sources, memoirs and fiction all describe conscripts finding their place in a new environment, navigating hierarchies of rank and experience, and being exposed to violence by other conscripts. Conscription affects young men from many countries, and young women in some, and East German experiences are relevant to many conscript armies. Writers and filmmakers often gesture to similarities between military service in the NVA and conscription in other national contexts, a comparison supported by similarities in scholarly accounts of conscription in different countries.³⁶ Most importantly, all contexts, even those in which women are conscripted alongside men, share the connection between military service and the development of certain forms of masculinities.³⁷ I therefore draw in

my analyses on theories from other militaries, and my conception of military masculinity can illuminate other contexts. At the same time, the NVA offers a distinct and instructive case for three reasons.

First, the NVA was never involved in direct combat. The rhetoric of peace was central to official discussions of the NVA, which was styled as the defender and guarantor of peace in Germany, apparently without conscious irony.³⁸ From the NVA's inception, the GDR's premier, Walter Ulbricht, emphasized its peaceful mission:

The National People's Army of the GDR shall be an army of working people, who love peace as much as they love their own freedom. All members of the future army, air force and navy of the GDR shall ... be on the front line defending peace [*an vorderster Front auf Friedenswache*].³⁹

Paradoxically amidst this peaceful rhetoric, the SED's propaganda also glorified the NVA's later participation in the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia after the Prague Spring in 1968. However, sources have shown since reunification that Moscow ordered the NVA's regiments to stand down at the last minute.⁴⁰ A second flashpoint occurred in 1981 amidst protests by the Polish Solidarity movement, but a planned NVA invasion was averted when the Polish regime imposed martial law. Thus, the NVA never saw direct military involvement, although repeated military exercises were a common feature of military service and many thousands even experienced full mobilization in 1968 or 1981.

In the absence of active combat, representations of the NVA focus on military training, which wider scholarship on military masculinities frequently overlooks in favour of a narrower focus on war. Training offers compelling insights into the place of masculinity within military institutions. On the one hand, scholarship on the warzone generally explains intimacy between soldiers and alternative masculinities as products of the extreme circumstances of war.⁴¹ On the other hand, the profound psychological effects of war are often attributed to the extraordinary nature of the warzone. Representations of military training show that marginalized masculinities are fundamental to military environments more generally, including outside the warzone. Such accounts also make it impossible to ignore the role of the institutional environment itself in the suffering of conscripts and recruits.

In this context of peace, and among countries in peacetime more broadly, the Border Guard represents an anomaly that sits uneasily with the NVA's peaceable rhetoric. The Border Police of the GDR was founded in 1950, but after the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, it was subsumed into the NVA as the Border Command of the NVA. In 1974, the Border Guard of the GDR was separated from the NVA proper, but remained under

the control of the Ministry for National Defence.⁴² Peter Joachim Lapp attributes this cosmetic restructuring to concerns that disarmament agreements during the *détente* of the 1970s might affect numbers at the border.⁴³ The NVA's most infamous policy was that deserters, would-be escapees and even trespassers at the border could be shot on sight. Debates about this policy have placed border soldiers at the centre of contemporary discussion of the NVA. Since the 1960s, Western discussion of the GDR has presumed the existence of an order to shoot on sight (*Schießbefehl*), and after 1990, journalists and archivists began searching in earnest for a directive.⁴⁴ Historians have countered that the NVA relied on obscure, ambiguous or nonspecific commands, and Pertti Ahonen suggests that this structure placed the initiative on ordinary soldiers, albeit while instilling in them fear of commanding officers' reactions.⁴⁵ Even without a written order, the brutality of the Border Guard is undisputed, and the highest echelons of the SED must have supported the policy, for violence at the border continued unchecked, was largely hidden from the public, and border guards were not tried under GDR law. However, Ahonen cautions that such brutality must be viewed against a broader background of violence at the border and across GDR society.⁴⁶

A second factor that distinguishes the GDR is overwhelming popular antimilitary sentiment. The population of both German states reacted to the end of the Second World War with fatigue, which translated into indifference and even hostility towards militarization.⁴⁷ Many conscripts shared this scepticism, as Sylka Scholz has argued. She analyses the post-reunification life narratives of East German men and suggests that most viewed military service with resignation, as a burdensome but necessary phase, with little identification with military roles or values.⁴⁸ Ambivalence towards militarization, and the effectively unavoidable nature of conscription, meant that many attempted to retain civilian identities and existing masculinities while in the NVA. The resulting resistance to the military's ideal masculinities could enhance the personal conflicts caused by military service, a fact reflected in the particular prominence in film and literature of masculinities that contravene or transgress ideal masculinities.

A third and final factor that differentiates the NVA from other conscript armies is its dissolution and integration into its one-time enemy, the West German Bundeswehr, in 1990. Bickford has emphasized the importance of reunification as a rupture in the lives of NVA officers, who suddenly became the 'military other' in the Berlin Republic as the NVA was redefined as 'bad' and 'illegal'.⁴⁹ The shift to a focus on illegality was influenced by the border guard trials of the early 1990s. From September 1991 onwards, around 3,000 cases of violence at the border were investigated, overwhelmingly involving former border guards.⁵⁰ Although many defendants were convicted – in Berlin over 200 out of 297 – they were not sentenced harshly, usually

receiving suspended sentences of up to two years.⁵¹ The trials' main impact was the heated discussion and media attention they generated. The cases raised complex questions that have continued to influence legal debates into the twenty-first century, and this discussion framed the NVA as a whole in terms of legality and morality.⁵² These trials, along with those of high-ranking SED officials, focused discussion of the GDR military on the distribution of guilt along the chain of command. This shift faced many ex-convicts, not only ex-border guards, with their own guilt and complicity, and forced many to ask whether their subordinate position entirely absolved them of responsibility for the NVA's violent culture.

The shift to a legalistic and moralistic understanding of the NVA appears to have caused ex-convicts to re-evaluate the place of military service in their life trajectory and to assess the morality of their actions and those of others. Scholz demonstrates the difficulties that some of her interviewees had, most of them ordinary convicts, in articulating the place of military service in their lives after 1990. She argues that military service remains a discrete episode in men's narratives, even for those who explicitly emphasize the military's positive effects on their lives.⁵³ She concludes that military masculine ideals did not always fit the life stories that men were constructing after reunification, but that the inclusion of conviction as a discontinuity in men's narratives indicates its formative role.⁵⁴ Though military service may have remained discrete, its effects were never wholly separate from ex-convicts' later lives. The wealth of documentary films and autobiographical or semi-autobiographical literature that continue to engage with GDR military service suggests that military service had profound effects, which prevented convicts from putting the NVA behind them.

For some men after 1990, the NVA became a focus for nostalgia.⁵⁵ For others, military service was a source of self-reproach, no longer just a nuisance, but a form of participation in an institution that supported and defended a repressive regime. This preoccupation is particularly prominent in autobiographical narratives, but it also influences the characterization of convicts in post-reunification fiction and feature films. The need since reunification for men to reassess their complicity or subordination within the military's hierarchies of masculinities makes the East German context remarkable. While films and literature produced within the GDR were strictly controlled and rarely show evidence of soldiers' scepticism, works produced outside the GDR and after reunification generally display a rejection of the NVA's ideals. Post-reunification narratives therefore show that East German military and civilian masculine ideals continue to be negotiated in the Berlin Republic.

From the Margins to the Centre

One of this book's central claims is that masculinities commonly considered to be marginalized – those marked by vulnerability or victimhood, theatricality, shame, same-sex intimacy or desire – are in fact central to military institutions and the wider gender order. The literature, films and television that I analyse in the following chapters, even works that promote the normalizing power of military service, centre around these transgressive, troublesome or inadequate masculinities. In each chapter, I explore aspects of masculinity that are not commonly associated with normative masculinity, and show how central they were to the representation of masculinity and the creation of military ideals in the NVA. As a particularly normative, even repressive environment, the East German military provides an ideal case study for showing just how important marginalized masculinities are in the representations that create, structure and disseminate gender ideals.

Work within queer studies has recently supported the idea that marginalized, or even repudiated, aspects of masculinity are in fact important structuring elements in masculine norms. In her 2015 book *Not Gay*, for example, Jane Ward argues that 'homosexuality is an often invisible, but nonetheless vital ingredient – a constitutive element – of heterosexual masculinity'.⁵⁶ Ward analyses hazing, initiation and bonding rituals in the US military, university fraternities and sports teams, and explores how sexual acts between men are understood not as gay sex, but as part of men's creation and upholding of standards of heterosexual masculinity. Her argument focuses on the constitution of heterosexuality, but her work has important implications for work on masculinity in a broader sense. In this book, I expand on Ward's approach by foregrounding a wider range of marginalized masculine traits that go beyond sexual acts. The works I analyse centre around these traits, as 'constitutive elements' of military norms, but also as demonstrations of the impossibility or even undesirability of living up to those norms. Ward's work focuses on the repudiation of homosexuality through straight white men's recourse to gay sexual acts. Yet in the chapters that follow, I suggest that repressive normative structures like that of the NVA also create spaces for the productive exploration of alternative masculinities and same-sex intimacy.

As the book title *Comrades in Arms* suggests, my interest in military masculinities combines embodied, individual aspects of masculinity with a focus on gender as a set of socially produced conventions and practices. Amidst the turn in the last decade to affect and emotion, embodiment and phenomenology, it can be tempting to isolate aspects of gender that originate in the embodied experience of individuals, and to contrast such experience with the institutions and systems through which gender is negotiated. Since

the beginning, though, and particularly in the work of Raewyn Connell and Kaja Silverman, masculinity studies has conceptualized gender at the interstice between embodied experience and wider social structures.⁵⁷ By rereading these founding works of masculinity scholarship and bringing together Connell's sociological approach with Silverman's psychoanalytic model, I will outline an understanding of gender as a product of embodied negotiations, which I explore more fully in the subsequent chapters. These negotiations are performative in Judith Butler's sense: performances construct both bodies and gender while being constrained by the limits of the body, and these negotiations refer to and are in dialogue with ideals and assumptions about gender that are not always conscious.⁵⁸

As an institution, the NVA linked its standards of masculinity closely to the male body: its ideal of the 'socialist soldier personality' was never as gender-neutral as the SED's jargon might imply. Women could serve voluntarily from the 1950s, primarily in administrative, medical or communications roles. The 1982 Military Service Law then extended the roles available to women and allowed them to serve anywhere in the army. The Law even provided for conscription of women in wartime, although this provision was never implemented.⁵⁹ Yet despite increasing legal equality, restrictions remained on the military roles available to women. These inequalities were epitomized by new uniforms in 1983 that accentuated women's femininity and their difference from male comrades by adding a skirt and different caps.⁶⁰ Outside the GDR context, the relationship between military masculinities and women soldiers has attracted scholarly attention, raising intriguing questions about gender in the military.⁶¹ Yet film and literature about the NVA neglect women soldiers almost entirely, perhaps because conscription was a near-universal rite of passage for men, but enlisting was an unusual step for women. The lack of representations of women soldiers in the NVA demonstrates the powerful links between the military, masculinities and the male body, and suggests that military masculinities were incompatible with official conceptions of femininity and womanhood. The close connection between the GDR's ideal forms of masculinity and the NVA as a training ground makes the military a productive context for a closer investigation of the complexity of East German masculinities. I have restricted my investigation to male soldiers due to the paucity of sources depicting women soldiers, but I nonetheless aim to challenge the association of military masculinities with idealized male bodies by paying attention to multiple, often deviant, ways of embodying military masculinities.

Connell's work on 'hegemonic masculinity' is particularly useful for understanding how individual masculinities relate to ideals and norms of soldierly behaviour.⁶² The term is most often used as a label for dominant forms of masculinity, without sufficient attention to the hegemonic structure

she describes. For Connell, consensus on and complicity with gender norms are powerful forces in sustaining hegemony, but this hegemony is far from fixed and depends on relationships of subordination for its power. Connell defines masculinity and femininity as plural and relational ‘*gender projects*’, in which institutions, representations of men and women, and the everyday actions of individuals play a part.⁶³ Drawing on Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, Connell emphasizes the imbalance of power in gender practice. She argues that the power of certain men and male-dominated institutions, including the military, depends on specific configurations of masculinity that are privileged over other masculinities as well as femininities.⁶⁴ Only very few men, in Connell’s analysis, ever practise hegemonic masculinity fully, and most are ‘complicit’ in the hegemonic form by striving to emulate it in numerous ways, albeit incompletely. These complicit men avoid challenging the gender order, whether because they admire or aspire to dominant hegemonic forms, or whether protecting themselves from marginalization or exclusion.

Recent debates around GDR masculinities in history, literary studies and social sciences focus especially on the plurality of hegemonic forms, informed by Connell’s work.⁶⁵ The multicentric nature of GDR masculinities has been suggested by Mark Fenemore, who disputes the existence of a single dominant hegemony.⁶⁶ Furthermore, Scholz has investigated competing hegemonic masculinities in East Germany, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 1: the socialist soldier personality, the working-class hero (*Held der Arbeit*) and the affectionate father.⁶⁷ Even within the single ideal of the socialist soldier personality, the influence of German and Soviet traditions produced multicentricity. These traditions often complemented one another. Muscular, honourable, proletarian images of the ideal Soviet man, such as the monument to Soviet war dead erected in Berlin’s Treptower Park, differed little from a bourgeois German masculinity based on self-control, bravery, honesty, strength, courage and discipline.⁶⁸ Soviet influence was clearest in the NVA’s structure and rhetoric: it was modelled on the Red Army, and the so-called brotherhood in arms of socialist nations was an important tenet of conscripts’ political training.⁶⁹ The two traditions clashed above all in the contrast between continuities from Nazism and official rhetoric of renewal and de-Nazification. In particular, the NVA’s uniform resembled that of the Nazi Wehrmacht, a fact greeted with considerable scepticism by conscripts and civilians.⁷⁰ The different influences on the NVA’s hegemonic masculinity suggest a need for attention to soldiers’ individual embodied negotiations of these overlapping and competing traditions.

Connell later admitted that her theory that a majority of men are complicit in masculine dominance is ‘rather bleak’, and she has been criticized for suggesting the permanence of masculine hegemony.⁷¹ However, her model does

emphasize the potential for hegemonic masculinities to be changed or challenged, and she establishes a detailed account of masculinities that conflict with hegemonic models. For her, hegemonic masculinities are always related to, and even dependent on, what she terms 'subordinate' and 'marginalized' masculinities. She argues that subordinate masculinities, such as those associated with gay men, are disadvantaged by the gender order itself. By contrast, 'marginalized' working-class or black masculinities exist in a parallel gender order with internal relations of dominance and subordination; nevertheless, the whole parallel gender order is marginalized with respect to hegemonic racial or class groups.⁷² Connell's fine distinction between subordinate and marginalized masculinities is not always useful or clearly defined. She later hints at subcultural forms of hegemony within gay and lesbian groups, collapsing the distinction between subordination and marginalization.⁷³ This move away from her initial categories allows for multiple sources of power across the gender hierarchy, such that forms of hegemony can reside even in otherwise subordinate masculine positions.

Connell thus depicts hegemony and subordination as a complex system that resists categorization. The importance of consensus, and of actions and interactions between individuals, means that her model already addresses the question of how individual masculinities relate to gender systems. Implicit within her analysis, and explicit in subsequent work with Connell's ideas, is the possibility for multiple different hegemonic masculinities, even if hegemonic forms tend to share certain bodily and temperamental characteristics: bodily strength, physical skill, bravery, endurance, the potential for aggression and so on. For Connell, masculine hegemony depends on the everyday practice of men aspiring to comply with or reject the ideal. Subordinate and marginalized masculinities are at the centre of Connell's case studies, which show that hegemony depends on relations of subordination and marginalization, but also that there can be multiple sources of hegemony. To use a hypothetical military example, a conscript may well be older, more intelligent, bigger, stronger and fiercer than a man employed as a career officer. Where the second derives his power from his position within an institutional hierarchy, the first might call on his other hegemonic attributes to contest the officer's power or elevate himself above other conscripts. The boundary between power and subordination in Connell's model is more fluid than many commentators have allowed. The officer may, for example, feel it necessary to assert authority over this powerful conscript especially strongly, resulting in more testing training, higher expectations and even ritual humiliation. The conscript's power, then, might also become his weakness by attracting undue attention.

Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1992) also centres analysis on what she terms 'marginal' masculinities, but she emphasizes their unsettling

and subversive potential more explicitly than Connell. Silverman outlines the concept of a 'dominant fiction', a network of ideals that govern the subject's position in society.⁷⁴ She argues that ideal masculinities are intimately connected to the dominant fiction and exert a normalizing force on femininities and on masculinities that deviate from the 'phallic standard'.⁷⁵ Silverman analyses marginal masculinities in order to counter, as well as simply understand, the workings of this dominant fiction. Viewing the Oedipus complex as the primary way in which subjects are subordinated within the dominant fiction, Silverman argues that 'even in the most normative of subjective instances the psyche remains in excess of that complex, and that in other cases desire and identification may actually function as mechanisms for circumventing or even repudiating the dominant fiction'.⁷⁶ Silverman and Connell agree that the power of ideal masculinities depends on the repudiation of subordinate and marginalized masculinities. It is therefore impossible to understand the GDR's gender ideals without investigating subordinate, transgressive and even queer aspects of masculinities.

The importance and complexity of subordinate masculinities within military hierarchies has been suggested by Paul Higate's sociological work inspired by his experience as a clerk in the Royal Air Force. Higate argues that rank hierarchies make explicit power relations that remain naturalized or concealed in other contexts, and he analyses masculinities that are subordinated within the military, including administrative and support roles.⁷⁷ In turn, Bickford has drawn on Higate's work to examine the relative prestige of different NVA occupations, and he describes the dual hierarchies that operated in the NVA.⁷⁸ The first was the traditional rank hierarchy. The second, unofficial hierarchy was the so-called 'EK' movement, where 'EK' stands for 'Entlassungskandidat', a soldier nearing the end of his service.⁷⁹ Power depended on the time remaining in a conscript's service, divided into six-month segments. Conscripts in their first six months were called 'rookies', 'smooth' after their ironed epaulettes or the rather unsavoury 'Spritzer' or 'squirts', which referred to their need to be snappy (*spritzig*), but also had connotations of urination or ejaculation. In the penultimate six months of their service, they were called 'vices' (*Vize*), and EKs in their final six months. EKs subjected new recruits to hazing, beatings and exploitation that were more brutal than official discipline and often loom larger than official punishments in post-reunification accounts.⁸⁰ Interactions between hierarchies were complex: officers tolerated the EK movement because it promoted deference and subordination, yet EKs themselves were still subject to discipline from above in the rank hierarchy.⁸¹ Conscripts' individual positions within these competing hierarchies determined their experiences. Masculinities that were subordinated within these hierarchies have hardly been investigated in scholarship on the NVA, even though some scholars have addressed them

in other militaries.⁸² Literature and films depicting the NVA place subordinate or marginal masculinities at the centre of their portrayals and therefore demand an analysis that focuses on masculinities that fail to approximate military norms.

The above approaches tend to neglect the embodied nature of masculinities in the experience of military service, even though Connell and Silverman both gesture to bodies being read as more or less masculine. The context of military training focuses attention particularly on the body as a limiting factor in negotiations of masculinity, as well as on the physical pain that serves to punish deviations from masculine standards. Butler's concept of performativity, on which later masculinities scholarship has built, resembles Connell's understanding of 'gender practice', but more clearly articulates the role of the body. She writes that bodily sex is 'a process whereby regulatory norms materialize "sex" and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms. That this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled'.⁸³ Bodily materiality, in other words, is never fixed or free of cultural meanings; bodies are shaped through performative negotiations of gender, just as gender is shaped in turn by the possibilities and limitations of the body. The history of how cultural ideals and concepts of masculinity have shaped the male body has been the subject of much research, most notably in the German context by George Mosse in his discussion of the spread of the nineteenth-century gymnastics movement.⁸⁴ But it is important to bear in mind Butler's insistence that bodies can never fully comply with standards of masculinity and that even concepts of maleness are culturally imposed. Bodies limit conformity with gender norms as much as they can suggest conformity when properly sculpted and worked.

Sara Ahmed has taken Butler's argument further in discussing what she calls the bodily horizon: 'the horizon marks the edge of what can be reached by the body. The body becomes present as a body, with surfaces and boundaries, in showing the "limits" of what it can do'.⁸⁵ Much as Silverman looks to marginal cases to understand masculinity, Ahmed recommends that we look to moments of bodily failure, overreach or impossibility to understand the body and the norms it reaches towards. In military cultures, the need for recruits to push their bodies is clearly articulated throughout training through the orders of superiors, with more immediate punishments than in civilian society for coming up short. The body is sculpted performatively through such routines in the way Butler describes. Yet even when a soldier deliberately strives to reach a target, Butler and Ahmed both emphasize the inevitability of failure, and require us to consider masculine ideals in relation to a cycle of bodily failure, inadequacy and deviation.

In order to centre analysis on supposedly marginalized masculine traits, this book proceeds from three premises in its understanding of masculinities. First, marginalized masculinities are central to gender norms because masculinity always consists in a reciprocal relationship between individual practice and overarching ideals. Although ideals may be broadly shared, the degree of commitment versus cynicism is important, as is the fact that some ideals may be more conscious than others. Military service is particularly fruitful for analysing masculinity because it frequently makes men conscious of ideals of behaviour and achievement because of the stark differences between civilian and military life. The second point is that masculinity is built up through embodied performativity. Individuals enact their gender in performative ways through bodily actions and interactions with other bodies. Masculine bodies are shaped by these actions, their limits are defined by interactions, and the body defines the bounds within which conformity with ideals is possible. Third, far from a tension between discursive or systemic models of gender and individual practice, the relationship between individuals and institutions is paramount to understanding gender, especially within the military, but also in civilian society. As I demonstrate throughout this book, masculinity emerges as a negotiation between overarching ideals, specific institutional demands and practices, and extra-institutional factors such as individual traits, values and beliefs.

Contemporary Negotiations of GDR Masculinities: *Deutschland 83* and *Deutschland 86*

Deutschland 83, a 2015 television series cowritten by American Anna Winger and German Jörg Winger, and its 2018 sequel *Deutschland 86* illustrate trends in representations of GDR military masculinities, support the model I have outlined and raise questions that guide my investigation.⁸⁶ This drama suggests the need to return to portrayals of GDR military service in order to advance our understanding of East German society and our current fascination with its legacy. The transnational genesis of the two series indicates the importance of the GDR's appeal even outside Germany as a way of understanding the contemporary world. The script was first written by Anna Winger in English and translated into German by her husband, Jörg, and was coproduced by the American cable television network SundanceTV and the German private broadcaster RTL. *Deutschland 83* premiered on SundanceTV to rave reviews and decent viewing figures for a foreign-language series on a small cable channel in a crowded market.⁸⁷ Disappointing ratings for its German premiere on RTL created doubt about the series, and especially its potential to sustain the two planned sequels: 3.2 million viewed the

first episode in November, but this fell to 1.63 million by the finale in December.⁸⁸ Yet in the UK on Channel 4, *Deutschland 83* soon became the most-viewed foreign-language programme ever with 2.5 million viewers live and online.⁸⁹ Its international success probably contributed to Amazon's decision to pick up *Deutschland 86* on its German platform, although its success is difficult to quantify because Amazon does not release viewing figures. *Deutschland 86* premiered on 19 October 2018 on Prime in Germany and SundanceTV in the US. It received similar plaudits from reviewers, especially in the English-speaking world, and the new series contains large portions in English, a thematic nod to its international audience. The two series' success has depended on this international distribution, and there seems to be a better market outside Germany for the show's depiction of the GDR in the spy genre.

The transnational production and distribution of *Deutschland 83* and *Deutschland 86* is mirrored in their unusually transnational plots. While the Stasi drama in *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*, 2006) is confined to East Germany with only occasional border-crossing characters gesturing to links with the West, *Deutschland 83* unfolds primarily in West Germany and *Deutschland 86* is set substantially in Cape Town, Paris and rural Angola and Libya.⁹⁰ The settings suggest that our current image of East Germany is inseparable from post-reunification mediations and representations of the state, often from Western perspectives. At the opening of *Deutschland 83*, Martin Rauch, an NCO in the Border Guard, is approached by his aunt, Lenora, to take an assignment as a Stasi mole in the office of the Bundeswehr's NATO liaison, General Edel. Believing his mother's kidney transplant will be expedited as a result, Martin leaves his mother, Ingrid, and girlfriend, Annett, in the East and travels to Bonn as Bundeswehr Oberleutnant Moritz Stamm.⁹¹ He embarks on a series of missions, depicted with playful nods to spy thrillers and with retro appeal created by the 1980s soundtrack and costumes. By situating Martin's mission in West Germany, and cutting between his family in Kleinmachnow and his missions in Bonn and Brussels, the series sets Martin's relationships with East German institutions in an international context. *Deutschland 86* expands on this theme by focusing on East Germany's dealings with West Germany and with African states and resistance movements. As the GDR's economy suffers, Martin, Lenora and South African agent Rose Seithathi facilitate illegal arms sales between West Germany and the apartheid government in South Africa. In East Berlin, Annett, now rising through the ranks of the Stasi's inner circle, establishes drugs trials in East German hospitals for a West German firm. In the first episode, Annett sums up the contradiction in her superiors' economic schemes: 'But it sounds as if you are talking about capitalism.'⁹² In *Deutschland 86* military and surveillance structures are not the only networks

that transcend the borders of the GDR; economic structures and patterns of colonialism also entangle East Germany in transnational flows of people and capital.⁹³

Deutschland 83 shows Martin negotiating masculinity within military and surveillance institutions in both East and West. Any culture shock is primarily a comic touch, and allows the inclusion of retro details from West and East and playful jokes around East German language, as in the training montage at the Bonn villa of Professor Tobias Tischbier, Martin's Stasi contact in the West: 'This is an orange. If you say "Apfelsine", she'll think, what's going on here' (Episode 1, 20:47–20:51).⁹⁴ Tischbier's blasé tone adds to the impression that such differences are largely cosmetic, and that there are substantial parallels between the institutions of West and East and their influence on characters' identities. Figures on both sides of the border are shaped physically and symbolically by institutions, but their own values and sense of self ensure that the negotiation of masculinity is a multifaceted and multi-directional process: their actions and interactions in turn shape and influence masculine institutional cultures too. Of these institutions, the military is most prominent as a backdrop to the masculine identities of characters. *Deutschland 83* suggests that depictions of the GDR military not only shed light on how the NVA itself has been represented during and since the GDR, but can also illuminate the complex negotiations through which we articulate masculine identities in the West.

The representation of Martin's masculinity in *Deutschland 83* draws on stereotypes of the East German army, as well as on masculine stereotypes from other genres, in particular the spy thriller. The first episode introduces Martin in the second scene, cutting from Lenora at the GDR's Permanent Representation in Bonn to a dimly lit corridor in a facility at the border. Martin and a colleague have arrested two Western students for smuggling out volumes of Shakespeare bought with money changed on the black market. As he interrogates the students, Martin is filmed from a low angle, in medium shots and medium close-ups that ensure his uniform is always in view. The authority he gains from costume and camerawork is enhanced by his stern tone and laconic take on the language of state socialism: 'Shakespeare stays here. You can take Marx with you, you might just learn something' (Episode 1, 2:41–2:45). Martin's harsh admonishment appears hyperbolic, given the harmless nature of the students' crime, and this line hints that he may not be taking it entirely seriously. This suggestion is borne out when Martin and his colleague burst into laughter once the students leave. The film thus creates a disjunction in Martin's masculinity, between his enthusiastic embodiment of a strict soldierly masculinity with an inherent threat of violence and his lack of underlying sincerity that suggests a more complex relationship to the scripts of the Border Guard.

Martin's ambivalence towards the GDR's masculine ideals is enhanced by his Stasi mission, which takes him out of the NVA and positions him in the Bundeswehr. Whatever genuine commitment to state socialism might lie behind his admonishment of the students, he cannot reveal such ideological positions while undercover. Yet his new role requires a similar approach to masculinity to the one he learned in the NVA. On arriving in the Bundeswehr, he expresses ideological commitments as part of a performance of authority and loyalty, even though he is not committed to these positions. When he first meets his roommate, General Edel's son Alex, Martin declares his allegiance to NATO and echoes Western justifications of the arms race in the early 1980s: 'We have to build up our nuclear arsenal to keep the Soviets under control. We just have to show those assholes who's boss. If we're not prepared to do that, we might as well forget all this, right?' (Episode 1, 23:40–23:53). As Martin moves in and out of shot, the camera remains focused on Alex Edel's serious face and upright posture, inviting the viewer to scrutinize whether Martin's performance is successful. The humour and confidence of the interrogation scene are gone; he appears to believe that articulating such ideas sincerely is essential to passing as a West German soldier. Alex's serious face initially suggests that he is testing Martin, but his hollow laugh suggests that Martin has overestimated the need to parrot such ideological positions: 'You sound like my father' (Episode 1, 23:55–23:57). Alex rejects West German arms policy, anticipating Martin's own later disillusionment with the GDR's surveillance apparatus, and he greets Martin's ideological sincerity with exasperation. Martin's response to Alex's question is almost too sincere, lacking cynicism and distance. Such an attitude places military ideals at one remove: far from striving to conform to or vehemently reject them, both Martin and Alex are, in Connell's terminology, 'complicit'. They conform in what they consider to be superficial ways, which nonetheless shape their own masculinities, perpetuate standards of masculinity and bolster military systems.

Deutschland 83 draws close comparisons between the military masculinities promoted in the Bundeswehr and the NVA, yet by exploring this relationship, the series also highlights its broader interest in pluralizing forms of hegemonic masculinity. On the level of genre, the series investigates the close relationship between the masculinities of soldiers and of Stasi spies in contemporary imaginings of GDR culture, each representing not just a hegemonic form of masculinity, but a symbol of the GDR's repressive system more broadly. *Deutschland 83* constructs Martin's soldierly masculinity out of references to both sets of stereotypes and generic expectations. The interrogation scene in Episode 1, for example, echoes scenes of interrogation by Stasi officers in *Das Leben der Anderen*, especially the first medium shot of Martin filmed by a camera at desk level, along with the room's grey and beige

décor. Later scenes in *Deutschland 83*, in which Stasi agent Schweppenstette interrogates Annett's friend Thomas, occur in a near-identical setting with similar camera angles, further blurring the distinction between Martin's job as a border guard and the role of Stasi officer.

The blurring of military and spy stereotypes is also key to Martin's relationships. Annett initially appears as the unfaithful military girlfriend, a trope familiar from military films such as *Pearl Harbor* (2001) and *Jarhead* (2005), who becomes faithful after discovering that she is pregnant with Martin's child.⁹⁵ Yet much of the plot revolves around Martin's fleeting James Bond-style relationships with NATO secretary Linda and Yvonne, the daughter of Martin's boss at the Bundeswehr, General Edel. Just like women in the Bond films, both are strong characters wooed by Martin's charm and both get into compromised situations because of their relationships with Martin, including Linda's dramatic death in Episode 4. Like Bond films during Judi Dench's tenure as M, Martin's often incompetent attempts to follow his missions are directed by a more senior woman, his aunt Lenora. Like M, Lenora frequently emasculates Martin by withholding information and, for much of the series, ignoring his analysis of the situation in the Bundeswehr.⁹⁶ Women rarely occupy positions of power in military films, which instead tend to focus on mothers, wives and daughters of soldiers, and including a woman in Martin's Stasi command structure focuses the story on his complex negotiations of spy and military masculinities. Moreover, Martin's frequent incompetence makes him dependent on Lenora and Tischbier, often conflicting with the precision and professionalism of his persona as a military officer.

Characters' relationships to hegemonic masculinity in *Deutschland 83* are not just plural because of the different genres they draw on; rather, many characters develop a complex combination of subordinate and complicit masculinities. Martin does not substantially challenge West or East German hegemonic masculinities, a complicity that allows him to blend in, and his conscious performance of conformity mixed with good-humoured distance preserves his individual values even while acting for the Stasi. By revealing in Episode 7 that he is a Stasi mole, Martin asserts his principles against both states' bellicosity, ending the first series on the run from both regimes. Yet the circularity of his return to his mother's garden in Episode 8, echoing the first episode, suggests that his status within the masculine hierarchy is not substantially compromised.

However, Alex's homosexuality represents a greater challenge to the military gender system in the Bundeswehr and, in line with Silverman's argument, his more marginal position reveals the fragility of military masculinities. His active resistance to the arms race is explicitly connected to his homosexuality through his relationship with Tischbier, who also leads the resistance movement at the University of Bonn. Alex's desire to impress Tischbier leads him

to kidnap an American general in Episode 6 and join a protest outside his own base in Episode 7. Their relationship also exposes Alex to HIV: this storyline is handled awkwardly, but creates the possibility that Alex's subordination will end in exclusion from society and eventually death. The series ends on a cliffhanger: Alex's diagnosis is not revealed in *Deutschland 83*, and an unexplained gunshot in the Edel house leaves open the question whether Alex kills himself. The other potential victim of the gunshot is General Edel, whose rigid adherence to his military career has resulted in his entire family leaving him. In *Deutschland 86*, we learn that Alex is HIV negative, but that he was about to shoot himself when General Edel walked in. In his surprise, Alex accidentally shot and injured his father, who survived but was paralysed from the waist down.⁹⁷ While Martin emerges from his mission without damaging his complicity in hegemonic masculinity, and by 1986 has even gained celebrity, West German forms of hegemonic masculinity are unsettled at the end of *Deutschland 83*. With his injury and absence from the second series, General Edel encapsulates the impossibility of truly embodying hegemonic ideals, and Alex's decision to leave the military to work in AIDS hospices mirrors Martin's decision to go on the run, emphasizing individual agency in negotiating masculinities over any normative power of military ideals.

The power of these ideals in the series is determined by citizens' negotiations of ideal masculinities and the institutions that promoted them. As in Silverman's work on marginal masculinities, in which she describes the pleasure and temptation in the punitive function of the subject's own superego, censure and repudiation of subordinate aspects of masculinity seem in *Deutschland 83* to occur within the individual psyche.⁹⁸ Neither the military nor the Stasi actively repudiates subordinate masculinities in the series; rather, characters grapple with reconciling their own values, the pressures placed on them by institutions and other individuals, and broader assumptions about masculinity. The potential consequences of marginalization within the gender order are clear, in the anger Alex faces from his father, his manipulation by Tischbier and the danger of the HIV epidemic. Yet marginalization never seems inevitable; there is room for Martin and Alex to retain aspects of their identity from outside their military roles, as well as for cynicism and even principled resistance. The focus in *Deutschland 83*, as in other literary and film narratives, is on individual ways of existing within, challenging and accommodating oneself to the military and its gender norms. Such narratives depict gender practice, but their production and dissemination are also part of a society's gender practice, and GDR institutions and gender norms thus inform our understanding of masculinity in the present. *Deutschland 83* and *Deutschland 86* offer new perspectives on gender in East Germany and show how memories of the GDR continue to shape our negotiations of German and global cultures in the twenty-first century.

Deutschland 83, with its emphasis on cynical and often deliberately transgressive responses to ideals of masculine behaviour, points to four principles that a discussion of masculinity in the GDR must adopt. First, it insists on the importance of East Germany for understanding the contemporary Western world more broadly. Second, it places masculinity at the centre of the GDR's most pervasive, and most repressive, total institutions, suggesting that the effect of these institutions on masculinity and subjectivity was more lasting than the institutions themselves. Third, it proceeds from the assumption that even committed soldiers within the NVA – and indeed the Bundeswehr – approached the requirements placed on them with a degree of distance and self-awareness. This approach forces us to move beyond arguments based on soldiers being mere representatives of state repression, and requires discussion of literary and filmic images of masculinity as a set of embodied negotiations of institutions and state structures. A division between the state and the individual becomes impossible, not only in the terms used by Mary Fulbrook in her description of the GDR as a 'participatory dictatorship', but also in characters' embodied, gendered subjectivities.⁹⁹ Fourth, and finally, it suggests that focusing on representations of subordinate aspects of masculinity in the GDR, an under-researched area of East German culture, also helps us understand mechanisms of marginalization within our own societies.

This book takes these positions as its starting point and looks back at the longer history of representations of masculinities in the NVA since the advent of conscription in 1962. Literature and film depicting the NVA can help us understand how masculinity was conceived and negotiated in the GDR, as well as the fraught relationship between military identities imposed by the state and the values, concerns and principles of individuals. I take as my focus masculinities that come into conflict with the NVA's military ideals, revealing the limits of those ideals and expanding our understanding of masculinities in the NVA and in the GDR more broadly. My chapters are thematic, and each points to continuities that stretch across GDR and post-reunification representations. In order to elucidate the negotiations of masculinity that operate on the level of individual texts and individual characters and episodes within films or prose works, I focus on select examples. My case studies are selected for their representative nature, but also for their unique perspectives on each chapter's theme. By approaching each theme from numerous perspectives, I allow for complexities and differences in the construction and reconstruction of GDR masculinities over the almost sixty-year span of my corpus.

This book offers a new conception of the GDR dictatorship that places masculinity and its mechanisms of complicity and marginalization at the centre of individuals' relationship to the state. Chapters 1 and 2 probe the limits of ideal masculinity in both official literature of the NVA's own publishing house and in films depicting violence at the border. Chapters 3 and

4 focus on the interplay between the performativity of military service and soldiers' bodies, while Chapters 5 and 6 look closer at the effects of military service on soldiers' feelings and desires. The book offers insights from film and literature into questions poorly served by the historical record; the role of bodily vulnerability in Chapter 3, for example, and especially experiences of same-sex desire in Chapter 6. My investigation has important consequences for our understanding of contemporary societies. It offers an explanation for the ongoing, even increasing, fascination with the GDR in contemporary society that accounts both for the playful, retro appeal of East German culture, which I analyse in Chapter 4, and for the profound emotional and psychological effects that military service had on conscripts, as I explore in Chapter 5.

The book looks beyond 1989 as a caesura, focusing instead on lines of influence that link approaches to the GDR in today's Federal Republic with East German writers and filmmakers, influences that illuminate the ongoing fascination with and continuing difficult negotiations of the GDR past. It suggests a model for GDR studies that accounts both for the specificity of the East German state and for its essential and unavoidable presence in the contemporary imagination. And most broadly, it develops our understanding of marginalized masculinities in the context of military and other male-dominated institutions. This book's central rationale is that, by centring analysis around masculinities conventionally studied only as marginal within such organizations, norms themselves become pluralized, and individual embodiments of masculinity can be prioritized over the normalizing forces of institutions.

Notes

1. Berlin, Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), MfS HA I/16793, 'Analyse über ledige Offiziere im Verantwortungsbereich des Grenzkommando-Süd, die älter als 28 Jahre sind bzw. das 28. Lebensjahr erreicht haben', 19 April 1988, fol. 3.
2. Ibid.
3. M. Simpson, 'The Metrosexual Is Dead: Long Live the "Spornosexual"', *Daily Telegraph*, 10 June 2014.
4. L. Guadagnino (dir.), *Call Me by Your Name* (Sony Pictures, 2017). See Y. Desta, 'Armie Hammer Has the Most Ridiculous Digital Editing Story of the Year', *Vanity Fair*, 29 November 2017.
5. M.I. Black, 'The Boys are Not All Right', *New York Times*, 21 February 2018; B. Barth, 'The Good Men: Inside the All-Male Group Taking on Modern Masculinity', *The Guardian*, 18 June 2018; A. Wendt, 'Bist du gesund, Mann?', *Focus Magazin*, 30 June 2018, 70–77.
6. R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), 98–99.

7. See *ibid.*, 119–42.
8. See the articles from a 2009 conference in K. Leeder (ed.), *Re-reading East Germany: The Literature and Film of the GDR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
9. S. Urban, *Plan D* (Frankfurt am Main: Schöffling, 2011); D. Young, *Stasi Child* (London: twenty7, 2015); S. Spielberg (dir.), *Bridge of Spies* (Disney, 2015); D. Leitch (dir.), *Atomic Blonde* (Focus, 2017).
10. See e.g. S. Jones, *The Media of Testimony: Remembering the East German Stasi in the Berlin Republic* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); A. Ring, *After the Stasi: Collaboration and the Struggle for Sovereign Subjectivity in the Writing of German Unification* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).
11. D. Abenheim, 'German Unity and Military Professionalism: The Officer Corps of the German Armed Forces Confronts the Legacy of the *Nationale Volksarmee*, November 1989–January 1993', in D. Wetzel and T.S. Hamerow (eds), *International Politics and German History: The Past Informs the Present* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 103–26 (at 105).
12. See A. Wagner, 'Stacheldrahtsicherheit: Die politische und militärische Planung und Durchführung des Mauerbaus 1961', in H.-H. Hertle, K.H. Jarausch and C. Kießmann (eds), *Mauerbau und Mauerfall: Ursachen – Verlauf – Auswirkungen* (Berlin: Links, 2002), 119–37; and H.-H. Hertle, *Der Fall der Mauer: Die unbeabsichtigte Selbstauflösung des SED-Staates* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1996), 111–14.
13. A. Bickford, *Fallen Elites: The Military Other in Post-unification Germany* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 3.
14. K. Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 48.
15. See J. Hell, *Post-fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and the Literature of East Germany* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); L. Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008).
16. R. Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 168.
17. On censorship and its effects on GDR writers and filmmakers, see D. Berghahn, *Hollywood behind the Wall: The Cinema of East Germany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); and S. Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism: Negotiating Space in the GDR Literary Sphere* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011).
18. S. Brockmann, *The Writers' State: Constructing East German Literature, 1945–1959* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2015), 9.
19. S. Scholz, *Männlichkeit erzählen: Lebensgeschichtliche Identitätskonstruktionen ostdeutscher Männer* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2004), 190–91 and 194–95.
20. Bickford sets out this tension between the extraordinary and the universal in *Fallen Elites*, 9–10.
21. D. Bald, 'Militärpolitische Restauration: Zur Wehrpflicht im geteilten Deutschland', in E. Opitz and F.S. Rödiger (eds), *Allgemeine Wehrpflicht: Geschichte, Probleme, Perspektiven* (Bremen: Temmen, 1995), 75–87 (at 82).
22. R. Wenzke, *Ulbrichts Soldaten: Die Nationale Volksarmee 1956–1971* (Berlin: Links, 2013), 31.
23. R. Wenzke, 'Auf dem Wege zur Kaderarmee: Aspekte der Rekrutierung, Sozialstruktur und personellen Entwicklung des entstehenden Militärs in der SBZ/DDR bis 1952/53', in B. Thoß (ed.), *Volksarmee schaffen – ohne Geschrei! Studien zu den Anfängen einer 'verdeckten Aufrüstung' in der SBZ/DDR 1947–1952* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1994), 205–72 (at 249–60).

24. W. Eisert, 'Zu den Anfängen der Sicherheits- und Militärpolitik der SED-Führung 1948 bis 1952', in Thoß, *Volksarmee schaffen*, 141–204 (at 172–73); Wenzke, *Ulbrichts Soldaten*, 32.
25. Wenzke, 'Auf dem Wege', 261.
26. Wenzke, *Ulbrichts Soldaten*, 36–37 and 41; T.M. Forster, *Die NVA: Kernstück der Landesverteidigung der DDR* (Cologne: Markus, 1980), 29.
27. 'Gesetz über die allgemeine Wehrpflicht (Wehrpflichtgesetz) vom 24. Januar 1962', *Gesetzblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, vol. 1, 1962, 2–6.
28. C.T. Müller, *Tausend Tage bei der 'Asche': Unteroffiziere in der NVA – Untersuchungen zu Alltag und Binnenstruktur einer 'sozialistischen' Armee* (Berlin: Links, 2003), 54.
29. S. Kolditz and U. Egger, interview, in Egger (dir.), *An die Grenze* (Colonia, 2007), additional material, 9.38–10.00; P.J. Lapp, 'Die Grenztruppen der DDR (1961–1989)', in T. Diedrich, H. Ehlert and R. Wenzke (eds), *Im Dienste der Partei: Handbuch der bewaffneten Organe der DDR* (Berlin: Links, 1998), 225–52 (at 226); P. Ahonen, *Death at the Berlin Wall* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 220.
30. E.g. M. Sollorz, 'Der IM "Georg Schröder": Jens Dobler im Interview mit Michael Sollorz', in J. Dobler (ed.), *Verzaubert in Nord-Ost: Die Geschichte der Berliner Lesben und Schwulen in Prenzlauer Berg, Pankow und Weißensee* (Berlin: Gmünder, 2009), 248–55.
31. J. Steike, 'Von den "Inneren Truppen" zur Bereitschaftspolizei (1953–1990)', in Diedrich, Ehlert and Wenzke, *Im Dienste der Partei*, 69–95 (at 81–82).
32. T. Diedrich, 'Gegen Aufrüstung, Volksunterdrückung und politische Gängelei: Widerstandsverhalten und politische Verfolgung in der Aufbau- und Konsolidierungsphase der DDR-Streitkräfte 1948 bis 1968', in R. Wenzke (ed.), *Staatsfeinde in Uniform? Widerständiges Verhalten und politische Verfolgung in der NVA* (Berlin: Links, 2005), 31–195 (at 149–51); 'Anordnung des Nationalen Verteidigungsrates der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik über die Aufstellung von Baueinheiten im Bereich des Ministeriums für Nationale Verteidigung (Bausoldatenanordnung) vom 7. September 1964', *Gesetzblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, vol. 1, 1964, 129–31.
33. B. Eisenfeld and P. Schicketanz, *Bausoldaten in der DDR: Die 'Zusammenführung feindlich-negativer Kräfte' in der NVA* (Berlin: Links, 2011), 127–31, 144–46 and 167–94.
34. 'Gesetz über den Wehrdienst in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Wehrdienstgesetz) vom 25. März 1982', *Gesetzblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, vol. 1, 1982, 221–29.
35. N. Leonhard, 'The National People's Army as an Object of (Non) Remembrance: The Place of East Germany's Military Heritage in Unified Germany', *German Politics and Society* 26(4) (2008), 150–63 (at 158).
36. E.g. D. Morgan, "'It Will Make a Man of You': Notes on National Service, Masculinity and Autobiography', special issue, *Studies in Sexual Politics* 17 (1987); A. Ahlbäck, *Manhood and the Making of the Military: Conscriptio, Military Service and Masculinity in Finland, 1917–39* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).
37. For example, in the Israeli and American contexts, see respectively U. Klein, 'The Military and Masculinities in Israeli Society', in P.R. Higate (ed.), *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 191–200 (at 191–92); and E.A. Disler, *Language and Gender in the Military: Honorifics, Narrative, and Ideology in Air Force Talk* (Amherst, NY: Cambria, 2008), xvii.
38. A. Bickford, 'The Militarization of Masculinity in the Former German Democratic Republic', in Higate, *Military Masculinities*, 157–73 (at 158).

39. W. Ulbricht, 'DDR setzt Bemühungen zur Verständigung fort: Rede Walter Ulbrichts am ersten Sitzungstag der Konferenz in Prag', *Neues Deutschland*, 28 January 1956, 1–2 (at 2).
40. See R. Wenzke, *Die NVA und der Prager Frühling 1968: Die Rolle Ulbrichts und der DDR-Streitkräfte bei der Niederschlagung der tschechoslowakischen Reformbewegung* (Berlin: Links, 1995).
41. Discussions of masculinities that deviate from military ideals are especially prominent in the context of the First World War: T. Kühne, "...aus diesem Krieg werden nicht nur harte Männer heimkehren": Kriegskameradschaft und Männlichkeit im 20. Jahrhundert', in T. Kühne (ed.), *Männergeschichte – Geschlechtergeschichte: Männlichkeit im Wandel der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1996), 174–92; S. Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); J. Crouthamel, *An Intimate History of the Front: Masculinity, Sexuality, and German Soldiers in the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
42. P.J. Lapp, *Gefechtsdienst im Frieden: Das Grenzregime der DDR* (Bonn: Bernard & Graefe, 1999), 233–37.
43. Lapp, 'Die Grenztruppen', 234.
44. Ahonen, *Death at the Berlin Wall*, 42. See e.g. B. Hans, 'Schießbefehl-Streit: Honecker, Heuchelei, Hysterie', *Der Spiegel*, 13 September 2007.
45. Ahonen, *Death at the Berlin Wall*, 219. See also P.J. Lapp, 'Verwirrung um den "Schießbefehl"', *Deutschland Archiv* 40 (2007), 773–75.
46. Ahonen, *Death at the Berlin Wall*. I discuss violence at the border further in Chapter 2.
47. Bald, 'Militärpolitische Restauration', 80.
48. Scholz, *Männlichkeit*, 189.
49. Bickford, *Fallen Elites*, 7 and 12.
50. R. Grafe, *Deutsche Gerechtigkeit: Prozesse gegen DDR-Grenzschilder und ihre Befehlsgeber*, 2nd edn (Munich: Siedler, 2004), 18.
51. Ahonen, *Death at the Berlin Wall*, 261 and 273.
52. See S. Hobe and C. Tietje, 'Schießbefehl an der DDR-Grenze und ius cogens', *Archiv des Völkerrechts* 32 (1994), 130–48; A.J. McAdams, *Judging the Past in Unified Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); A. Künzler, 'Judicial Legitimacy and the Role of Courts: Explaining the Transitional Context of the German Border Guard Cases', *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 32 (2012), 349–81.
53. Scholz, *Männlichkeit*, 188.
54. *Ibid.*, 257.
55. J. Hasselmann, T. Loy and N. Garrelts, 'Wenn die Stasi-Garde in Berlin trainiert', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 11 May 2013.
56. J. Ward, *Not Gay: Sex between Straight White Men* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 5.
57. In historical scholarship, Josie McLellan's *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) is an excellent example of how to account for the relationship between bodies and institutions.
58. See e.g. J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); J. Butler, 'Introduction', in *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1–23.
59. 'Wehrdienstgesetz 1982'.
60. C. Lemke and G. Neugebauer, 'Frauen und Militär in der DDR', *Deutschland Archiv* 18 (1985), 411–26 (at 419–20).
61. See O. Sasson-Levy, 'Feminism and Military Gender Practices: Israeli Women Soldiers in "Masculine" Roles', *Sociological Inquiry* 73 (2003), 440–65; R. Woodward and

- T. Winter, *Sexing the Soldier: The Politics of Gender and the Contemporary British Army* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 74–76.
62. Connell, *Gender and Power*; and R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995).
63. Connell, *Masculinities*, 72. Emphasis in original.
64. *Ibid.*, 77–78 and 79–80.
65. J. Tosh, ‘Hegemonic Masculinity and the History of Gender’, in S. Dudink, K. Hagemann and J. Tosh (eds), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 41–58; E. Newlands, ‘Preparing and Resisting the War Body: Training in the British Army’, in Kevin McSorley (ed.), *War and the Body: Militarisation, Practice and Experience* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 35–50; C. Duncanson, *Forces for Good? Military Masculinities and Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
66. M. Fenemore, *Sex, Thugs and Rock ‘n’ Roll: Teenage Rebels in Cold-War East Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 11–12. See also S. Satjukow and R. Grieds (eds), *Sozialistische Helden: Eine Kulturgeschichte von Propagandafiguren in Osteuropa und der DDR* (Berlin: Links, 2002).
67. S. Scholz, ‘“Sozialistische Soldatenpersönlichkeiten” und “Helden der Arbeit”: Hegemoniale Männlichkeiten in der DDR’, paper presented to the first conference of the Arbeitskreis für interdisziplinäre Männer- und Geschlechterforschung (Stuttgart, 2001). Retrieved 30 May 2019 from https://www.fk12.tu-dortmund.de/cms/ISO/Medienpool/Archiv-Alte-Dateien/arbeitsbereiche/soziologie_der_geschlechterverhaeltnisse/Medienpool/AIM_Beitraege_erste_Tagung/Scholz.pdf; and S. Scholz, ‘Vom starken Helden zum zärtlichen Vater? Männlichkeit und Emotionalität in der DDR’, in M. Burotta and N. Verheyen (eds), *Die Präsenz der Gefühle: Männlichkeit und Emotion in der Moderne* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010), 203–28.
68. See G.L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 17–39.
69. E.g. *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins: Ein Ratgeber für den Soldaten*, 16th edn (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, [c. 1974]), 34–39.
70. D. Niemetz, *Das feldgraue Erbe: Die Wehrmachteinflüsse im Militär der SBZ/DDR* (Berlin: Links, 2006). See Chapter 3.
71. R.W. Connell and J.W. Messerschmidt, ‘Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept’, *Gender and Society* 19 (2005), 829–59 (at 833). See e.g. S.M. Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities: Key Themes and New Directions* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), 92–94.
72. Connell, *Masculinities*, 78–79 and 80–81.
73. *Ibid.*, 154–57.
74. Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 15–51.
75. *Ibid.*, 1–3.
76. *Ibid.*, 2.
77. P.R. Higate, ‘“Soft Clerks” and “Hard Civvies”: Pluralizing Military Masculinities’, in Higate, *Military Masculinities*, 27–42.
78. Bickford, ‘The Militarization of Masculinity’.
79. The reasons for the widespread use of the term ‘movement’ (*Bewegung*) are unclear, but may reflect the notional conception of these informal hierarchies as surreptitious challenges to formal military structures.
80. Bickford, ‘The Militarization of Masculinity’, 166.
81. C.T. Müller, ‘Die “EK-Bewegung” in den Kasernen der NVA: Eine Form von “sekundärer Anpassung” in “totalen Institutionen”’, in H. Ehlert and M. Rogg (eds), *Militär, Staat*

- und Gesellschaft in der DDR: Forschungsfelder, Ergebnisse, Perspektiven* (Berlin: Links, 2004), 559–83.
82. See Raz Yosef's work on the Israeli context: *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 48–83.
 83. Butler, 'Introduction', 2.
 84. Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 40–55.
 85. S. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 55.
 86. A. Winger and J. Winger, *Deutschland 83*, dir. by S. Radsai and E. Berger (FremantleMedia International, 2015): hereinafter referenced in the text. A. Winger and J. Winger, *Deutschland 86*, dir. by F. Cossen and A. Feldhusen, premiered on SundanceTV (USA) and Amazon Prime (Germany), 19 October 2018.
 87. A. Fry, 'Sundance Struggles with Language Barrier', *Drama Quarterly*, 14 August 2015. Retrieved 30 May 2019 from <http://dramaquarterly.com/sundance-struggles-with-language-barrier>.
 88. M. Ehrenberg and J. Huber, "'Deutschland 83" endet mit Quotientief: Diese Serie passt nicht ins deutsche Fernsehen', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 18 December 2015.
 89. 'Deutschland 83 Becomes UK's Highest Rated Foreign-Language Drama', Channel 4, press release, 12 January 2016. Retrieved 30 May 2019 from <http://www.channel4.com/press/news/deutschland-83-becomes-uks-highest-rated-foreign-language-drama>.
 90. F.H. von Donnersmarck (dir.), *Das Leben der Anderen* (Buena Vista, 2006). Most famously, W. Becker (dir.), *Good Bye, Lenin!* (X Filme, 2003) dramatizes its own role in the ongoing Western mediation of the GDR. See also P. Cooke, 'Performing "Ostalgia": Leander Haußmann's *Sonnenallee*', *German Life and Letters* 56 (2003), 156–67.
 91. I use German rank names throughout to avoid confusion caused by translation: see the Glossary for US and UK equivalents.
 92. Winger and Winger, *Deutschland 86*, Episode 1, 9:28–9:30.
 93. For historical discussion of East Germany's involvement in Africa, see L. Madureira, "'Kalashnikovs, Not Coca-Cola, Bring Self-Determination to Angola": The Two Germanys, Lusophone Africa, and the Rhetoric of Colonial Difference', in V. Langbehn and M. Salama (eds), *German Colonialism; Race, the Holocaust, and Postwar Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 275–93; and S. Gehrig, 'Reaching out to the Third World: East Germany's Anti-apartheid and Socialist Human Rights Campaign', *German History* 36 (2018), 574–97.
 94. 'Das ist eine Orange. Du sagst Apfelsine, dann denkt sie, was ist'n jetzt los'. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.
 95. M. Bay (dir.), *Pearl Harbor* (Buena Vista, 2001); S. Mendes (dir.), *Jarhead* (Universal, 2005).
 96. See Jack Halberstam's brief discussion of James Bond: *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 3–4.
 97. Winger and Winger, *Deutschland 86*, Episode 3, 6:02–6:24.
 98. Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 190–91.
 99. M. Fullbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 11–12.

Part I

**MILITARY MASCULINE IDEALS
AND THEIR LIMITS**

Chapter 1

**PLURALIZING THE GDR'S SOCIALIST
SOLDIER PERSONALITY**



By directing attention towards individual embodied negotiations of masculinity within military and surveillance institutions in East and West, *Deutschland 83* and *Deutschland 86* invite us to reconceive of norms of masculinity in GDR society. The two series encourage a look back at the history of representations of East German soldiers to move away from an understanding of soldiers as a cypher for state repression or for rigid gender roles. Far from being monolithic masculine ideals disseminated from above, the masculinities in representations of soldiers since the introduction of conscription in 1962 show complex embodied negotiations of military service, in which vulnerability, theatricality, emotions and even same-sex desires are foregrounded.

Discussions of masculinities in the GDR have generally focused on the society's ideals, resulting in the impression that masculinity was relatively constant and so powerful that men had few options to articulate less normative gender roles. Mary Fulbrook, for example, explains her focus on femininity in her chapter on gender in *The People's State* (2005) by suggesting that '[o]fficial conceptions of masculinity changed very little during the forty years of the GDR'.¹ Her assertion that East German masculinities were unchanging corresponds with George Mosse's research emphasizing the continuity of ideal masculinity in German culture since the nineteenth century.² Fulbrook briefly suggests that men were 'challenged to rethink their domestic roles or develop notions of the "new man"' in response to changing constructions of femininity.³ However, her intricate exploration of the development

of women's roles leaves little space to explore how men's gender roles were rethought in relation to '[o]fficial conceptions of masculinity', and she later argues that 'male gender roles were rarely, if ever, explicitly challenged or significantly shifted'.⁴

The premise of this book, which builds on and extends Fulbrook's work, is that the GDR's masculine ideals were themselves always plural and subject to substantial change and revision during the state's forty-year lifespan. Moreover, the negotiation of ideals of East German masculinity continues in depictions of the GDR after reunification. By conceiving of these ideals as negotiated, I am not suggesting rigid, more or less universally accepted standards of masculinity to which men and women were forced to accommodate their everyday gender practice. Rather, these standards were complex composites, influenced by the SED's policies and propaganda – including literature and film – but also by the individual and collective values of East German citizens, the demands of everyday life within the state's institutions, and the limitations of citizens' abilities to emulate, perform and embody ideal masculinities. In this chapter, I show how even the officially sanctioned literature of the NVA's military press presents masculinities that are complex and varied. These works suggest a more reciprocal relationship between official discourses and individual lived experience than is often allowed for in the writing on gender in East Germany. This mutual influence between ideals and embodied negotiations of ideal masculinities shows that the state's gender order supports Fulbrook's wider arguments about the GDR's 'participatory dictatorship'.

Some initial studies have provided a more nuanced picture of gender in the GDR by analysing the complexities of masculinity. For example, Mark Fenemore's work on youth culture has shown that masculinities changed substantially over the GDR's forty-year existence and operated within a complicated system of competing official and subcultural forms of prestige.⁵ More recently, numerous scholars have asserted the necessity of viewing changes to femininity in the context of changing expectations of masculinity. Josie McLellan views changes to gender roles over the GDR's history as part of a dialogue between shifts in femininity and masculinity, and Georgina Paul analyses masculinities and femininities together in her overview of gender in GDR literature.⁶ Numerous publications on East German masculinities, focusing primarily on ideal forms of masculinity, have made important contributions to our understanding of how such ideals were constructed and promoted.⁷

Three intersecting masculine ideals have been identified most prominently. First, as Fulbrook argues, GDR masculinities were often defined in relation to 'the rather muscular ideal of the "traditional" working-class male', the heroic worker.⁸ Holger Brandes's post-reunification interviews with men

from the former East and West have also shown that working-class identity remained an important means of differentiating East German masculinities from post-1990 gender norms.⁹ The second masculine ideal is the antifascist fighter, which Julia Hell has explored in relation to depictions of father figures.¹⁰ Finally, the third masculine ideal is the so-called 'socialist soldier personality' (*sozialistische Soldatenpersönlichkeit*), which has received comparably little attention. Sylka Scholz describes this pluralization of hegemonic masculinities in Connell's terms, relating them closely to men's professions and showing how multiple hegemonic forms can coexist.¹¹ We should see these three forms of ideal masculinity not as competing forms of hegemonic masculinity so much as different manifestations of a set of hegemonic values that are never reducible to a single form of gender practice. They reveal the importance of Connell's plural and shifting understanding of hegemonic masculinity, as men and women could appeal to hegemonic values and norms in different ways. The three ideals are entirely compatible with one another and were always in dialogue: the heroic worker and the socialist soldier are often depicted in an antifascist frame, and most soldiers or antifascist fighters in official publications come from working-class backgrounds.

The socialist soldier personality differs from the other ideals in its high degree of visibility, both in everyday life in the GDR and in literature and film. In GDR society, visibility was achieved using the NVA's uniform: requiring conscripts to wear their uniform even on leave was the institution's way of enhancing and enforcing its visibility as a guarantor of ideal GDR masculinity. As Andrew Bickford has argued, soldiers in uniform are one of the most visible representations of state power, and compulsory conscription ensured that young men were forced to play this representative role themselves.¹² Beyond its visibility, the influence of this masculine ideal became particularly acute during military service, which made it the most actively enforced of the state's masculine ideals. Yet the six-monthly influx of new, often unkempt and unenthusiastic conscripts meant that the ideal was always under pressure and always negotiated by individuals. Literature and films depicting military service therefore offer a chance to explore this ideal. The works suggest that it is rather more complex and less coherent than its bureaucratic label might suggest.

In this chapter, I identify features of the socialist soldier personality by focusing on press statements, soldiers' manuals and photographs. I then turn to two novels that explore these ideals in fictional military units: *Härtetest* (*Endurance Test*, 1978) by Wolfgang Held (1930–2014) and *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* (*There Is No No-Man's-Land*, 1980) by Walter Flegel (1934–2012). Military literature from the late 1970s demonstrates the changes to conceptions of masculinity at this time, after the expatriation of Wolf Biermann and in the context of a growing variety of subcultures that

coexisted in this final period of the GDR's history. These novels show the NVA's ideals having a powerful normative force. Yet with conscripts' diverse range of civilian occupations and identities, the ideals appear both elastic enough to absorb conscripts with many different strengths and adaptive enough so that, in the end, no soldier is excluded from belonging to Held's and Flegel's idealized military communities. As I discuss in Chapters 5 and 6, there is a substantial disjuncture between this image of the socialist soldier personality as a shifting and flexible ideal and autobiographical descriptions of military service by ex-conscripts. Yet such novelistic statements of the complex and fluid nature of military ideals demonstrate the NVA's and the SED's awareness of the need to present military ideals in an inclusive way to meet their recruitment targets. This change in representation may not have increased enthusiasm for the military, but these portrayals show that the NVA's presentation of its ideals was influenced by conscripts' diverse embodiments of military masculinities, and indeed by the refusal or inability of many to reconcile their own values with the military organization.

The Socialist Soldier Personality

In line with Raewyn Connell's emphasis on hegemonic masculinity as a 'configuration of gender practice' and Kaja Silverman's reminder that ideal masculinity exists not in the abstract, but only in 'discursive practice and its psychic residue', the socialist soldier personality depends on the practice of members of the military and on representations that construct and shape gender ideals.¹³ Official pronouncements on the nature of socialist soldier personalities engage closely with the shifting, embodied and representational quality of masculine norms, allowing for varied interpretations and approaches to being a soldier. Speeches and manuals issued to conscripts, including photographs and press images, play an important role in constructing and disseminating the GDR's military masculine ideals. These sources show a continued awareness of the need for these images to reflect a diversity of ways in which a conscript might embody and live up to the socialist soldier personality.

The socialist soldier is defined most clearly against the West German 'mercenary' (*Söldner*), who is reduced to a caricature so that socialist soldiers might be contrasted with the Bundeswehr soldier. As my discussion of *Deutschland 83* has suggested, differences in discipline, behaviour and values were often relatively small, and depended on the ideological framing of masculinity in the two militaries. The framing of soldier versus mercenary posits a masculinity in the East that is more progressive and inclusive than in the West. The term 'mercenary' implies that the Western soldier is both financial

beneficiary and passive victim of the state's belligerence. The East German soldier, by contrast, is depicted as an active class warrior. As Armeegeneral Heinz Keßler wrote:

the soldier in the National People's Army is superior to the mercenary of the Bundeswehr precisely and above all because he fulfils his military duty in the knowledge that he is serving the most just cause in the world, the defence of the achievements of the workers, the defence of the community of socialist states.¹⁴

The ideal soldier, in the logic of Keßler and the NVA leadership, is assured of his social and ideological mission. NVA soldiers are held up as defenders of working people, possessed of a class-consciousness that enables them to understand this task as the highest cause. By contrast, the Bundeswehr soldier is constructed as the foot soldier of capital who acts against the working classes and against his own interests. This argument is made in a 1984 volume of questions and answers for soldiers: 'The soldier in [the Bundeswehr] represents not the needs of the workers, but the interests of powerful monopolists, the profiteers of the arms race and the politics of confrontation.'¹⁵ However, if this class-consciousness is the ultimate factor unifying socialist soldier personalities, then the GDR's military masculinities have substantial latitude for variation, so long as all are bound by their common cause.

In contrast with the individualizing, even atomizing language of the mercenary applied to the West, socialist soldiers were associated with comradeship and collective spirit. As Thomas Kühne has described, the concept of comradeship had been a pillar of German military organizations for many decades prior to the NVA's foundation.¹⁶ This language of brotherhood is common to many militaries, most notably the elite soldiers of the United States Marine Corps.¹⁷ In the NVA, this idea of comradeship was framed in terms of 'socialist relationships' between soldiers, an idea that was fleshed out in soldiering manuals: 'The attitude of each individual towards the fulfilment of his military duties is primarily shaped by the atmosphere in the collective, by mutual respect, trusting relationships and honest, comradely reciprocity.'¹⁸ This extract from the 1984 manual creates an idealized image of a unit in which each soldier looks out for the other, thereby securing collective success.

This idealized community is also suggested in the photographs that accompany the manual issued to soldiers on enlistment, *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins* (*The Meaning of Being a Soldier*), and yet these images always bear signs of the disjunction between theory and practice within these military communities. In the 1974 manual, there are three images of smiling young soldiers together, including one of five young soldiers singing together (see Figure 1.1). Guitar



Figure 1.1 Five soldiers making music together. *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins: Ein Ratgeber für den Soldaten*, 16th edn (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, [c. 1974]). © Eulenspiegel Verlagsgruppe Buchverlage GmbH, Berlin. Used with permission.

music and singing unite the men in a tableau of togetherness, as they form close bonds through recreation. Yet the staged, even awkward quality of the scene prevents this togetherness from seeming natural or unself-conscious. All men are, in stage choreography terms, cheating out – facing the camera rather than each other – and the composition is striking, based around a diagonal that focuses attention on the soldier at the front playing the guitar. One man looks directly into the camera. By returning the viewer's gaze, he both draws us into the scene and arrests our vision, calling attention to the photograph's self-conscious construction. The framed print in the background is precisely centred, adding to the photograph's careful composition. The print is of Walter Womacka's 1962 painting *Am Strand (On the Beach)*, showing a young heterosexual couple lounging on a beach. The painting's indistinct, abstracted beach landscape gives it an air of fantasy. Here, the painting reminds us of the temporary nature of the military community, and its fantasy of the young couple suggests the soldiers' absent girlfriends and wives, so as to diffuse any homosocial eroticism. On closer inspection of the uniforms, the man playing the guitar is an *Unteroffizier*, the other men's superior. The music making is therefore framed within the military

hierarchy, with lower-ranking soldiers singing along to their commander's tune in imitation of their obedience in training. The image not only speaks of community and camaraderie, but also reminds conscripts of the boundaries of masculine intimacy and of the pervasiveness of military hierarchies.

The collective, then, was never solely about a brotherly relation, and any group was always subject to military hierarchies. Nevertheless, the NVA emphasized that these collectives were not homogeneous, but rather created the conditions for individuals to realize their potential: 'In your military fighting collective, you can develop into a socialist soldier personality; you can prove your status as a military class warrior.'¹⁹ Press discussions of the military particularly emphasized soldiers' individual prowess, including characteristics such as independent thinking and technical competence that gave an impression of a military that valued members' individual contributions.²⁰ One way, supposedly, that the NVA supported men to achieve their individual potential more than a Western army was by appealing to soldiers' initiative: 'members of the National People's Army are not only permitted, but even required ... to shape their military service on their own initiative [*initiativreich mitzugestalten*]. This is achieved above all by fulfilling the orders of superiors with precision and creativity'.²¹ The verb 'mitgestalten' describes a military created by the actions and interactions of its members, closer to the plural understanding of military masculinity that I am proposing. However, this quotation immediately undermines this impression; initiative was strictly circumscribed and was only to be exercised in finding creative solutions to follow orders.

Traditional characteristics of soldierly masculinity such as obedience do play an important role, then, in the NVA's self-presentation. Obedience and discipline emerge particularly strongly from closer analysis of the NVA's descriptions of socialist relationships and the military community. Even press articles, aimed at the wider public and not just NVA members, describe ideal military men 'who fulfil their every duty to the leadership of the Party and the State'.²² In soldiering manuals too, discipline is essential to the ideal socialist soldier. To answer the question 'Order and Initiative – A Contradiction?', the 1984 guide attempts to clarify this tension:

In our socialist army, orders are the incontrovertible law. An army member is to carry out any order he receives assiduously, within the required time scale, and with the commitment of his entire being ... It is therefore important that any use of the soldier's own initiative should be in accord with, and serve to carry out, the orders he has received.²³

The emphasis on obedience far outweighs individual initiative, and powerful modifiers such as 'incontrovertible' (*unumstößlich*) and 'assiduously'

(*gewissenhaft*) intensify the insistence that one's entire self be invested in carrying out orders. Initiative is a secondary concern and must not detract from unquestioning obedience. Most passages discussing responses to orders echo these almost tautological intensifying phrases: 'every order under all circumstances is to be carried out in an assiduous and timely manner'.²⁴ The socialist soldier personality therefore diverged little from long-established traditions of unquestioning obedience in German military cultures, despite its shift in emphasis onto collective spirit and class-consciousness.

Strict discipline was combined with language of strength, endurance, and even aggression, which sits awkwardly alongside the insistence on trust, respect and comradeship.²⁵ For example, *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins* repeatedly describes the aggression expected of NVA conscripts. It calls for 'strength and endurance, military excellence and iron discipline, an unfettered aggression [*Kampfwille*] and an unbreakable commitment to victory [*Wille zum Sieg*]'.²⁶ The emphasis on strength and endurance is combined with the violence and aggression more usually associated in the GDR with the National Socialist or Prussian military past. Formulations such as 'unfettered' (*unbändig*) and 'unbreakable' (*durch nichts zu brechen*) demand a persistent and unthinking aggression that jars with the army's assertion of its peaceable and comradely nature. Moreover, the disjuncture between emphasis on discipline and the adjective 'unfettered', with its connotations of uncontrolled and uncontrollable aggression, underlines the implicit contradictions even within the military's own presentation of its masculine ideals.

The requirement for strength and aggression at times tips over into the suggestion of violence. In the photographs at the back of *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins*, around ten images show soldiers working with deadly machinery, tanks, missiles, guns and artillery. One example even gestures to the potentially destructive and dangerous effects of this arsenal (see Figure 1.2). This image presents three soldiers crouching down operating an artillery gun. Two at the front are supporting the front legs to prevent inaccuracy caused by the gun's recoil, and a third soldier crouches behind the gun. The barrel of the gun is sending up a plume of smoke, as it has presumably just been fired. The three soldiers' positions mirror one another, each crouched on one knee, hunched forward, eyes and face straight ahead and a determined expression visible under their helmets. The photograph frames the soldiers amidst the destruction caused by such weaponry. Close behind them, a house lies in ruins, with timber and rubble filling the frame. The smoke from the artillery fire is carefully positioned so as not to conceal this ruined building. The windows all seem black and empty, the glass presumably having been blown out. The foreground frames the soldiers on two sides, with a brick wall on the right-hand side of the shot and another destroyed wooden construction diagonally across the bottom of the photograph. These are soldiers aware of



Figure 1.2 Three soldiers show focus and concentration amidst artillery fire in a ruined building. *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins: Ein Ratgeber für den Soldaten*, 16th edn (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, [c. 1974]). © Eulenspiegel Verlagsgruppe Buchverlage GmbH, Berlin. Used with permission.

the damage wrought by their weapons, who remain unfazed and focused, and whose concentration on their task is absolute. The image is not just one of obedience, strength and discipline, but of active aggression, preparing conscripts to fire weapons, face the consequences of their actions and continue following orders amidst destruction or chaos.

The NVA fought to temper this image of aggression with a public image of support for soldiers' personal development. The implication was that there was room in the NVA for many different ways of meeting the military's standards, and that with the correct effort and commitment any East German man could integrate successfully. The reason for this was in part a difficulty in meeting Warsaw Pact recruitment targets for soldiers committing to military careers.²⁷ Yet in these manuals and images, any individuality is always subject

to a normalizing force, such that differences are neutralized in the name not only, or even primarily, of military efficiency, but also of the need for a certain kind of socialist man in society. Although Silverman's concept of the 'dominant fiction' can seem more monolithic than the more varied and plural ideal I am delineating here, her psychoanalytic model helps explain this normalizing force. 'The dominant fiction', she writes, 'neutralizes the contradictions which organize the social formation by fostering collective identifications and desires.' She continues: 'both the symbolic order and the mode of production are able to protect themselves from interruption and potential change only so long as that ideological system commands collective belief – so long, that is, as it succeeds in defining the psychic reality of the prototypical subject'.²⁸ In the context of the NVA, fostering investment in certain norms and standards, while retaining space for individual initiative and approaches, can produce a more powerful normalizing effect than a refusal of individual difference. Silverman suggests that individual psychic investments sustain the dominance of certain forms of masculinity through their ability to shape individual values, beliefs and practice.

These speeches and soldiers' manuals were an important means of creating such investments, with *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins* rereleased almost every year. However, literature and film were privileged more highly in the GDR as effective ways of influencing public opinion and, as Silverman would have it, the investments of individuals in the state's dominant ideals and values. In 1956, the Press of the Ministry for National Defence was founded, renamed the German Military Press in 1960 and then, amidst the détente and *Ostpolitik* of the 1970s, the Military Press of the GDR (Militärverlag der DDR) from 1973. Bernard Decker has discussed the output of the Press, arguing that few East German authors engaged with the NVA, even though military fiction was actively encouraged in order to impart the military's values and policies to the public.²⁹ Decker perhaps overestimates the demand for such works, which appeared even in the GDR to limit writers' and filmmakers' engagement with military themes. The attitude to the military and to conscription in East Germany was generally lukewarm, and readers seem to have had little time for military novels, except while preparing for or undergoing their own military service.

The novels' genre is also significant, with the military press continuing to produce a form of socialist realism that was sometimes even self-consciously anachronistic by the 1980s.³⁰ In accordance with this style, many novels published by the Militärverlag are formulaic in echoing official statements about the military and its values of masculinity and socialist citizenship. Their third-person narratives often employ a form of collective free indirect style, as well as pronouncements and even moral judgements by the narrator in a generalizing present tense. Yet, as I will show with Held's *Härtetest*

and Flegel's *Es gibt kein Niemandsland*, even the most conformist writing opens up the socialist soldier personality into a plurality of masculinities, and focuses on the ways in which individuals negotiate and embody the military's expectations. In these novels, these negotiations are invariably successful in integrating the individual into the military unit, but the ideal itself is shown as fluid and writers acknowledge men's struggles to reconcile existing identities with the expectations of military service.

***Härtetest* and the Multiplication of Military Masculinities**

Härtetest is among the best examples of how literary depictions of the NVA broaden the range of masculinities under the umbrella of the socialist soldier personality. Held first wrote the novel as the model for a television film of the same name, directed for GDR television by Hubert Hoelzke and broadcast on DDR1 in February 1978.³¹ The close relationship between literary and television production reflects the interest in creating attractive images of the military across media and meant that the story reached a wider audience than comparable novels. Even though reliable viewing figures are not available, the premiere of *Härtetest* on DDR1 at primetime on a Sunday suggests that the state broadcaster was aiming to reach a wide audience.³² The resonance in reviews was underwhelming, and the book itself hardly featured in the press at the time, so it is likely that the actual audience for the work was smaller than intended.³³ Yet both works, and the novel especially, demonstrate an important trend in writing of this time, broadening out depictions of soldiers to show the socialist soldier personality as an inclusive ideal with space for young men to negotiate their own ways of belonging to the military.

Härtetest focuses on the relationship between recently married Andreas and Doris Jungmann: Andreas decides two months after conscription to sign up as an NCO, entailing an extra eighteen months of voluntary service. Doris, who is newly pregnant, threatens to terminate the pregnancy if he does not retract his commitment. While both film and novel follow Andreas and Doris, the novel goes further in exploring military masculinity by focusing more closely on other men in Andreas's unit. The novel alternates between passages dated across four days from 25 to 28 June, which focus on Doris and Andreas's relationship and a military exercise, and flashbacks to the life of each of the men before military service. These flashbacks, interspersed with the exercise, show how the men have risen to the military's challenges in different ways and reveal multiple different masculinities that are accommodated within the NVA's hegemonic masculinity.

The opening is unusual for a military novel: it begins with Doris on a crowded rush-hour tram towards Andreas's barracks. The narrator emphasizes

her determination and confidence: ‘Doris Jungmann ... is not one for self-pity [*keine Zimperliese*]. She knows what she wants. And she knows that you only get your own way when you do not let up.’³⁴ Her resolve appears in an ambivalent light. First, it is a positive characteristic, giving her confidence to rebuke a man who invades her personal space on the tram. However, Doris’s strong-willed character is cast in a different light during her meeting with Andreas, in which she refuses to allow him to extend his service and threatens to terminate the pregnancy: ‘Your word of honour, Andy, or else the child won’t be born’ (14). Her determination sparks a crisis for Andreas. The restrictions on his leave and on visitors in the first months of basic training prohibit him from talking with Doris at length until the weekend, but she gives him an ultimatum that she is booked into a clinic on the Saturday.

The narration further enhances the melodrama, as we read about Andreas and Doris’s illicit meeting through the wire fence of the base as it is watched by the soldier on sentry duty. The sentry’s observations frame the scene: “Damn playacting! [*Scheißspiel*]” growls the sentry, who from his tower can still see the young woman and the white cloth that she is now holding to her face’ (16). The sentry frames the conversation as an act and Doris’s handkerchief as a sign of her upset that she had hidden in her performance of resolve. Held thus foregrounds the melodrama of this encounter, as well as using the sentry’s observations to place readers in the position of voyeurs. As Silverman has commented in her chapter on Rainer Werner Fassbinder, ‘exterioriz[ing] the gaze’ in this way insists on revealing the ‘external scaffolding’ of identity.³⁵ Rather than something fixed or interior, the process of internalization and negotiation by which identity is constructed is thus foregrounded in Held’s narrative too. As Silverman suggests, focusing on the ‘look’ serves to denaturalize and even challenge the dominance of hegemonic masculine identities.³⁶ The narrative shows Doris and Andreas performing to type, within a gender order and a military order that force them to compromise and prevent them from finding a solution. They cannot reconcile the ideals they are struggling with: the demands of being a military wife versus ideals of family and romantic love for Doris, and the requirements of fatherhood and soldiering for Andreas.

Doris’s ultimatum causes a crisis in their marriage, but also challenges Andreas’s commitment to the military, and the novel is most interested in this second challenge. The next episode cuts to a more conventional military scene: “‘Weapon cleaning’ is on the schedule’ (16). Andreas is not present initially, emphasizing the contrast between his conflict with Doris and the camaraderie exhibited by his comrades. The four men are also cleaning Andreas’s rifle so that he can meet with Doris, and Heinz Körner’s so that he can practise his oboe for the NVA music festival. The atmosphere is friendly, as Egon Schornberger and Michael Koschenz chatter about women, to the extent that their commander, Unteroffizier Brettschneider, has to call for

quiet. Despite Andreas's absence, his obedient military behaviour is central to this scene, as Brettschneider reflects on his delay: 'It would be the first time that Jungmann had drawn attention to himself for the wrong reasons; he had even been praised by his platoon leader for exemplary fulfilment of his military duties' (18). From the start, then, the novel sets up several different ways of living up to the hegemonic standards of socialist soldier personalities. For Körner, it involves representing the unit by playing in the festival; for Andreas, his reputation for good behaviour allows him some leeway; and for the other four men, fulfilling their duty means quietly and meticulously polishing their rifles.

The novel repeatedly emphasizes the men's adherence to the aspects of ideal military masculinity articulated in soldiers' manuals. Obedience and commitment to the cause are the most prominent attributes when the platoon is called to a manoeuvre. In novels from the Militärverlag, military exercises are often a narrative vehicle for characters to perform obedience and endurance, and thus signal their investment in the hegemony of the socialist soldier personality.³⁷ Even though the manoeuvre will prevent Andreas getting to Doris, he is unwavering: 'He is convinced that being a soldier demands more than just good will. The army is not a safe harbour for weaklings and shirkers' (75).³⁸ His language combines the generalized platitudes recognizable from *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins* with the coarser language of the military dormitory. In a long passage in free indirect style, the narrator shows the confusion in Andreas's thoughts between concern for Doris, commitment to the exercise and his future as an NCO. Andreas's adherence to hegemonic masculinity is never in doubt. Rather, his indecision represents the different and often conflicting hegemonic masculine values that young men in the GDR were required to negotiate. As he thinks to himself: 'I have been waiting for this combat exercise, but now the alarm comes precisely when I so urgently need the time for my marriage, for my son, who otherwise may not be born at all ... Or is that all part of the endurance test?' (ibid.). The endurance test of the novel's title is less a test of physical strength than of Andreas's ability to triangulate between forms of masculine hegemony. The phrasing of this sentence even suggests that the real test is the emotional and mental resilience required to withstand and resolve his worries about his marriage.

Displays of physical strength do occur in the novel, but not without some irony. The evening before the alarm, a scene in the dormitory is introduced with the following display of ironized homosocial play:

The table floats, held by a single fist, aloft. Jochen Nickel, watch in hand, watches the second hand and Michael Koschenz's trembling arm muscles all at once. The dormitory's macho man is once again showing off his strength to his roommates. (41)

By inserting the parenthetical phrase ‘held by a single fist’ to break up the idiom ‘floats aloft’ (*schwebt in der Luft*), with its connotations of weightlessness, gracefulness or even magic, this image is set in conflict with the fist as an emblem of power and strength. The bathos caused by the laconic third sentence diminishes Koschenz as a ‘macho man’ (*Kraftprotz*) and uses the phrase ‘once again’ (*wieder einmal*) to evoke boredom or resignation towards such displays. Körner and Jungmann both demand that Koschenz call off the performance. Yet, although Nickel’s perspective is not given directly, his careful observation of his comrade’s musculature suggests admiration and fascination. Again, hegemonic masculinity is mediated through the act of looking, which, using Silverman’s analysis, distances and ironizes the presumption of macho strength. This episode sets the tone for the novel’s ambivalent approach to physical strength. While such displays are one way in which characters demonstrate their suitability as military men, they are also bound up with accusations of showing off and with a rejection of the theatricality of shows of male strength. The novel generally rejects the idea that strength is purely physical, in favour of individual skill, intelligence and technical prowess.

The collective side of military service is prominent in the novel, with understanding and cooperation extending up and down the rank hierarchy, as well as between the conscripts. Their relationships even include physical intimacy. When the exercise begins, and the men are clustered together in their armoured vehicle, the tense situation is mitigated by physical closeness between the men: ‘In the darkness inside, the tension mounts. The ear-splitting noise makes conversation impossible. It is comforting to feel the man next to you [*den Nebenmann zu spüren*]’ (75). The oppressive darkness, confined space and deafening noise are counteracted by an image of tactile intimacy enhanced by the darkness and poor visibility. This intimacy is managed carefully, so that it remains a response to an extreme situation of danger and anticipation rather than acquiring any homoerotic charge. The use of a collective free indirect style, in which the narrator seems to give the combined thoughts of the group of men, is typical of socialist realist military or industrial novels. The technique merges their thoughts and feelings just as their bodies are brought together, showing through narrative the collective effects of shared individual investments in a certain ideal, as Silverman describes. The collective in the novel thus becomes something felt and embodied, not just a theory from official manuals.

Closeness and intimacy between the men are not the only things bringing them together; Held balances such intensity with moments of good humour. At the opening of the novel, when Unteroffizier Brettschneider reprimands a group of soldiers for disturbing Körner’s oboe practice, they mimic his serious tone: “‘Art, comrades ... understand?’” one of them crows, capturing

the Unteroffizier's tone with deceptive accuracy and getting a laugh.' The narrator sets up the expectation that the soldiers will be punished for insubordination, but undercuts it after a playful dash: 'Brettschneider shakes his head and – grins' (20). Brettschneider knows to pick his battles with the soldiers, tolerates their high spirits, and exhibits a degree of self-awareness and self-irony. His understanding of Körner's need for quiet and his ability to take a joke set him up as a sympathetic leader with whom soldiers can feel at ease. The novel thus gives form to the socialist relationships of the military's propaganda, suggesting that a mixture of intimacy, understanding and humour are the basis for the good working of the military unit.

A further episode shows the importance of such humour for avoiding the sexualization of men's communal and often homosocial activities, resonating with Jane Ward's discussion of bromance films and prankster comedy in *Not Gay*.³⁹ On the exercise, the soldiers must swim naked across a river, holding their kit above their heads. The soldiers begin joking about the situation, with Preller calling it 'FKK' (*Freikörperkultur*, a form of naturism or nudism) and Nickel complaining 'but it's no fun without girls' (153). The seriousness of the situation, with the nonswimmer Körner having to be helped across by Schornberger and Koschenz, does not prevent the soldiers from seeing themselves from outside, creating an awkward awareness of their own possible objectification or the homoerotic potential of the situation. A man and two women climb out of a car and watch the men swimming: 'They giggle and point in amusement at the pale, naked bodies of the men, whose helmets look curiously awkward' (155). The narrator here adopts an outside view of the soldiers, but stops short of suggesting that such a gaze might sexualize the men's bodies, with the onlookers focusing only on the awkwardness of the soldiers' helmets and pale skin. However, the soldiers themselves do draw attention to their potentially desirable bodies:

'... Imagine you're watching this: more than a dozen stark naked men ...'

'Well built! [*gut gewachsen*]' pipes up Jochen Nickel, who has now gone for cover.

'With helmets and metal tags on their chests ...' (157)

As in Silverman's discussion of Fassbinder, this effect denaturalizes the soldiers' masculinity and makes them and us aware of their vulnerability to objectification: 'Exhibitionism unsettles because it threatens to expose the duplicity inherent in every subject, and every object.'⁴⁰ The ability to laugh at themselves and not take themselves too seriously again emerges as a central element of the socialist soldier personality, but this exchange indicates a self-consciousness about how they appear to others, as well as an awareness of the potentially desirable effect of their well-built bodies that threatens to

undermine the urgency of their cause. As Silverman argues, no man and no image of masculinity, however dominant, can ever fully possess or control the effects of the gaze.

As well as merging the men's consciousnesses within a collective free indirect style, the structure of *Härtetest* is indicative of the tendency among GDR military novels to show varying individual masculinities successfully subsumed under the socialist soldier personality. Held creates various flashbacks to the preconscription lives of soldiers and thus creates each as an individual with a complex civilian identity that is never completely superseded by his military training. Even minor characters receive equal treatment, such as Jochen Nickel. His flashback switches into the first person with the suddenly combative phrase 'Now will you finally let me say something, people?' (170). It gradually emerges that the chapter is a speech delivered as part of a disciplinary procedure for attacking his supervisor at the abattoir where he worked. Yet the section repeatedly signals its other purpose, encouraging us to understand Nickel's personality in the context of his personal hardships: 'What? Of course it's relevant to this case. How else are you going to build up a picture of me? Of my whole self? And especially of my personality?' (171). Nickel's insistence on a rounded personality formed over a lifetime is essential to the novel's understanding of soldierly masculinity, which is never absolute, but always negotiated by individual conscripts in response to their own experiences. Nickel, who was raised by his grandmother after his parents left him and escaped to the West and who dropped out of school to find work, emphasizes his resilience, but also his pride and lack of patience with authority. Yet the flashback, in which he calls his grandmother 'Mutsch', reveals that Nickel has not always been as resilient in military training. His comrades find an unaddressed letter from 'Mutsch', which responds to complaints expressed in a previous letter about conditions in the military. The soldiers never find out whose letter it was, but the flashback ensures that readers pick up on this indication of Nickel's more ambivalent reaction to military service. His pride and first-person performance of toughness are shown in the context of fragility and insecurity. His obedience and endurance in the exercise show the work he has done to integrate himself into the military and to live up to the expectations of the socialist soldier personality, but the letter shows that this process is long and difficult.

The novel thus balances the endurance and obedience expected of soldiers with an attempt to present them as complex individuals, shaped by civilian circumstances and by their personalities, especially their pride and anxieties about military service. Conscripts' superiors repeatedly show awareness of the need to treat soldiers as individuals and to allow them to find their own way of meeting the military's expectations. As Brettschneider puts it: 'if you look closely, everyone is a totally different case ... Everyone! Whoever you choose!'

(46). Yet at times in the novel this apparent care and individual attention tips over into a more paternalistic style of authority that potentially emasculates the conscripts. The final dénouement of the conflict between Andreas and Doris involves his platoon leader, Leutnant Winter, visiting Doris at the clinic in Andreas's stead as a sort of *deus ex machina*. In an extended passage of direct first-person thoughts, we gain an insight into why Winter has involved himself in Doris's decision:

The characteristics determining a socialist soldier personality are influenced by feelings ... Whatever is eating away at a soldier in my platoon hurts me too, unsettles me, ruins my day. (213–14)

The empathy that shapes the 'socialist relationship' between Winter and Andreas has led Winter to intervene without Andreas's knowledge or permission, apparently because he feels Andreas's hardships too strongly. The novel thus ends by emphasizing the importance of emotions for sustaining the military hierarchy and the comradeship of a unit made up of such different individuals. Yet Doris is outside this empathic community, as Winter accuses her of egotism for allowing her own feelings and difficulties to get in the way of her prescribed role as the faithful wife. Moreover, feelings are not the only thing at stake, as revealed in Doris's conversation with Winter, who echoes the official line about the need to defend the achievements of socialism against Western aggression. The final scene of the novel, with a loving reconciliation between Doris and Andreas, finally associates the military's role with the creation of a certain form of masculinity, even if soldiers have a degree of freedom and variation in how they embody this ideal. The final words from Andreas's first-person perspective underline the sort of heterosexual, paternal masculinity required: 'We will love each other and quarrel with each other and have a child. We will be a family...' (220).

The approach to military masculinities in *Härtetest* thus depends on a tension between its aims as a piece of official military literature. Its audience is not primarily young women like Doris, but current and future conscripts, and it addresses their worries about reconciling military service with their families, civilian lives, and wider ambitions and values. The storyline with Doris threatening to abort the child is undoubtedly sensationalist and ultimately rather moralizing, cementing as it does the importance of certain forms of family. Although Nickel's upbringing by his grandmother is portrayed in positive terms, it is in the context of his parents' escape to the West, so that the heterosexual nuclear family remains the ideal. Moreover, the intervention of Leutnant Winter demonstrates the importance of hierarchy even as it emphasizes empathic connections that hold this hierarchy together. Endurance and obedience, signalled not least in the novel's title, remain the

paramount characteristics for military masculinity. These traits are required of all soldiers and, implicitly, their loved ones, in order to live up to the challenge of military service. Tension arises because of the novel's concern with developing individual masculinities. These men never deviate so much from the military's requirements as to cause problems for discipline or for their own psychological wellbeing. Yet the successful adaptation of each conscript to the military aims to assuage young men's worries that they will struggle to fit in or live up to the NVA's expectations. Individual initiative, as called for in *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins*, is sparse in this novel; obedience and patience are the virtues demanded here. But the masculine ideal in Held's novel is always plural and multiple, and its normalizing force is all the more powerful because of its allowances for variation in how soldiers embody and negotiate military values.

***Es gibt kein Niemandsland* and the Self-Sufficient Soldier**

Flegel's novel *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* shares many similarities with *Härtetest*.⁴¹ Both works create a rose-tinted image of the NVA that pairs kindly officers with respectful conscripts. Both authors present more individualized characters than the generalized and abstract expositions of the socialist soldier personality in the press or soldiering manuals. Their soldier figures largely conform to the military's ideals, notwithstanding occasional, small-scale conflicts. However, unlike *Härtetest*, in which superiors such as Winter or Brettschneider intervene to resolve soldiers' conflicts, *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* presents soldiers working through conflicts themselves. Flegel thus foregrounds the idea of the socialist soldier as self-sufficient, self-aware and personally committed to the cause. His novel also presents moments of unexpected intimacy and shows greater interest in the performative and embodied construction of military masculinities than *Härtetest*, indicating the need for further investigation of masculinities that deviate more substantially from the military's norms.

The novel was released by the Militärverlag in 1980, in a similar context to *Härtetest*, with the NVA concerned about meeting recruitment targets. The 1980s in the GDR were characterized politically by growing environmental and antinuclear movements and resistance to the military and the arms race, as the détente of the 1970s proved short-lived.⁴² The country's cultural scene was becoming increasingly diverse, with flourishing literary underground networks and the state's efforts to use rock music to promote socialism among young people.⁴³ Flegel's writing and narrative remain conventional in their socialist realist mode, but his style is engaging and the story is tightly plotted, avoiding the lengthy descriptions of military procedures and long digressions

that characterize *Härtetest* and earlier works from the Militärverlag. Flegel was among the GDR's most prominent authors of military fiction and served as an Oberstleutnant in the NVA until he retired in 1986, apparently in frustration at the organization's resistance to his efforts to explore the military's problems in his writing.⁴⁴ *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* depicts a cross-section of military and civilian society in a garrison town, and was among the most successful works of its kind, reprinted in several editions and translated into Russian and Czech.

The novel centres on a division manoeuvre and parallel descriptions of the garrison town's civilian society, which consists primarily of women and children and is largely domestic, in contrast with the public roles of the novel's military men. Unlike *Härtetest*, and perhaps reflecting Flegel's seniority in the NVA, *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* takes in the full command structure, from the division's commander Generalmajor Werner and his deputy Oberst Bredow to company commanders Major Wittenbeck and Major Puhlmeyer. Flegel explores the personalities of officers more thoroughly than Held does, showing the different temperaments that were compatible with hegemonic forms of military masculinity. His officers range from the kind, fatherly Werner and the awkward, if handsome, Wittenbeck to the aggressive disciplinarian Bredow. Flegel also focuses on a single platoon, led by Leutnant Ahnert and including the more experienced conscript Gefreiter Eisner and the newly enlisted Soldat Fichtner and Soldat Litosch. The novel's main characters are the family of Oberst Karl Schanz, a representative of high command seconded to the regiment, but in an ambiguous relationship with its chain of command. His daughter, Friederike, is the focus of the narrative in the civilian setting, along with her mother and siblings. By showing the families of soldiers, Flegel demonstrates the pervasiveness of masculine ideals and their effects on women, in line with Connell's hegemonic model, in which the power of certain masculinities is felt across society.

Fichtner is a shy young man more used to being a shepherd than a soldier, and the novel explores his problems integrating into the military environment and adapting to its standards of masculinity. The novel opens with him trying to win Friederike over after a fleeting sexual encounter. The opening chapter sets up a competition for Friederike's affections between Fichtner and the older, more experienced Wittenbeck. When the division goes on manoeuvre, it is separated from civilian society, deferring Friederike's choice until the ball after the manoeuvre, where she chooses to dance with Wittenbeck. The scenes during the manoeuvre focus on Fichtner struggling to integrate: he wanders off, plays his harmonica absent-mindedly, and lacks confidence. Schanz, meanwhile, takes on a fatherly role towards members of the regiment, encouraging Fichtner and helping young conscripts find their place in the masculine collective. He also acts paternally towards Wittenbeck,

whom he visits and recommends for a prestigious job after the two men bond in the homosocial environment of the smoking tent. This nepotistic move jars with Schanz's otherwise meticulous observation of regulations, but also emphasizes his ability to assess Wittenbeck's capabilities instinctively. At the novel's end, Fichtner, despite being rejected by Friederike, realizes his potential and becomes integrated into the military community.

Unsurprisingly from someone so senior within the NVA, Flegel provides a largely affirmative portrait of the NVA and its opportunities for personal development, with an emphasis on soldiers' need for individual commitment to realize their potential. The novel shows the NVA coexisting with surrounding society, and depicts soldiers of all ranks working to find their place amongst the army's expectations, values and gender ideals. Flegel avoids conflict and implies that it is possible for all young men to find a way of conforming to the demands of military service by developing skills and relationships, mastering their weaknesses and discovering their strengths. The movement from diverse masculinities towards increased conformity is mirrored in the plot, as the interwoven strands converge on the manoeuvre ball in the final chapter. Viewed together, Flegel's soldier characters provide an instructive, if occasionally didactic, example that broadens official descriptions of the socialist soldier personality to explore a range of different ways for soldiers to conform with and negotiate ideal military masculinities.

Strength and endurance are less prominent masculine characteristics in *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* than in soldering manuals or *Härtetest*, with the novel focusing on relationships between soldiers rather than on the hardships they undergo. However, Flegel still emphasizes the impressive physicality of certain soldiers, including Gefreiter Eisner, whose name corresponds to his civilian occupation as a steelworker. Eisner is depicted as a muscular figure:

whose shoulders are the same height as Ahnert's eyes. Broad, muscular shoulders, which you would think would cause Eisner to get stuck in the hatch [of the armoured vehicle]. But there must be something about the work of a steel smelter that has made this man so nimble and quick. (57)

Eisner's strength and musculature are a mixed product of the GDR's two masculine ideals: he has been disciplined in the NVA after being, in Flegel's rather unsubtle metaphor, forged in the steelworks.⁴⁵ This training makes Eisner's physique imposing but lithe. By contrast, his platoon leader, Leutnant Ahnert, is less powerful: his short stature repeatedly seems a source of embarrassment, even if it does not impede his military success (53).

Flegel's description of Oberst Bredow encapsulates his approach to the strength and physicality expected of soldiers by combining the need for discipline with the military's attempts to train hardened soldierly bodies.

Bredow is 'a powerful man, stocky, with a slight belly, which he nonetheless manages to hide by accentuating his upright posture' (41). Like Ahnert's stature, Bredow's squat physique is not presented in ideal terms, although he is still described as powerful. Characteristically for Flegel's approach to ideals of the soldierly body, Bredow is disciplined and knows how to compensate for physical weaknesses. The narrative perhaps emphasizes his posture to undermine him in comparison with other officers, but it also demonstrates his ability to overcome bodily imperfections and comply with the military's ideals. Bredow's primary failing is not his belly alone, which he is able to control, but the fact that it represents his lack of self-control more generally (42).

Along with comradeship, Flegel promotes self-control like that exhibited by Bredow most consistently as a central aspect of the NVA's masculine ideal. From the start of Fichtner's service, for example, he enviously views fellow conscripts' ability to conform to the military routine and control their existing instincts and identities: 'They have managed in a short time to lock their previous habits and needs deep within themselves, to put them on hold [*konservieren*] or to forget them entirely' (47). Flegel depicts the pressures on conscripts to change or conceal their identities. Their existing identities are not preserved in their existing form, but internalized, distilled or consciously suppressed, as the military's changes render some existing identities obsolete or troublesome. Self-control particularly restricts the expression of pain or emotions by Fichtner's comrades during exercises and endurance tests: 'With few exceptions, they withstand marches, strength exercises and other strains ... with stoical equanimity' (*ibid.*). Flegel does not explore the negative implications of this repression of existing identities, a subject I explore in subsequent chapters. Instead, he creates an idealized officer figure to embody this controlled ideal masculinity, Oberst Schanz, who combines self-control with a caring, comradely and even fatherly demeanour. Friederike describes the family descending into arguments when Schanz is away: 'Otherwise, his calm and consistency, his logic in both thoughts and emotions are persuasive; they balance out most problems and encourage reflection' (96). Schanz's quiet self-control, paternal good nature and idealized socialist relationships with his men express themselves particularly through his encouragement of Fichtner. Schanz urges Fichtner on several occasions to control his nerves and emotions, obey his superiors and, implicitly, conform to the military ideal.

Representations of military service not only shed light on military masculinities but also, by virtue of the widespread nature of the experience of conscription, offer productive insights into East German masculinities more generally. Conscription is one means by which military ideals are disseminated in wider civilian society, and yet Ahnert despairingly remarks of one wayward conscript, 'after eighteen months, he will take the uniform

off and in most cases, wherever he goes back to, no one is interested in how he was as a soldier' (119). Flegel describes a tension between this disregard for military identities in wider GDR society and the NVA's efforts to shape good socialist citizens during military service. The novel ultimately suggests that conscription does have profound effects on soldiers' later lives, even if these go unacknowledged by families and colleagues. Towards the end of the novel, for example, Litosch realizes the effects of military service on his identity: 'He'll never go back to living like he did before enlisting ... And an external sign of this change will be the fact that he no longer runs around with shoulder-length hair and a mane of unkempt curls' (251). Echoing Held's interest in soldiers being looked at and judged on their appearance, Litosch describes the military's effect on his masculinity using the opposition between his long hair before enlistment and his present military crew cut. In Chapter 3, I analyse the symbolism of the haircut in more detail, but Litosch's example suggests that hair is an important interface between the military's masculine ideals and its more visible changes to soldiers' bodies. In line with Silverman's argument that revealing externally constructed aspects of masculinity can denaturalize it, Litosch presents his masculinity as an ongoing dialogue between bodily changes, external perception and deeper personal change. Flegel depicts an army in constant dialogue with wider society when soldiers return to their families, universities or careers. Even though conscripts' military identities are seen by the career officer Ahnert as more temporary than his own, Flegel uses Litosch's realization to suggest that the military's masculine ideals continue to affect conscripts and the way others see them after conscription.

The tension in *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* between the specificity of the military ideal to the military environment and its longer-term effect on masculinities can be understood using the paradigm of 'boundedness' and 'pervasiveness' advanced by the sociologist David Morgan. Boundedness describes the extent to which masculinities are developed in a total institution cut off from civilian society. Pervasiveness, by contrast, denotes the prestige and influence of such institutionally specific masculinities in wider society.⁴⁶ The boundedness of masculinities developed during conscription is usually emphasized most prominently. Monika Szczepaniak, for example, in her discussion of Austrian and German militaries around the time of the First World War, describes conscripts' experiences of being suddenly cut off from civilian lives and of entering a highly bounded masculine world. These abrupt changes also characterized military service in East Germany, yet conscription is rarely the complete break that Szczepaniak describes.⁴⁷ Before conscription, young men and women were socialized in institutions that promoted the socialist soldier personality. Paramilitary education featured in the Young Pioneers, the Free German Youth (Freie Deutsche Jugend,

FDJ) and even schooling with the introduction of military education as a lesson in 1978. The Society for Sport and Technology (Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik) also provided 'premilitary education' from the 1950s.⁴⁸ The NVA aimed to influence conscripts' lives after military service too: *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins* emphasizes conscripts' duty to return to their communities as everyday defenders of the achievements of socialism.⁴⁹ Moreover, Sylka Scholz's analysis of post-reunification life narratives has shown ex-soldiers asserting the value of military skills or discipline for their careers, revealing that military masculinities in East Germany were highly pervasive as well as highly bounded.⁵⁰ The development of the socialist soldier personality is thus essential to understanding GDR masculinities more widely too.

Even though the masculinities promoted in *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* ultimately support the NVA's ideals and show their normative force on soldiers, Flegel is critical of the military's unrealistic and monolithic assumptions about masculinities. At several points, characters refer cynically to the socialist soldier personality:

Again and again, you hear talk of the creation of socialist soldier personalities. Even new recruits [*Soldaten*] use this term, as if they knew exactly what it meant. But in fact for every thirty soldiers the term hides thirty different meanings [*verbirgt sich dahinter bei dreißig Soldaten dreißigmal etwas anderes*]. (120)

Through Ahnert's voice in free indirect style, Flegel compares the military's masculine ideal and the reality of soldiers' differing individual masculinities. Although Ahnert's thoughts about the socialist soldier personality present the permeation of official rhetoric through all echelons of the military hierarchy, the quotation suggests that use of the term is unthinking or even meaningless. This critique does not completely reject the term, but rather calls for a more nuanced understanding of soldiers' gender roles. Whilst the last sentence apparently describes the tendency for the socialist soldier personality to conceal or hide soldiers' differences, the construction 'verbirgt sich dahinter' also suggest that soldiers' varying masculinities bolster the ideal and even give it its power. Flegel thus hints at a more complicated relationship between individual masculinities and the NVA's ideals than is first suggested by his largely affirmative approach.

The novel in fact depicts a wide range of military masculinities, even though Flegel's purpose is often to show how individual soldiers conform and become useful to the military in different ways. Any gender ideal is unachievable, and by definition everyone deviates from it in some way. Bringing Silverman's and Connell's work together underlines the fact that no hegemonic gender system is possible without marginalized subjects or

peripheral forms of gender practice. In Connell's Gramscian model, the dominance of any masculinity must be relative, potentially shifting and often unstable, because it depends on repeated assertions of hegemony. To pursue Silverman's and Connell's logics one step further, deviant or subordinate masculinities are not only important for understanding masculine ideals. Affording such power and interest to the relationship between dominant and peripheral forms of gender practice requires us to understand subordinate and marginalized masculinities on their own terms, in their full complexity and in appreciation of their centrality to the gender practice of people of all genders, not just men most closely aligned with hegemonic masculinity. The case of the NVA demonstrates the necessity and the productivity of such an approach, given that gender practice was characterized not only by deviation from the socialist soldier personality, but also by widespread cynicism towards the military and its values. Despite the focus on ideals of masculinity in scholarship on the GDR, then, and even though Held's and Flegel's writing supports these ideals and ignores the widespread scepticism towards the NVA, Flegel's novel points to the importance of a broader investigation of masculinities that failed to emulate military ideals, rejected them or negotiated partial forms of acceptance.

Participating through Subordination

The character of Fichtner in *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* provides an example of the complexity of relationships of subordination and hegemony in relation to the military's masculine ideals. Fichtner is young and inexperienced, a shepherd and a daydreamer whose mind is often focused on his sheep or the landscape instead of on the manoeuvre. He is tortured by homesickness (47) and by claustrophobia: 'Always and everywhere this horrible, oppressive confinement [*Enge*]. And Fichtner is used to open spaces. Meadows, rivers, rolling hills and slopes' (48). His yearning for the open countryside, which even seems feminized by the pastoral imagery in this quotation, leads him to wander off from the manoeuvre one evening, where he is arrested by a patrol. Only Schanz's unexplained sympathetic intervention saves Fichtner from punishment.

The novel highlights Fichtner's subordination within the hierarchies of military masculinities through direct contrasts with other men. When Fichtner is first introduced, Friederike is resisting his advances, which, we later learn, follow an initial sexual encounter between them. One of the novel's strands then follows Friederike's choice between Fichtner and Wittenbeck. Friederike remembers Wittenbeck's stiff, soldierly approach to dancing – 'he waltzed almost like he was on the parade ground' (87)⁵¹ – but also his kind, fatherly

play with Friederike's young sister, Ingrid (88). Wittenbeck's strength and ruggedness – 'He must spend his time dealing with hard, heavy objects' (90) – is contrasted with Fichtner's gentle, quiet and remarkably passive behaviour when he and Friederike have sex (9). Ultimately, Friederike chooses Wittenbeck at the ball after the manoeuvre. In a moment of tragic pathos, perhaps with a conscious nod to Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* (1837), Fichtner sees them dancing through the window, draws his knife and goes into the woods. Instead of turning on Friederike, as the emasculated Woyzeck turns on Marie, Fichtner goes to harm himself. Litosch saves him from his despair by talking him round and, somewhat incongruously, encouraging him to take his harmonica and perform for the guests at the ball. Fichtner's exaggerated and melodramatic response to rejection contrasts with Wittenbeck's reserved and controlled demeanour, perhaps affirming Friederike's choice by showing that Fichtner still represents a more immature, emotionally excessive, subordinate masculinity.

Fichtner's gradual integration into the platoon demonstrates the tendency in Flegel's novel for differences between soldiers and deviation from the socialist soldier personality to be minimized and normalized. Fichtner's knowledge of the land proves indispensable. He stops soldiers using gorse bushes for camouflage, when there are no gorse bushes in the location where they are sheltering, and he shows conviction and self-assuredness for the first time: 'Never, as long as Ahnert had known him, had the shepherd spoken with such determination, showed such energetic commitment to something affecting everyone' (176–77). Here, the NVA's socialization recalls Michel Foucault's influential description in *Surveiller et punir (Discipline and Punish)*, (1975) of an 'organization of geneses', through which institutions encourage the individualization of members so that their personal development contributes to the strength of the institution.⁵² Fichtner's differences from his fellow conscripts do not prevent him from finding his place within the platoon, even though at the end of the novel he remains subordinated relative to Litosch and Wittenbeck. Indeed, in line with Connell's analysis of the construction of hegemony through relations of subordination, Fichtner's failure to live up to the socialist soldier personality is one means by which other conscripts' conformity and the ideal itself are constructed. For example, the brash behaviour of his comrade, Litosch, only seems more military by comparison with Fichtner's silent and solitary nature. Military masculinities are thus constructed in the novel through competitive relationships with other men and through men's willingness to contribute to military efficiency using their own specific skills. Ultimately, Fichtner's integration, despite losing the competition with Wittenbeck, is sealed when his emotional outburst over Friederike is diverted suddenly into not just participating in but even providing the entertainment for the final ball on his harmonica.

Although Fulbrook's focus has not been on masculinities, her work is vital for understanding individuals' complex relationships with ideal masculinities and the central role of subordinate and marginalized masculinities in GDR power structures. Her concept of the 'participatory dictatorship' has proved influential in shifting focus away from the GDR's political and repressive institutions towards everyday experiences: 'the people themselves were at one and the same time both constrained and affected by, and yet also actively and often voluntarily carried, the ever changing social and political system of the GDR'.⁵³ Although various alternatives have since been proposed to characterize the East German dictatorship, from a 'totalitarian welfare state' to a dictatorship based on 'tacit minimal consensus', most either privilege the state's role in disseminating coercive and paternalistic power or exaggerate the extent of any consensus among the population.⁵⁴ Fulbrook's concept thus remains the most instructive for understanding the circulation of power in the GDR through citizens' interactions with each other and with state institutions, bolstering the power of the SED, albeit often unintentionally. Donna Harsch has described citizens' participation in the GDR's power networks as a negotiation with representatives of different institutions: 'individual East Germans navigated and, indeed, negotiated among institutional interests, trying to play this state bureaucrat off against that political functionary, that economic manager against this trade union official'.⁵⁵ Sara Jones picks up on this structure of negotiation in her discussion of writers' encounters with the GDR public sphere.⁵⁶ Through such institutional negotiations, citizens generally aimed to gain privilege or to create freedoms amidst the GDR's restrictive power apparatus, and yet Fulbrook's concept of a 'participatory dictatorship' suggests that such negotiations also supported and sustained institutions and the power apparatus itself.

Fulbrook's work and subsequent scholarly investigations have moved past binary models of resistance and conformity. Although Fulbrook never draws on Judith Butler, her account of the East German state is strongly reminiscent of Butler's discussions of gender performativity. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler argues that what appear to be 'expressions of gender' do not reflect a pre-existing gender identity; rather, these actions constitute the gendered subject performatively as part of a constant and generally unconscious chain of interactions with others and with ideal conceptions of gender.⁵⁷ Fulbrook rightly highlights the extent to which women's gender was negotiated through interactions with the masculine-dominated official culture of the GDR. Although conventional femininity was supplemented with more traditionally masculine industrial labour and the homosocial environment of the work brigade, this was combined with a consistently paternalistic approach to women. As Christine Eifler has demonstrated, representations of women in NVA publications were rather more passive and conventionally feminine

than in other official GDR publications.⁵⁸ However, neither Fulbrook nor Eifler discusses the fact that negotiations of East German gender ideals were not only reactive but also productive in a Butlerian sense, performatively constructing identities through forced interactions with institutions. Given the dominance of a paternalistic masculinity in the state's official culture, citizens' negotiations of gender ideals are crucial to understanding the workings of the 'participatory dictatorship'. Just as women negotiated the gender ideals promoted by the state, so too did men position themselves amongst masculine ideals. They interacted with peers or colleagues and participated in GDR institutions and power structures in ways that performatively resisted, subverted, supported and constituted the normative power of the state's gender ideals and its masculine-dominated institutions.

In refracting the military's ideal masculinity into multiple soldierly masculinities, Flegel's and Held's novels suggest that the socialist soldier personality is constructed through men's participation in the institution and their negotiations of gender ideals. Butler's performative concept of gender and Fulbrook's understanding of the participatory nature of the GDR dictatorship combine to produce an understanding of masculinity constructed through interactions with the GDR power structure. Many institutions, and particularly the military, were constituted and supported by the everyday interactions of members with the institutions' masculine-connoted values and ideals. Gender identity is a central aspect of subjectivity, but it is also crucial to institutional power and to the interactions of individuals with institutions such as the military. Negotiating masculinities in the GDR not only involved performative actions and interactions with gender ideals; these ideals were bound up with the institutions that promoted and disseminated expectations on men and women to conform to ideals of masculinity and femininity.

Jason Crouthamel has discussed negotiations of ideal masculinities as a central feature of soldiers' experience of the warzone during the First World War: 'In the remote, otherworldly universe of the front experience, men created complex notions of masculinity that both reinforced and modified hegemonic gender and sexual norms.'⁵⁹ However, Fulbrook's discussion of life in the GDR in terms of participation in institutions and Butler's account of a performative construction of identity through everyday actions and interactions both suggest that such negotiations were not limited to any 'remote, otherworldly universe'. In fact, soldiers' everyday experiences of military training in the GDR, far from any warzone, show similar negotiations of identity, which provide compelling insights into the workings of gender in militaries and state institutions more widely.

The performative construction of masculinity was explicitly harnessed by military training and as such became part of men's participation in the

institution and their contribution to its power. Techniques such as drill, exercises, sports, cleaning and maintenance, such as the weapon cleaning at the opening of *Härtetest*, aimed to train soldiers to respond automatically to situations but also to turn them into soldiers. For example, Flegel emphasizes in *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* that the tedium of drill conditions soldiers to assert the power of their minds over their bodies and rehearse automatic connections between orders and the desired behaviour (240). Drill is emblematic of the well-acknowledged fact that military service not only aims to construct military efficiency but also to construct men who behave in line with military ideals of masculinity.⁶⁰ In the GDR, because of the importance of masculine ideals in conscripts' daily routines, negotiations to gain freedoms and avoid punishment always appear in representations of the NVA as negotiations of masculine values of independence, endurance, courage, self-reliance and so on. Through limited conformity, conscripts attempt to emulate ideal military masculinity to a sufficient extent to avoid punishment and, literally, pass muster. In creating spaces to avoid military discipline, conscripts seek ways of expressing masculinities that could otherwise invite punishment and censure for transgressing the military's masculine ideals.

In both novels, conscripts' negotiations usually serve to contain their individual masculinities within the acceptable bounds of the military's masculine ideal. These negotiations take various forms, from Bredow's posture as a bodily strategy to hide his belly and render his body commensurate with the military ideal, to Andreas's commitment to the military exercise despite the strains on his emotions caused by his argument with Doris. However, in Butler's work on performativity, she suggests that queer performative negotiations, which reveal the construction of gender ideals, could also challenge such ideals, even if they rarely subvert them entirely.⁶¹ The novels of the Militärverlag appear to be aware of this possibility, as is clear in the repeated efforts of *Härtetest* to undercut any possible homoerotic tensions with humour. One remarkably queer example from *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* is the fashion show organized by Litosch and his roommates: 'On left and right, spectators were standing against the walls and the seven soldiers from Litosch's dormitory walked up and down between them' (158). Litosch presents the men's uniforms, using a fake microphone, as the conscripts model them. His comments mock the ill-fitting, greying items and make explicit the hierarchies constructed by soldiers' clothing. For example, he describes 'a tunic-like, navel-length shirt, well-suited for NCOs and their deputies, as it particularly emphasizes the chest. We even call it the "shirt of authority" [*Autoritätshemd*] for this reason' (158). The fashion show is brought to an abrupt end when the duty officer appears, and within the novel too the episode is a short and isolated example that seems to provide a momentary release of soldiers' critical or subversive energies. Yet it demonstrates the application of Butler's concept

of performativity to the military context: if military masculinities are constituted through ongoing individual negotiations of military ideals, then these negotiations always retain the possibility for soldiers' actions to challenge the NVA's ideals and reveal their constructed nature.

Conclusion

Despite their tendency to create normalized representations of soldiers, both Held and Flegel suggest that literature and film are compelling sources for developing a better understanding of the importance of military service within the gender order and the society of East Germany. Their novels hint at the wide range of military masculinities that existed alongside and in dialogue with the socialist soldier personality, and even at the need to recentre our understanding of the dynamics of gender around subordinate masculinities. *Härtetest* and *Es gibt kein Niemandland* both show a movement from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences towards increasing acceptance of military values and the coherence of the military community. Humour is important in both texts for ensuring that potentially unsettling moments of deviation from the NVA's norms are always defused in favour of light-hearted conformity with its masculine ideals. Yet neither novel aims to homogenize NVA conscripts: both achieve their momentum and narrative interest through differences between soldiers and deviations from military norms and practices. This is particularly the case in *Es gibt kein Niemandland*, in which the interplay between characters such as Litosch and Fichtner and the rest of their unit places difficulties in conforming and even deliberate deviation from NVA gender norms at the centre of the novel. Fulbrook acknowledges in *The People's State* the importance of ideal constructions of masculinity for the SED's power, and in these novels this ideal is explored most thoroughly. However, in the subsequent chapters, I build on Fulbrook's work to make a rather different claim, taking the impetus of Held's and Flegel's novels as a starting point, and drawing on the works of Connell, Silverman, and more recent theories of masculinity and queerness. The workings of GDR society and its institutions more broadly can only be fully understood by taking seriously the participation of men who rejected the state's masculine ideals, failed to live up to them or were forced into marginalized positions.

Flegel and Held invite a more substantial investigation of works that explore the limits of military ideals, as well as the complex relationships between military ideals and the masculinities they exclude. These novels were written by members of the NVA in close discussion with the military publishing house and targeted at an audience of NVA members, ex-members and men approaching conscription. Yet even here tensions in soldiers' masculinities

drive the narrative and the individual characters. These tensions are an important trend across writing and films depicting East German soldiers, and especially in films of the state film studio (Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft or DEFA) and works produced outside the GDR or after its collapse. Flegel and Held's work is representative of the work of the Militärverlag, in that there are few representations of the Border Guard or of the conscientious objectors enlisted as *Bausoldaten*. In the rest of this book, I broaden my sources to account for a greater diversity of images of conscription. Focusing on this diversity and on moments when masculinities failed to live up to the demands of the NVA, we can achieve a more nuanced understanding of masculinities in the GDR. Even in the military context, representations of East German masculinities were never monolithic or entirely true to the state's ideals. Moments of masculine failure or inadequacy are the starting point for the majority of literary and filmic depictions of military service. For all the GDR's reputation as an oppressively male society, its legacy is one of limited acts of conformity, refusal and failure that have had profound influences not only on individuals' lives, but also on the shaping of masculinities in contemporary Germany.

Notes

1. Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 141.
2. Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 3–4.
3. Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 141.
4. *Ibid.*, 174.
5. Fenemore, *Sex*.
6. McLellan, *Love*; G. Paul, 'Gender in GDR Literature', in Leeder, *Re-reading East Germany*, 106–25.
7. E.g. Scholz, "Sozialistische Soldatenpersönlichkeiten"; Bickford, *Fallen Elites*.
8. Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 141.
9. H. Brandes, 'Hegemoniale Männlichkeiten in Ost- und Westdeutschland', in S. Scholz and W. Willms (eds), *Postsozialistische Männlichkeiten in einer globalisierten Welt* (Berlin: Lit, 2008), 59–77.
10. Hell, *Post-fascist Fantasies*. See also S. Allan, 'DEFA's Antifascist Myths and Construction of National Identity in East German Cinema', in Leeder, *Re-reading East Germany*, 52–69.
11. Scholz, "Sozialistische Soldatenpersönlichkeiten".
12. Bickford, *Fallen Elites*, 105.
13. Connell, *Masculinities*, 72; Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 48.
14. H. Keffler, 'Soldaten der sozialistischen Revolution', *Neues Deutschland*, 1 March 1969, 3.
15. H. Lindner et al., *Fragen und Antworten zum Wehrdienst* (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, 1984), 21–22.
16. T. Kühne, *Kameradschaft: Die Soldaten des nationalsozialistischen Krieges und das 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

17. See J.A. Warren's praise of this brotherhood in *American Spartans: The U.S. Marines – A Combat History from Iwo Jima to Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 18–25.
18. Lindner et al., *Fragen und Antworten*, 150.
19. *Ibid.*, 75.
20. E.g. R., 'Auf Friedenswacht', *Neue Zeit*, 1 March 1969, 2; W. Verner, 'Militärische Höchstleistungen sind unsere revolutionäre Klassenpflicht', *Neues Deutschland*, 1 March 1970, 6.
21. Lindner et al., *Fragen und Antworten*, 155.
22. W. Lamertz, 'Unser Kampfbund zeigt Stärke und Aktivität', *Berliner Zeitung*, 18 November 1972, 1–2.
23. Lindner et al., *Fragen und Antworten*, 156–57.
24. *Ibid.*, 151: 'jeden Befehl [ist] unter allen Bedingungen gewissenhaft und zeitgerecht auszufüllen'.
25. Similar lists of characteristics were discussed within the NVA's command structure; see BStU, MfS HA I/16634, 'Hinweise zur Erarbeitung und Führung der Persönlichkeitsbilder', 3 September 1983, fols 111–13.
26. *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins*, 57.
27. A. Saunders, 'Growing up on the Front Line: Young East Germans and the Effects of Militarism during the 1980s', *Debatte* 13 (2005), 283–97 (at 288–89).
28. Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 54–55.
29. B.H. Decker, *Gewalt und Zärtlichkeit: Einführung in die Militärbelletristik der DDR 1956–1986* (Bern: Lang, 1990), 2.
30. I conceptualize this anachronism and simultaneity of genres elsewhere: T. Smith, 'Music, the GDR Military and the GDR Today in the Works of Walter Flegel', in S. Ehrig, M. Thomas and D. Zell (eds), *The GDR Today: New Interdisciplinary Approaches to East German History, Memory and Culture* (Bern: Lang, 2018), 99–116.
31. H. Hoelzke (dir.), *Härtetest* (Fernsehen der DDR, 1978).
32. See television programme listings in *Neue Zeit*, 18 February 1978, 9.
33. See G. Herrmann, 'Härtetest im Dienst und privat: Ein Gegenwartsfilm von Wolfgang Held', *Berliner Zeitung*, 28 February 1978, 6; R. Funke, 'Bewährungsprobe für einen jungen Soldaten', *Neues Deutschland*, 1 March 1978, 4.
34. W. Held, *Härtetest* (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, 1978), 5: hereinafter referenced in the text.
35. Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 129.
36. *Ibid.*
37. E.g. H. Kruschel, *Der rote Antares* (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, 1979); W. Flegel, *Das einzige Leben* (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, 1987).
38. 'Nach seiner Überzeugung verlangt das Soldatsein mehr als nur guten Willen. Die Volksarmee ist kein bequemer Platz für Weichlinge und Duckmäuser.'
39. Ward, *Not Gay*, 111–14 and 124–27.
40. Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 152.
41. W. Flegel, *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, 1980): hereinafter referenced in the text.
42. See e.g. Saunders, 'Growing up on the Front Line'.
43. See K. Leeder, *Breaking Boundaries: A New Generation of Poets in the GDR* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996); T. Ryback, *Rock around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 204.
44. Anon, 'Walter Flegel', author biography, *Märkischer Verlag Wilhelmshorst*, undated. Retrieved 30 May 2019 from http://www.maerkischerverlag.de/php/aut_flegel.php;

- S. Kahlau, *Volksarmee im Wandel? Die Darstellung der NVA im DEFA-Spielfilm von den 1950er bis zu den 1970er Jahren* (Munich: Akademische Verlagsgemeinschaft München, 2015), 95.
45. Steel has a long history of links to masculinity, but in postwar Central and Eastern Europe, it was a particularly common metaphor for hardened masculinity taken from Soviet military literature. See e.g. N. Ostrovskii, *Kak zakalialas' stal'* (*How the Steel was Tempered*) (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1936).
 46. D. Morgan, 'Theater of War: Combat, the Military, and Masculinities', in H. Brod and M. Kaufman (eds), *Theorizing Masculinities* (London: Sage, 1994), 165–82 (at 168).
 47. M. Szczepaniak, *Militärische Männlichkeiten in Deutschland und Österreich im Umfeld des Großen Krieges: Konstruktionen und Dekonstruktionen* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011), 25.
 48. P. Heider, 'Die Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik (1952–1990)', in Diedrich, Ehlert and Wenzke, *Im Dienste der Partei*, 169–99.
 49. *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins*, 92.
 50. Scholz, *Männlichkeit*, 194–95.
 51. 'Er exerzierte gleichsam den Walzer.'
 52. M. Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 143–51.
 53. Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 12.
 54. P. Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1–18; T. Lindenberger, 'Tacit Minimal Consensus: The Always Precarious East German Dictatorship', in P. Corner (ed.), *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes: Fascism, Nazism, Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 208–22.
 55. D. Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 7.
 56. Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism*.
 57. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 34.
 58. C. Eifler, "...es schützt Dich mein Gewehr": Zu Frauenbildern in der NVA-Propaganda', in Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Frauenforschung der Humboldt-Universität Berlin (ed.), 'Unter Hammer und Zirkel: Frauenbiographien vor dem Hintergrund ost-deutscher Sozialisationserfahrungen', special issue, *Frauen-Gesellschaft-Kritik* 23 (1995), 269–76.
 59. Crouthamel, *An Intimate History*, 2.
 60. See the demonstrative titles of Morgan, "It Will Make a Man of You", and U. Frevert, 'Das Militär als "Schule der Männlichkeit": Erwartungen, Angebote, Erfahrungen im 19. Jahrhundert', in U. Frevert (ed.), *Militär und Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1997), 145–73.
 61. See e.g. J. Butler, 'Critically Queer', in *Bodies that Matter*, 223–42.

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'.¹ 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'.² 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'.³ Violence in Connell's account is involved in 'drawing boundaries and making exclusions', just as it is in settling international or personal conflicts.⁴ 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.⁵ 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'.⁶ 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 1956.⁷ 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.⁸ 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.⁹ 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).¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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.¹² 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'.¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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'.¹⁶

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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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.²¹ 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’.²² 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.²³ 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.²⁴ 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.²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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.²⁷ 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.²⁸ Otherwise its reception was muted, with its plot deemed incoherent or unbelievable, its characterization inadequate and its ending too open.²⁹ 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.³⁰ 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.³¹ 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.³² 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.³³ By 7 July, the first full version of the screenplay shows Gunter being shot by Western police at the border.³⁴ Pertti Ahonen has discussed Göring as a new type of GDR masculine hero: 'the hero-victim of the socialist frontier'.³⁵ 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'.³⁶ 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.³⁷ *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.³⁸ 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.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹ 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'.⁴² Wolfgram briefly discusses border guards in his analysis. He analyses Western films that portray Eastern guards as 'quite brutal and indifferent to human life'.⁴³ 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'.⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶

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.⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹ 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.⁵² Even though the film strongly implies that Gunter is killed, the studio told the press that he survives.⁵³ 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'.⁵⁴ 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.⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶ 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).⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸ 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).⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰ 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.⁶¹ 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.⁶² *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.⁶³ 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.⁶⁴ 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.⁶⁵ The film is a tragicomedy loosely drawing on Jancke's own border service.⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ Generally, however, the film's mixture of irony and psychological drama was well received.⁶⁹

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.⁷⁰ 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).⁷¹ 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.⁷² 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.⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ The viewing figures for *An die Grenze* support this: the film's premieres alone reached 5.81 million viewers.⁷⁵ 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*.⁷⁶ 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.⁷⁷ 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.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰ 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).
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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.⁸¹ 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.⁸² 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*.⁸³ 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.⁸⁴ 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”’.⁸⁵ 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.⁸⁶ 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.

Part II

CHALLENGING PERFORMANCES

Chapter 3

THE VULNERABLE BODY IN UNIFORM



In *Julia lebt* and *An die Grenze* especially, the vulnerability of soldiers' bodies is the most prominent challenge to the socialist soldier personality promoted by the NVA. Men's bodies are an important part of their negotiations of masculinity throughout their lifetime. As Raewyn Connell writes: 'Masculine gender is (among other things) a certain feel to the skin, certain muscular shapes and tensions, certain postures and ways of moving, certain possibilities in sex.'¹ Connell uses sporting masculinities to demonstrate the construction of masculinities through body-reflexive practices: performative acts that are at once social and embodied. She argues that although bodies are central to the assertion of hegemonic masculinities, 'they can [also] be positively recalcitrant' in failing or refusing to perform in line with hegemonic masculine ideals.² Kaja Silverman goes further: she argues that ideals of masculinity are so invested in the coherence and inviolability of the male body that they are particularly vulnerable to challenges to their 'unimpaired bodily "envelope"'.³ Silverman's analysis of images of wounded soldiers in films suggests that ideal military masculinities are as susceptible as Connell's sporting masculinities to the excesses and vulnerabilities of 'recalcitrant' physical bodies, which limit the extent of an individual's conformity to masculine ideals. However, the reverse is also true: the body is not simply a source of resistance. Conscripts who reject military ideals are still forced into drill and military exercises, compulsory actions that shape their bodies in the image of ideal military masculinity. These body-reflexive practices make it impossible to reject the socialist

soldier personality completely, necessitating more complex negotiations of military masculinity.

This chapter investigates the relationship between conscripts' bodies and masculinities by exploring representations of the body in military uniform in three GDR-era texts. *Der Reserveheld* (*The Reserve Hero*), a 1965 film directed by Wolfgang Luderer (1924–95), and *Ein Katzensprung* (*A Hop, Skip and a Jump*), which was directed by Claus Dobberke (b. 1940) and premiered in 1977, are both DEFA films produced in the GDR. I compare and contrast these two works with *Fassonschnitt* (*Crew Cut*, 1984), an autobiographical novel written and published by Jürgen Fuchs (1950–99) after his exile to the West.⁴ These contrasting texts offer a nuanced picture of the role of the body in representations of East German military masculinities. At first glance, the works range from the films' light-hearted conformism to Fuchs's profound criticism, but closer analysis challenges this opposition and reveals similarities in the works' approaches to the body. Fuchs's novel was produced in the West as an explicit critique of the NVA and as a reckoning with his own experiences. Viewed alongside *Der Reserveheld* and *Ein Katzensprung*, Fuchs's writing brings into focus soldiers' vulnerability in the more light-hearted films. Viewed together, these three works show uniform as an interface between individual bodies and the military's ideals of masculinity. Luderer and Dobberke compare uniform to costume in order to explore the potentially subversive implication that the body might preserve its association with apparently more natural civilian masculinities, despite the demands of military service. Ultimately, however, uniform plays a sinister and disruptive role in both films and especially in *Fassonschnitt*: the works show bodies changed and marked, as conscripts are forced to negotiate the masculine ideals that the uniform represents.

The relationship between body and uniform in these texts, and between characters' individual masculinities and the military's gender ideals, can be understood initially as an interplay between two competing narratives of masculinity. On the one hand, the body is never innocent of meaning at the moment of enlistment.⁵ It has been constructed performatively over the conscript's life in line with certain masculine values, which the body has in turn shaped through the body-reflexive practices that Connell describes. On the other hand, the uniform takes the form of a complex narrative representation of the military's masculine ideals, which are applied to the soldier's body on entering the army. The NVA aimed to change men's bodies and behaviour to conform to its ideals. However, in *Der Reserveheld*, *Ein Katzensprung* and *Fassonschnitt*, existing civilian masculinities conflict with the socialist soldier personality, revealing the negotiations of masculinity set in motion by conscription. By analysing uniform as a representation of ideal military masculinity that is applied to soldiers' bodies, it is possible to show how

Luderer, Dobberke and Fuchs exploit the uniform's complexity to explore and even challenge the transformative and normalizing effects of military service. None of these texts successfully subverts the power of uniform or the military's harnessing of body-reflexive practices: all three portray soldiers' bodies, psyches and masculinities being changed by the embodied performances of military service.

Rewriting the Body

Uniform presents an ideal military masculinity that is supposedly tailored to fit the individual wearer, giving the impression that the soldier is a straightforward human embodiment of military norms. Just as a narrative is positioned within generic conventions and literary traditions, military uniform contextualizes the wearer's masculinity in relation to military values and wider social stereotypes concerning soldiers. In the GDR, the grey uniform, as opposed to the olive of the Bundeswehr, framed the wearer's military masculinity as East German and socialist. Yet the 'stone grey' also deliberately recalled the 'field grey' of Prussian and Wehrmacht uniforms, depicting GDR military masculinities as historically German, in compliance with Soviet policy that required satellite states to be 'socialist in form, national in character'.⁶ However, the uniform's Wehrmacht resonances in fact highlighted the contradictions in the NVA's claim to be an 'army of peace'.⁷

Besides the uniform's role in delineating a genre and tradition of masculinity, it shares several other features with narrative texts. Uniform uses a symbolic system governed by dress codes and regulations, much like the syntax and symbolism that govern language, characterization, imagery and other aspects of narrative works. Uniform charts temporal progression and variation, using stars on the shoulder and stripes on the sleeve to show a soldier's rise through the ranks and medals on the chest to document successes. In this sense, the uniform's narrative resembles a biography, highlighting key stages of a soldier's military career and bearing marks of achievements and development over time. Although a biography is generally more complex and personal than the uniform, the two share a concern with the unique and specific: the uniform displays an individual military career and masculine development, while portraying the wearer as a tangible embodiment of the military's ideals.

Military uniform appears to present a clear and unambiguous narrative that fixes the individual in a specific military identity and replaces any existing civilian traits. However, taking for granted the homogeneity or uniformity of the masculinities represented by the uniform can result in the complexity of its messages being neglected. Nathan Joseph has argued that uniform

communicates more than just adherence to military values: ‘The uniform depicts specialized offices, hierarchical position, internal organizational relationships, and external relationships with the public more accurately than any other category of clothing.’⁸ Uniform therefore presents not a single, monolithic ideal, but a range of hierarchically arranged masculinities that embody the ideal in specific, individual and varying ways. In order to portray these intricate hierarchies of power and achievement, uniforms are complex, varying their symbolism according to branch, regiment and occupation as well as rank. Military films and literature often depict civilians and new conscripts lacking fluency in the military’s symbolic systems, even in East Germany, where military ideals pervaded society through schools and youth groups. The uniform’s complexity as a narrative of military masculinity opens it up to readings by uninitiated or resistant observers that conflict with official messages, highlight potentially harmful effects and unsettle or even subvert the masculine ideal symbolized by the uniform.

In contrast, the body’s association with a civilian narrative of masculinity stems from the performative nature of gender. Embodied performativity is central to the construction of masculinities through military training, and this link offers a productive way of understanding GDR citizens’ participatory interactions with the state’s institutions as gendered interactions. Conscripts’ bodies are constructed through performative gender practice prior to entry into the military. As Butler argues, ‘regulatory norms of “sex” work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies’.⁹ In other words, the dynamic of repetition and sedimentation that constitutes performativity does not produce gender separately from, but on and through, the body; the body-reflexive practices described by Connell are one means by which gender and the body are mutually constructed. For Butler, gender depends on reiterations in time, with each act ‘a repetition, a sedimentation, and congealment of the past’.¹⁰ In Butler’s understanding of performativity, then, the body assumes a narrative of individual gender practice through reiterations over time that are shaped by past actions. Although in some East German cases the military ideal complemented soldiers’ existing self-narrative, most were forced to adapt to the demands placed on their body by military training and the ideal of the socialist soldier personality.

The dialectic between the materiality and cultural coding of bodies is essential to the construction of military masculinities, particularly when those masculinities are represented in literature or on film. In a literary context, the referentially shifting ‘I’ of first-person prose gains stability as a representation of self where it can appeal to a coherent bodily referent, but coherence is itself a key meaning inscribed on that body by the narrative act.¹¹ The body in film often appears more visually consistent, yet its meanings are inseparable from narrative devices, such as sound, costume, lighting and camerawork,

and from codes and conventions governing the creation of character types.¹² Uniform's relationship to the body is defined by the same dialectics. The body's apparent visual coherence versus the ever-changing uniform threatens to disrupt the uniform's meanings. Yet the body is also vulnerable to being changed and marked by the uniform, its meaning rewritten by the experience of military training.

Der Reserveheld and *Ein Katzensprung* explore the potential for soldiers' vulnerable or 'recalcitrant' bodies to unsettle uniform's narrative projection of ideal military masculinity. They emphasize uniforms' costume-like qualities and suggest a more authentic narrative associated with the body. Ultimately, though, the two films challenge the idea that the body itself is unchanging or immune to changes during military training, with *Ein Katzensprung* especially emphasizing the vulnerability of soldiers' bodies that makes them susceptible to being shaped by the uniform and by military training. In all three works, and especially Fuchs's novel, the exploration of uniform as a costume draws attention to the material experience of wearing it, to the vulnerability of soldiers' bodies during military training, and to the physical and psychological changes that they undergo. Fuchs's novel is centred especially on the profound psychological effects of uniform and bodily changes. All three works deny that an authentic embodied masculinity can remain immune to military discipline and hierarchies. The works show soldiers engaged in bodily negotiations of military masculinities in response to physical changes, injuries and the military's body-reflexive practices.

Wolfgang Luderer (Dir.), *Der Reserveheld* (1965)

Der Reserveheld is a comedy starring the popular East German comedian Rolf Herricht as a reservist, whose inimitable comic personality is represented largely through physical slapstick and apparently remains unaffected by military service and the NVA uniform.¹³ Like *Julia lebt*, *Der Reserveheld* was produced in the period of cultural liberalization after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and before the Eleventh Plenum later in 1965. For all its farcical humour, *Der Reserveheld* treats the nascent conscription system with irony, a liberty undoubtedly facilitated by Herricht's fame. The film is playfully conscious of its own contingency in this respect: Herricht's character is also a famous comedic actor, subtly renamed Ralf Horricht. Frank-Burkhard Habel has suggested that the film was withdrawn on ideological grounds after its premiere in February 1965, presumably with its irreverent approach to the NVA in mind, but cinema and television listings demonstrate that the film continued to be screened into the 1980s.¹⁴ It was generally praised by reviewers, although its exaggerated physical comedy was often deemed

unsubtle, a criticism that perhaps underestimates the film's self-referentiality and irony.¹⁵ The film was also well received by the NVA, which awarded Luderer, Herricht and Rudi Strahl, the film's screenwriter and former NVA Oberleutnant, the NVA Service Medal in Silver.¹⁶

The film's opening scene apparently shows a hapless soldier preparing for roll call, but suddenly he comes out of character, revealing that this scene is being shot for a film within the film. As the camera pans out, the actor, Horricht, rejects the role of soldier as beneath him and storms off set. That evening, he receives a conscription order for reserve service, which he mistakes for fan mail and destroys. The full eighteen-month military service only applied to men under twenty-six, but men of Horricht's age could still be called up for shorter periods in the reserve.¹⁷ To punish his director for giving him such a lowly role, Horricht leaves town in the middle of filming to marry his fiancée, Susanne. After the NVA tracks Horricht down at his wedding on the Baltic coast, Horricht reports for conscription while his director and screenwriter are investigating the base as a film location. The director refuses to have the conscription order rescinded, quipping that it will be the perfect opportunity for Horricht to study for his role. The film-within-a-film motif is more developed than in *Drei Stern rot*, turning the military base into a film set and many soldiers into actors or extras. Filming begins on base during Horricht's service, and the film's comedy revolves around the coincidence that Horricht is conscripted while working on an army film. He soon wins over his comrades and frustrates his commanding officers, Leutnant Malorti and Hauptmann Hottas, with his comic personality and lack of respect for authority. When Susanne visits, rumours spread of an affair between her and Hottas, but the resulting confrontation is resolved with minimal conflict and Hottas persuades Horricht to show more commitment to his service. He then surpasses all his comrades in a manoeuvre, which the director is also filming. The narrative ends with the regiment's manoeuvre ball, which doubles as the film crew's wrap party.

The film was presumably designed to popularize the NVA through humour and Herricht's celebrity. Strahl stated in an interview that he aimed to show 'that the young soldier need not shed his personality along with his civilian clothes'.¹⁸ Strahl metaphorically associates the shift from civilian to military identity and the compatibility of individuality with military service with a change in clothing, and uniform is an important part of the film's play with military and civilian identities. The film depicts Horricht maintaining his comic personality throughout his service, appearing out of place partly due to his irrepressible comedic talents and partly because Herricht and his character Horricht are older than most military recruits.

Geoff King has suggested that in 'comedian comedy', a genre focused on a celebrity comic rather than conventional narrative, the actor-comedian is

often out of place in the narrative, which is certainly true of Herricht in *Der Reserveheld*. As King states: ‘The comedian performer can be quite tightly integrated into the narrative and into the diegetic space, but retains a license to break the rules.’¹⁹ In *Der Reserveheld*, the narrative ‘rules’ are broken by playful slippage between Herricht, Horricht and Horricht’s character in the film-within-a-film. Herricht resists integration into ‘diegetic space’ due to constant reminders of his celebrity and the dissolution of any distinction between Horricht’s personality and his acting; Horricht’s face is instantly recognizable to all except Hottas, and the laughter that greets his every move consistently disrupts military discipline. The film’s layers of fictionalization resist any distinction between real characters within the diegesis and their cinematic roles, so that all masculine identities appear as artificial as the film’s uniform-costumes.

Uniforms are commonly opposed to costumes, but definitions frequently expose their close relationship. Paul Fussell, for example, states that ‘ideas of frivolity, temporariness, inauthenticity, and theatricality attend costumes’, while Joseph associates costumes with a break with prevailing social norms.²⁰ Although the military discourages frivolity in relation to the uniform, as with the fashion show in *Es gibt kein Niemandsland*, the distinction between uniform and costume is not always so simple. For example, the often elaborate nature of the dress uniform may border on the theatrical, while in a conscript military like the NVA, uniform is more temporary than conscripts’ civilian clothes.²¹ Portraying the uniform as a form of costume potentially presents the NVA as a show army, with the soldier becoming the product of casting and wardrobe. In contrast to the changing, artificial uniform, the body might then appear more constant and authentic. In *Der Reserveheld*, though, costume metaphors are routinely undercut by emphasizing the inauthenticity of all roles, military or civilian, with the body just as vulnerable to being rendered superficial.

The instability of identities in the film and the importance of uniform and costume for their construction and communication are established from the beginning by the film’s animated credits. A cartoon Horricht is first dressed in stereotypically bohemian style, complete with beret, scarf, pipe and bag, before his clothes suddenly morph into military uniform (0:08–0:29). Cartoon credits were common in comic films of this period and the style of animation in *Der Reserveheld* recalls the credits of *The Pink Panther* (1963).²² The change from artist’s clothes into military uniform introduces Horricht’s role change as the basis of the film’s comedy. By showing both Horricht-the-artist and Horricht-the-soldier as cartoons, the film implies that artist characters will be just as caricatured as military figures, and their clothes just as recognizably uniform.

The film also undermines any idea that the body might be more authentic or less stylized than its costumes. Horricht’s body is an important part of the

film's caricature of a self-obsessed celebrity actor, particularly while on holiday for his wedding. A wide shot of a beach pans and zooms in to show Horricht lounging in a chair with the affected decadence associated with stereotypes of actors or artists, one arm behind his head and the other draped dramatically across the sunlounger. His disinterested tone when Susanne disturbs him adds to the impression of an arrogant celebrity (9:42–10:22). Horricht is portrayed as the archetypal prima donna, with his self-interest, posture and interest in tanning somewhat feminized and shown as silly and undesirable. For example, when Susanne teases Horricht about his desire to tan as quickly as possible, and he lazily responds 'And you're marrying me because of it', her response jokingly highlights the undesirability of his behaviour: 'Not because, in spite of it' (10:17–10:22). Horricht's identity as an actor is associated with his casually splayed body in swimwear, and he is undeterred by the telegram that arrives, as if in direct response to his decadent behaviour, ordering him to report for reserve service (10:29–11:18).

Despite Horricht's caricatured performance of the masculinity of an actor, this identity initially appears more natural when he enters reserve service. He is introduced to the order and precision expected from socialist soldier personalities by a comrade who demonstrates how to stow his uniform in his locker. Still in civilian clothes, Horricht's attempts to tidy his uniform away are haphazard and his roommate intervenes, while Horricht lights a cigarette and lounges on his bed, with his legs crossed and his arms leaning over the foot of the bedframe (15:27–17:43). Horricht's shirt and tie and casual demeanour appear at odds with the ordered military surroundings and the neat uniforms of Horricht's comrades. Horricht's incongruity within the military environment is further highlighted when his comrades burst into amused laughter when they recognize him. In this scene, Horricht makes no attempt to conform to the masculinity expected of a reservist: his dress and his posture instead mirror his civilian persona from the beach.

Horricht's early interactions with the NVA reveal an inability to interpret the masculinities and power hierarchies described by different uniforms. When he first meets Leutnant Malorti, he gives him a friendly clap on the shoulder without recognizing that the stripes on his sports uniform mark him as Horricht's platoon commander and superior (19:32). Horricht then presents himself in an undershirt to the base commander, whose orderly protests: 'What sort of a get-up have you come here in?' In a comic misunderstanding, Horricht gestures to his messy, incomplete uniform and replies: 'I was ordered to wear it ... They're not even my things' (21:12–21:18). Horricht misinterprets the orderly's criticism of his partial undress as a criticism of the uniform itself, and his matter-of-fact response ridicules the uniform and the NVA's dress codes. During his ensuing plea to be exempted from service, over-the-shoulder shots direct attention to the base commander's epaulettes

as symbols of rank and superiority (21:29–23:35). Horricht's naive plea for dismissal and his state of undress conflict with this formal emphasis of rank through camerawork. The film's parodic touches and Horricht's comic errors mock his ignorance, but also make the NVA's uniform regulations appear fussy. Horricht's cheekiness and subordination are repeatedly laughed off by his peers and never result in punishment, reinforcing his affable nature while glossing over NVA officers' often harsh responses to uniform infringements, as depicted in both *Drei Stern rot* and *An die Grenze*. Horricht's misunderstandings show the potential for representations of uniform not just to visualize a hegemonic ideal to which conscripts ought to aspire, but also to make this ideal and the military's uniform regulations appear insubstantial and finicky.

Der Reserveheld does, though, present ideal military masculinity as a construction that depends on uniform maintenance, revealing the role of uniform in constructing military bodies by showing its integration into the military's disciplinary apparatus and routine. Horricht is never subjected to physically gruelling training, but uniform is shown as part of other body-reflexive practices that train discipline, obedience and care for appearance. Although Horricht appears uninterested in developing the skills to maintain his uniform, he presents an exemplary appearance because his roommates perform his chores for him and even dress him (19:08–19:12, 32:12–32:33). The film thus foregrounds conventionally backstage scenes of uniform maintenance, which normally play a central role in asserting a hegemonic masculine ideal. Care and maintenance of the uniform, including cleaning, polishing, folding and organizing, enforce a disciplined approach to appearance and bridge the military's discipline of behaviour and control of the body. *Der Reserveheld* depicts these chores as part of the construction of self-sufficient and orderly masculinities, and yet Horricht is adept at avoiding these body-reflexive practices altogether, deliberately avoiding working on his body in the way required by the NVA.

Soldiers' dress would normally be judged against standards of cleanliness and order, and infringements would be punished, but Horricht avoids punishment, and even feminizes other soldiers around him by encouraging them to compensate for his incompetence. In military environments, uniform care enforces a conventionally masculine self-sufficiency and extends the more obviously phallic weapon cleaning, as in the opening of *Härtetest*, to the phallicized body in uniform.²³ However, in 1960s civilian contexts, these chores were conventionally coded as feminine, and *Der Reserveheld* uses scenes of uniform maintenance to depict the military quotidian as domestic and fussy. Even Hottas slips from the role of father to mother when he irons Horricht's trousers, and his request that Horricht keep this incident secret implies that it might challenge the military's masculine hierarchy:

Incidentally, I would be much obliged if you would keep this affair to yourself. It is generally not the done thing for a company commander to iron his soldiers' trousers and sew on their buttons. (40:10–40:19)

His polite and formal utterance is far removed in grammatical complexity, register and tone from the abrupt orders expected from a commanding officer. Critics have argued that Hottas's good-natured manner is unrealistic and prevents any real conflict with Horricht, but the exaggeration of domestic chores in this scene is nonetheless important.²⁴ Such tasks are as central as drill and sports to the military's attempts to impose masculine ideals, but focusing on domestic body-reflexive practices in a light-hearted and even feminizing manner renders them ridiculous, unsettles the uniform's disciplinary role and reduces the ideal soldier to a superficially well-maintained uniform.

The emphasis on uniform care and maintenance foregrounds the constructed nature of military ideals, which are ironized and even challenged by the film's self-conscious staging of its own construction. The characters of the director and screenwriter particularly destabilize the NVA's image and the film's narrative. While assessing the barracks' suitability as a film set, the screenwriter is disappointed because his script requires a 'raging torrent', but the river at the barracks is 'little more than a stream'. The river is an intriguing image in light of Theweleit's work on military masculinities. Theweleit describes the body of the 'soldierly man' providing an armoured dam against femininity and homosexuality, both of which he identifies with images of fluidity. The base's inadequate river thus suggests not just the NVA's impotence, but that the metaphorical tide of Western imperialism and 'ideological diversion', which justified the army's heroic efforts, might be overestimated; in the film at least, this metaphorical flood is just a trickle. The director responds: 'That scene will be cut anyway ... These scenes are always cut' (14:15–14:29). The cuts and editing that create the finished film thus appear arbitrary: we never know what role the scene was to play, and the director never explains why such scenes are cut.²⁵ Scenes even make it into the script by chance. When the screenwriter learns that Horricht has been conscripted, he describes it as a 'fantastic twist' (*großartiger Gag*) and promises the director: 'I'll write it into the screenplay!' (15:00–15:03). This motif recurs several times and represents a self-ironic nod from Strahl, according to whom the reality on set often furnished better comedy than his script.²⁶

The film's tongue-in-cheek self-referentiality subtly ironizes the NVA, which continually fails to live up to expectations. The manoeuvre towards the end of the film provides the most striking critique of the NVA's claim to be a powerful modern army. The scene opens with an establishing shot of a film crew in the foreground filming the manoeuvre, before cutting between shots of tanks and of the filming (1:02:02–1:02:40). The crew's camera on a moving



Figure 3.1
Officers' binoculars are dwarfed by film equipment in *Der Reserveheld* (1965). © DEFA Foundation.

platform, light screens and sound equipment are juxtaposed with two officers' binoculars as they oversee the manoeuvre (1:02:05; see Figure 3.1). Part of the joke here is that both officers and crew seem inadequately equipped, and the tiny microphone and light screens are comically inadequate for the scale of the scene being filmed. But the wide low-angle shot here ensures that the film equipment fills the screen and towers above the characters on the hill. The two officers are easily lost amidst the other figures, with the NVA's grey uniforms camouflaged among the film crew's clothes. Throughout the ensuing sequence, viewers might be struck by the old-fashioned tanks and military technology, and the screenwriter declares he had imagined something more impressive with fighter jets and parachutists (1:03:50–1:04:00). The film thus gently ridicules the NVA's self-portrayal as a modern army and suggests that the reality is less impressive than the propaganda. As in *Härtetest* and in the films already discussed, Luderer's film plays with observation and voyeurism. As with the 'look' in Silverman's work, such scenes potentially destabilize hegemonic masculinities by revealing their construction.

Because of the film-within-a-film conceit, the comparisons between the barracks and a film set, between soldiers and actors, and between uniforms and costumes are accentuated. This suggests the constructed nature not only of Horricht's identity, but also of the military environment itself. The film-within-a-film undermines any idealization of military identities, since all actions, not just Horricht's, appear orchestrated for the cameras. By depicting uniform as costume, the film extends its comic self-referentiality to soldiers' embodied masculinities. When Horricht escapes from the barracks to investigate rumours of an affair between Susanne and Hottas, the director is fitting

reservists for costumes for his film, a farcical situation in which a room full of soldiers are trying on soldier costumes indistinguishable from their 'real' uniforms. The director recasts soldiers in roles that supposedly correspond better to their bodies, announcing in one case: 'We can make a Hauptmann out of the fat man' (53:50–53:53). With this comment, the director highlights the men's bodily differences and the irony that officers are often older and less fit than ordinary conscripts. Horricht steals a costume and dresses as a General to escape the barracks, resulting in soldiers saluting him and even Hottas failing to recognize him. Horricht's unrecognizability conflicts with earlier scenes, in which his face is instantly recognizable and a source of comedy. However, even when dressed as a General, Horricht is never completely disguised; he hides in a van to elude the officer at the gate, and Susanne merely laughs at his General uniform. His celebrity and comic personality shine through the uniform, which in these scenes represents not a hegemonic masculine ideal, but artificiality, temporariness and inauthenticity.

Horricht's comic performances and the film's self-referentiality come together in his sudden transformation into an ideal soldier after his reconciliation with Hottas. In the manoeuvre, Horricht effortlessly surpasses his comrades in the commando crawl that he had previously been too inept to execute. The apparent ease of his transformation suggests that he simply assumes his new role once the cameras are rolling. His performance is introduced by an exaggerated zoom, foregrounding the camera's role not only in surveying the manoeuvre but also in his transformation (1:03:00). The accompanying marching-band music adds to the parodic effect of his exaggerated performance. The lines between his performances as actor and soldier are blurred, and the scene might suggest that he only acts the ideal soldier when needed for his film. His ability to execute the commando crawl is apparently due not to physical conditioning or the military's body-reflexive practices, but rather, ironically, to his skills as an actor. No longer associated purely with casual arrogance, Horricht's body is shown as a vehicle for his proficiency in switching between roles and, in this case, performing ideal military masculinity when required.

For all its light-heartedness, *Der Reserveheld* presents a rather cynical narrative of masculinity based around the relationship between Horricht and his uniform. The film's farcical humour reduces all roles to caricature. Uniform is the primary means of unsettling identity and narrative, appearing as a costume, as well as a source of slapstick. Despite associating Horricht's body with his comic personality through physical comedy and his casual posture and gestures, the use of stereotypes suggests that his identity as an actor-comedian is no more natural than the ideal military masculinity that he assumes at the end. Horricht's character becomes no more than a series of charades: just as his acting depends on costume and exaggerated bodily gestures, so too is his performance of the ideal soldier contingent

on a well-maintained uniform and performance for the cameras. Luderer depicts the centrality of uniform to the military's routine and discipline, but although the film shows neither Horricht's civilian nor his military masculinity as at all authentic or natural, the uniform's effects remain temporary and superficial, with little acknowledgement of how the uniform's involvement in body-reflexive practices might change and constitute military bodies.

Claus Dobberke (Dir.), *Ein Katzensprung* (1977)

Ein Katzensprung also styles uniform as costume to explore the potential for soldiers' bodies to challenge the uniform's narrative of ideal military masculinity. However, the film goes further than *Der Reserveheld* by depicting the lasting effects of military discipline and training on conscripts' bodies.²⁷ The screenplay for *Ein Katzensprung* was loosely adapted by Flegel from his 1976 collection of short stories.²⁸ The film is based primarily on the story 'Der Morgen eines Zugführers' ('A Platoon Commander's Morning'), which describes a conflict between Leutnant Günter Riedel, also the film's protagonist, and other officers, notably his company commander Hauptmann Kaiser, who assumes a more central part in the film than in the original story. The film begins with Riedel's return from his honeymoon to resume command of his platoon. The plot revolves around his ensuing conflict with Gefreiter Weißenbach, who had commanded the platoon in Riedel's absence.

Weißenbach focuses on making his own military service as uncomplicated as possible, excusing weaker recruits from exercises to ensure the platoon's success and using physical abuse to train and discipline them. Riedel, by contrast, idealistically aims to support his men and develop their abilities equally, in line with officially prescribed 'socialist relationships' and in a similar way to Oberst Schanz in Flegel's later work *Es gibt kein Niemandland*. Riedel struggles to assert authority over Weißenbach, and as punishment for insubordination demotes him from his position as driver, replacing him with an inexperienced recent conscript. The consequence of Weißenbach's demotion is the platoon's failure on manoeuvres because the new driver floods the vehicle's engine while crossing a river.

Riedel's conflict with Weißenbach is mediated by Kaiser, who is detached and stuffy with little time for Riedel's idealism and who countermands Riedel's demotion of Weißenbach. Kaiser also limits Riedel's social freedom, denying him free time with his wife, Maria, when she visits the barracks, for example. The film's conflicts remain unresolved. When Weißenbach is imprisoned for unauthorized absence and for brawling, Riedel goes to investigate the brawl without permission. He discovers the apparently mitigating factor that Weißenbach was fighting a man for sleeping with his

wife in his absence. By not giving scope to explore this situation, Dobberke implicitly appears to condone homosocial violence between men in a power struggle over a woman. Riedel's investigations cause him to miss an exercise, which endangers the company's performance and angers Kaiser still further. However, Riedel's punishment and any final decision on Weißenbach are deferred beyond the film's end. Instead, Kaiser selects Riedel's platoon for a prestigious regimental manoeuvre, leaving the viewer with an emphasis on military efficiency in place of narrative closure.

Ein Katzensprung was less popular than *Der Reserveheld*, but the NVA honoured the cast and crew with its Theodor Körner Prize for cultural contributions to the military.²⁹ This award came despite the NVA's initial opposition to the film's representation of internal conflicts, which continually delayed its production.³⁰ From a military perspective, the film was produced at a time of détente in the mid 1970s, perhaps allowing Dobberke more latitude to explore internal problems in the NVA. Yet the production and release coincided with the expatriation of Wolf Biermann in 1976 and the protests and arrests in 1976 and 1977, which may have contributed to the NVA's caution on approving the film. Reviewers praised the film's emphasis on pragmatism over idealism and its criticism of soldiers seeking an easy route through military service.³¹ Critics paid less attention to Dobberke's other apparent objective: he shows soldiers with their own values and identities, suggesting that a degree of individuality was compatible with military service.³² Dobberke shows Riedel and his platoon negotiating between their individuality and the military's expectations, resulting in a varied range of military masculinities. The film associates individual masculinities with soldiers' bodies, particularly by depicting them in various stages of undress. However, this emphasis on individual identities is combined with a portrayal of vulnerable bodies being marked and changed by military service and by the symbolic and physical effects of uniform.

Dobberke's presentation of the compatibility of existing narratives of civilian masculinity with military service centres on Riedel. Critics have associated Riedel with youthful idealism, but he also represents a stubborn individualism that conflicts with his military uniform.³³ His individualism is figured through civilian clothes, such as his motorcycle leathers (2:30) or his stereotypically fashionable wide-collared shirt with Aviator sunglasses (44:00). Although the popular cultural references of Riedel's casual clothes suggest individuality, his civvies actually represent other forms of casual uniform, just like Horricht's caricatured artist's clothes in the credits to *Der Reserveheld*. Riedel's leather jacket, for example, recalls countercultural use of 'James Dean jackets' in the GDR to denote opposition to the state, so for most viewers it would probably signify opposition to military norms rather than their compatibility with individuality.³⁴ Riedel's switching between



Figure 3.2 Riedel's wig betrays the artificiality of his officer masculinity in *Ein Katzensprung* (1977). © DEFA Foundation.

military and countercultural uniforms denies him any coherent individual identity because, like Horricht, he is shown moving between predefined roles. Moreover, the fact that he wears civilian clothes at all emphasizes his power as an officer, as his subordinates are not afforded such a luxury.

Dobberke suggests a comparison between Riedel's uniforms and costumes by using a theatrical metaphor. Riedel's wife, Maria, is a make-up artist, who on visiting the barracks practises for her professional examinations by applying a bald wig to her husband, exaggerating the military requirement that hair be cut short (44:35; see Figure 3.2). In this shot, the focus on mediation of images again attempts to destabilize masculine ideals through the 'look', to quote Silverman once more, with the inclusion of a mirror and a diegetic light source in addition to the light source outside the frame. The repetition of Maria's image in the mirror and on Riedel's photographs adds to this effect, even likening the mediation of Riedel's image to the circulation of images of women as erotic or romantic objects. The bald wig makes Riedel appear more like stereotypes of the career officer, but the flap at the back of the wig betrays its artificiality, and Maria continually emphasizes that his youthful face betrays his unsuitability for the role, judging him to be 'too young'. However, Riedel comments that the bald head and beard will suit him once he is a regimental commander, suggesting that his body will not always display his individuality and will ultimately be shaped by his military career (44:46–44:49). Riedel's comment implies a complex interaction between body and uniform: although his youthful face perhaps challenges the uniform as a symbolic representation of ideal military masculinity, the uniform will in turn exert pressure on his body over time, transforming it physically and symbolically.

The remainder of this scene further resists any suggestion that bodily changes during military service are purely cosmetic, when Kaiser and two other officers visit Riedel's room and interrupt his private time with Maria.

The continued relevance of hierarchies of military masculinities in free time renders Riedel powerless to object to Kaiser's intrusion. Maria styles Kaiser in the same bald wig, and he poses for a photographs, flexing his muscles, grinning and changing pose in an exaggerated and parodic display of hegemonic masculinity (50:34–50:50). The bald wig looks more natural on him than on Riedel, so that his tomfoolery becomes, perhaps unintentionally, self-parodic. Combined with the film's playful photographic montage technique here, this parody threatens to unseat Kaiser's authority. However, a military march is played in the background, diegetic sound generated by a record given by Kaiser to Riedel as a wedding present. This record functions throughout as a narrative reminder that, despite the momentary challenge to military hierarchies suggested by the make-up scene, military discipline and hierarchy still permeate Riedel's private space. Moreover, the fact that the bald wig suits the older and more senior Kaiser better than Riedel confirms Riedel's earlier suggestion that in time military service will leave a physical imprint.

Dobberke focuses repeatedly on the physical effects of uniforms on the men in Riedel's platoon. In some cases, the uniform itself appears physically restrictive and suffocating: after running in gas suits during the exercise near the beginning of the film, the men are visibly pale-faced and gasping for breath (8:44). Uniforms have long been a tool for restricting and transforming soldiers' bodies.³⁵ In nineteenth-century Europe in particular, rigid, unforgiving dress uniforms shaped military bodies by cinching in the waist, emphasizing the shoulders and padding the chest. Stiff, heavy materials forced an upright posture and made movements slow and cumbersome.³⁶ GDR dress uniforms were not dissimilar to their nineteenth-century predecessors, and even combat uniforms designed for greater freedom of movement were thick and heavy. During training exercises in *Ein Katzensprung*, the men's combat uniforms do not enhance the body, but conceal it in thick, uncomfortable-looking layers, visualizing the military's attempts to homogenize its conscripts (34:37). The uniforms efface individual identities by obscuring men's bodies, while also hiding the physical effects of military service and instead displaying a narrative of ideal military masculinity. The details and symbols on combat uniforms are less prominent than the colours and markings of dress uniforms, and in *Ein Katzensprung* combat uniforms often appear in wide-angle shots of groups of soldiers that make it near-impossible to distinguish between ranks or even recognize characters. The potential for reading combat uniforms as homogenizing or cumbersome, rather than efficient or functional, recalls the uniform's openness to misinterpretation in *Der Reserveheld*. Dobberke's potentially homogenizing use of uniforms further suggests that Riedel's body cannot provide more than a temporary challenge to the NVA's attempts to influence his masculinity.

Perhaps because the film's plot revolves around the relationships between individual soldiers, scenes with men in full uniform not only conceal their individuality, but often interrupt the storyline with a spectacle of military efficiency. Although dress uniforms are usually designed to attract attention, Dobberke's heavy, loose-fitting combat uniforms ensure that the object of the viewer's gaze is the organizational body the uniform represents rather than the individual body. Laura Mulvey has discussed how in narrative film, the woman as spectacle 'tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation'.³⁷ In military film, the male body, not the female, becomes the focus of military spectacle, but the spectacle created by uniform in *Ein Katzensprung* still runs counter to the storyline, as Mulvey describes. For example, a training exercise early on in the film is edited as a montage, with abrupt cuts between shots and only incongruous rock music in the background to cohere the scene (5:34–7:46). The music is by Stern-Combo Meißen, whose synthesizer sounds and prog and art rock influences add to the film's portrayal of a modern military aligned with the individual interests of the young men it recruits.³⁸ The use of montage emphasizes the digression from the plot and renders the exercise a pure spectacle of military masculinity. The gaze cannot linger on individuals; even the occasional disembodied dialogue is not clearly attributed to individual characters. Instead, the uniform draws the gaze not to individual male bodies, but to the institution they represent. Uniforms are associated with delays to the plot and narrative digressions, which make them a narrative inconvenience as well as the physical inconvenience suggested by their awkwardness and ill-fitting shape.

Nevertheless, a uniform's shape depends on the body of the wearer. Bodily deviations from the military ideal are not simply concealed by the uniform, but highlighted by the juxtaposition between ideal and really existing military masculinities. Joseph has described this fact: 'The precision and explicitness of a uniform makes even small departures from the norm more obvious and meaningful to both wearers and audiences, thereby making the study of deviation much easier.'³⁹ His concern is with deviations from uniform codes, a case for the knowledgeable observer, but military uniform also highlights bodily deviations that are clearer to the uninitiated. For example, slight or overweight bodies become more noticeable by contrast with the idealized stature modelled by the cut of the uniform. Bodily changes are more gradual than changes in uniform, which occur not just with progression through the ranks, but with the season, activity or time of day: the NVA had different uniforms for exercises, ceremonies and sport as well as codes governing clothing in washrooms and corridors. In this context, it could be tempting to use the body to represent civilian masculinities that are apparently more

coherent or authentic. Yet the soldierly body too remains vulnerable to the performative training techniques of military service and the shape imposed on it by the uniform.

Dobberke reveals the complicated relationship between soldiers' bodies and the socialist soldier personality by partially removing their uniforms. Weissenbach, for example, is broad-chested, slim-waisted and covered in chest hair, wearing braces that draw further attention to his muscular chest (16:37). He cuts a more forbidding figure than newer recruits, suggesting the success of the NVA's attempts to construct physically hardened bodies. A scene with a volleyball game confirms that these physical changes are not just aesthetic, but extend the uniform's narrative display of military hierarchies to the body, even when the uniform is removed (43:09–44:00). Many recruits are playing shirtless, displaying a range of physiques and disrupting the homogeneity of military bodies given by previous scenes featuring cumbersome combat uniforms. Conscripts continue to be marked out by uniform, with the distinctive red shorts of the NVA's gym uniform distinguishing them from officers playing in blue shorts. Sport establishes an alternative hierarchy of physical fitness, but this seems to correlate with time spent in training. The team with Kaiser and Weissenbach is more successful, so that hierarchies of rank and experience reinscribe themselves through bodily differences even when the uniform is removed.

Dobberke's soldiers' bodies are thus not immune to military training, and the vulnerable bodies of two new recruits are marked by their subordinate position. First, Weissenbach finds out that Soldat Maier cannot swim and decides to absent Maier from a swimming exercise by sending him to the medic. Although Weissenbach appears to spare Maier the humiliation of his weakness being exposed, he later seems to take pleasure in making Maier's weakness visible on his naked body: he gives Maier swimming 'lessons' by tying a rope around him and forcing him into the river. As Weissenbach watches Maier, the height difference and the rope accentuate the power differential and sadomasochism of the scene. Maier appears to consent to this hazing to address his weakness and live up to the military's expectations, but Weissenbach's brutality exploits and perpetuates Maier's weakness and subordination. Dobberke uses low-angle camera shots to emphasize Weissenbach's dominance further (15:28). Later in the dormitory, Maier's comrades see the lacerations from the rope (17:05). His shame at his weakness is demonstrated by his shouting when his wounds draw attention and by the long pause before he admits that he cannot swim. A comrade declares, 'it'll be gone again in two or three days' (17:47–17:49), but the difference between Maier's untoned torso and Weissenbach's muscles suggests that such injuries are in fact a lasting part of the rewriting of conscripts' bodily narratives during military service.

The second example of conscripts' bodies being marked by their subordinate positions highlights the disruptive effect of military uniform on conscripts' individual masculinities in the film. The incident occurs later in the same scene, when Soldat Helmke is beaten by Weißenbach for standing up for Maier. Weißenbach explicitly relates the beating to Helmke's transgression of masculine ideals by creating a contrast between his artistic civilian identity as a violinist and his role as a soldier: 'Your future with the violin, Helmke, only starts when you take off the uniform. For now, you'll be made into a soldier. And quickly' (18:47–18:55). Weißenbach's tone and his movements in squaring up to Helmke makes clear that this is a threat, and the tight framing on the two men displays Helmke's vulnerability and subordinate masculinity: his slim and boyish physique appears fragile alongside Weißenbach's strong, hardened body. Helmke's beating itself is edited out of the narrative. Weißenbach takes him outside the dormitory and the action moves outside the frame, which zooms in on the soldiers still in the dormitory before the door closes leaving a black screen (19:45–19:48). Dobberke shows only what Riedel sees the next morning: a black eye that even Helmke is unwilling to explain: 'I don't want to talk about it, Comrade Leutnant' (20:42–20:45). Although the black eye hints at further physical or psychological damage, the layers of uniform make it impossible to know the extent of Helmke's injuries. The uniform edits the rest of his body out of the field of vision, just as the violence is edited out using cuts and Helmke's silence. The gaps in the film's representation of Helmke's beating gesture towards the profound psychological effects of uniform, military violence and the conflict between existing and military identities.

Dobberke's film explores strategies to disrupt the narrative of hegemonic and anonymizing masculinity applied to the male body through military uniform. However, the film ultimately shows the place of an authentic individual self within military service to be fraught with difficulties. As in *Der Reserveheld*, Riedel's individuality is compromised by the artificiality suggested by his shifting roles and uniforms. Dobberke's costume metaphor associates individual identities with a more or less constant body, but his focus on soldiers' bodies also reveals them displaying positions within military hierarchies. Over time, the bodies of Dobberke's soldiers are shaped by the body-reflexive practices of military training, which aim to overwrite their civilian identities with ideal military masculinity. The film associates this process with uniform and the constant requirement to change and regulate it according to different contexts. Dobberke depicts the resulting individual negotiations of the military's ideal, particularly in the form of Riedel's continued attempts to find space for civilian masculinities within his military identity. Soldiers' vulnerable bodies rarely offer any alternative constancy that might guarantee the authenticity of civilian masculinities, but they do

encourage a focus on individual masculinities and on those that do not fit with the military's ideals.

Jürgen Fuchs, *Fassonschnitt* (1984)

By contrast with *Der Reserveheld* and *Ein Katzensprung*, Fuchs's 1984 novel-cum-memoir, *Fassonschnitt*, uses representations of uniforms to foreground psychological dissonances in its narrative treatment of Fuchs's memories of his own military service.⁴⁰ Fuchs served in the Border Guard from 1969 to 1971 and again as a reserve in 1972. He was arrested, interrogated and exiled in 1977 after protesting against the forced exile of Wolf Biermann, and died aged forty-eight from a rare form of leukaemia, amidst speculation that the Stasi exposed him to radiation.⁴¹ Published only in the West, *Fassonschnitt* is his first longer prose text, building on shorter prose and poems dealing with the NVA published after his exile.⁴² Fuchs gains greater freedom to write about his military service once in exile, so that *Fassonschnitt* focuses substantially more on brutality than either *Ein Katzensprung* or *Der Reserveheld*. Fuchs's formerly unpublishable memories even gained currency in the West German market as evidence of NVA brutality, especially in the aftermath of the 1983 crisis in relations between West and East and the increased arms race that followed.

Fassonschnitt is narrated in the first person and depicts the first thirteen days of the autobiographical narrator's military service, chronologically and in meticulous detail. The detail in Fuchs's text, fifteen years after the fact, is partially explained by the integration into the novel of shorter pieces written in the 1970s. On the whole, however, the obsessive detail and rigidly chronological structure point to conscription's profound effects on Fuchs, while also suggesting that elements of fictionality are mixed with Fuchs's memories. Indeed, the novel is not presented as memories, but as a present-tense narrative, giving Fuchs's style immediacy and allowing for fictionalization in part. Fuchs hinted at his artful construction, explaining that he chose the early stages of military service, bracketing out other important aspects, to foreground the sudden imposition of the military world on the conscript.⁴³ Fuchs's style is modernist and many passages recall his earlier prose poetry. However, stylistic aspects were originally neglected by critics, who focused on its honesty and authenticity, and even cited it as historical evidence for the NVA's impact on conscripts.⁴⁴ More recent criticism has focused on Fuchs's language and on the text's canonical function in post-reunification military writing, but close textual analysis of the novel is still limited.⁴⁵

Fuchs's text acknowledges the tendency for uniform to appear artificial, as in *Der Reserveheld* and *Ein Katzensprung*, but Fuchs's narrator experiences the

uniform in bodily terms from the outset. The film-like effect of thoughts of uniform and weapons gives the narrator a thrill as he awaits the train to the barracks:

There is also a thrill [*ein Kitzel*]: uniform, weapons, shooting ... Maybe it will be like in crime films, like in war, only without wounds, without death and dying. (29)

The narrator seems reluctant to acknowledge this apparently naive thrill, presumably because it jars with his anxiety regarding conscription. Yet he highlights the incongruity of this sensation by placing his comparison to film and television alongside an ironic comparison to a war ‘without death and dying’. The word ‘Kitzel’, or ‘thrill’, also resonates with ‘kitzeln’ (*to tickle*) or ‘kitzelig’ (*ticklish*), a sensation caused by an external irritant that in German has less pleasant connotations than in English. The idea of uniform as an external irritant is developed when the narrator first dons his uniform, which is awkward, preworn and unclean: ‘in the pockets crumbs, tobacco’ (53). The narrator’s unpleasant uniform recalls the ungainly combat dress in *Ein Katzensprung*, but instead of the homogenizing effect of Dobberke’s scenes, Fuchs offers an intimate tactile experience that foregrounds the uniform’s embodied qualities. Fuchs’s narrator reads his uniform less as a representation of ideal military masculinity than as a document of previous wearers, whose physical needs and pleasures are preserved in pieces of food and tobacco. Framing the narrator’s experience of the uniform as unpleasant and foreign gives the sense that the close physical contact between body and uniform is oppressive and influences the conscript’s experience of his body.

The narrator’s training in a gas suit demonstrates the oppressive effects of uniform not just on the body, but also on conscripts’ control of language. First, conscripts are fitted with masks, with Unteroffizier Pohl standing on the hose to check the fit: if the conscript struggles to breathe, the mask fits. The narrator is helpless as Pohl cuts off his air: ‘The air runs out; I start floundering and can see, blurrily, through the steamed-up glass of the goggles, Pohl’s laughing face’ (148). As the men practise getting into and out of the suits, the narrator watches Pohl and observes bitterly: ‘the enemy attack with chemical weapons does not apply to him’ (151). Once the company commander arrives, training with gas suits begins. This time, the narrator is ‘no longer as agitated as at the start’, instead describing the mask’s stifling effect in smothering his voice (155). The commander has a mask with a loudspeaker to issue orders, and his power consequently manifests itself not just in the uniform, but in his control of language, as the conscripts cannot speak through their ordinary masks. The uniform cuts off the soldiers’ ability to assert themselves verbally, which the narrator describes ironically: ‘Our struggle under these

cloaks has nothing to do with language. We have no say [*Wir haben nichts zu sagen*]. If we try to say anything, it becomes an incomprehensible coughing or barking, and ultimately you run out of breath' (156). Unlike other soldiers whose bodies react physically – one soldier vomits and clings speechlessly to a fence – Fuchs's narrator experiences the gas suit's oppressive effects in linguistic terms. The sentence 'Wir haben nichts zu sagen' describes literally having nothing to say or being ordered to say nothing, but also idiomatically having no influence or 'no say'. Fuchs's irony and wordplay create distance from the narrator's helplessness and speechlessness, as well as highlighting Fuchs's reassertion of narrative power over the commander through writing.

Fuchs uses the motif of the haircut to show the socialist soldier personality colliding with conscripts' existing self-narratives, as the haircut applies uniform regulations to the body itself. 'Fassonschnitt' denotes a military-issue crew cut, the point where dress codes are extended to the body.⁴⁶ Fuchs begins with his narrator's first crew cut, locating the beginning of military socialization not when he enters the barracks or dons the uniform, but when he visits the barber in his hometown as instructed in his conscription order. This causes a crisis of identity: 'Who am I? Who will I be in a few hours? Who is that, on the day of conscription, in this barber's chair?' (8). The string of unanswered questions is the first of many, as the coherence of the narrator's self-narrative is unsettled by entry into the military and the uncertainty and anxiety he experiences. This questioning is gradually internalized: 'What is going to happen [*Was wird werden*]?' This anxious, cowering question mark is inside me' (26). The narrator's acquiescence in the haircut triggers a spiral of self-scrutiny as he fails to reconcile this complicity with his previous dissident identity: 'I went to the barber. To me, I seem good and cowardly, obedient and shitty [*beschissen*]' (13). 'Good' and 'obedient', which are desirable masculine values in the military, are challenged by being used pejoratively and coupled ironically with the traditionally unmasculine 'cowardly' and the self-accusatory 'shitty'. Fuchs's language articulates the tensions between the narrator's and the military's conceptions of masculinity, presenting a conflict between mere acquiescence and what the narrator truly considers 'good'.

Fuchs's focus on the feel of the uniform on the skin and on the hair as an interface between military rules and soldiers' bodies draws attention to the surface of conscripts' bodies. In Freudian psychoanalysis, the body's surface is closely related to the psyche and especially to the ego, the largely conscious part of the psyche associated with self and identity. The surface of the body is central to Sigmund Freud's link between body and the ego: 'The ego is above all bodily; it is not merely a surface phenomenon, but rather is itself the projection of a surface.'⁴⁷ In other words, a subject's self-image and their understanding of their body and its boundaries are essential parts of ego formation. J.C. Flügel, an early psychoanalyst following Freud, developed

the ego's relationship to the bodily surface to account for the form and meaning of clothes. Flügel argues that consciousness is extended beyond the body to its clothes, which can either increase the subject's sense of power or overwhelm the subject's body and sense of self.⁴⁸ In this understanding, the ego is not only a projection of the body's surface, but is also influenced in its structure and even stability by the clothes that adorn the body's surface. Uniform's imprint on psyche and self stems from its complex transformative effect on the bodily surface: it alters symbolic readings of this surface, affects and mediates the soldier's sensory perception, and leaves lasting physical traces that influence bodily meaning after the uniform is discarded. Fuchs's depiction is more explicit than *Ein Katzensprung* or *Der Reserveheld* in rejecting the idea that the body could remain unchanged by military service, and *Fassonschnitt* associates these physical changes to the surface of the body with lasting psychological damage.

In line with Freud's and Flügel's ideas, Fuchs explores conscripts' psychological vulnerability during military service by depicting forced exposure of the body's surface, showing how it is part of the NVA's use of body-reflexive practices to construct masculinities. Nakedness is a source of disturbance for Fuchs's narrator. Whilst describing the medical examination before conscription, the narrator relates a childhood fear of nakedness: 'I could not bear being exposed in front of others, was scared of "surprises", comments and strange eyes' (23). The manipulation of his naked body renders it part of the military's costuming of its recruits: 'Dressing and undressing, like in prison films. With the difference that I was playing along' (ibid.). Dressing up and participating in the body-reflexive practices involved with the uniform does not give the narrator strength or allow him to suddenly excel like Horricht in *Der Reserveheld*. Instead, he describes himself as a prisoner, who 'plays along' not just as an actor in costume, but also as someone complicit, having inescapably entered the military's influence via its assessment of his naked body. The 'prison films' evoke films of concentration camps in light of the frequent parallels Fuchs draws between the GDR and Nazi Germany, and between the NVA and the Wehrmacht. Although the narrator elsewhere relates his conscription to his father's Wehrmacht service, comparing himself to a prisoner suggests that he is simultaneously identifying with the victims of Nazism. Fuchs's narrative struggles throughout with his narrator's complicity, but identifying with victims here conflicts with and risks undoing the ethical gesture of his otherwise self-accusatory tone.

Subsequent scenes of nakedness provoke shame, narrative disruption and feelings of objectification, such as when the narrator is subjected to a medical examination after arrival in the barracks: 'Broad shoulders, large hands ... that's how it seemed to me. I, I, I. What is the matter; what are they doing?' (69). The doctors' features are imposing, and the narrator's ellipsis, repetition

and staccato sentences reflect his feeling of violation. This violation appears to disrupt his sense of self, with the phrase ‘ich, ich, ich’ occurring twice more in this section, reflecting the narrator’s desperation as well as his disorientation and struggle to articulate himself. The only exception is a scene towards the end in the communal showers. The narrator anticipates the experience with horror: ‘I was frightened, thought back to the medical examination’ (331). The passage is still elliptical, implying that the narrator’s shame remains, but the shower experience ultimately appears comradely or even pleasant: ‘Lots of steam, poor vision, washing Jugel’s back, jokes, comments, but friendly ones really, under hot water, we were all naked’ (332–33). The narrator does not comment further on this episode, neither confirming nor denying the potential for homoeroticism inherent in the men washing each other. This ellipsis notwithstanding, the shower scene’s tacit intimacy and solidarity imply that nudity can create a space for emotions and camaraderie outside the restrictions of the uniform.

Like Dobberke, Fuchs also describes a volleyball game, which represents the military’s use of body-reflexive gender practices to construct bodies that conform to the socialist soldier personality. Fuchs plays with the idea that sports might challenge the military’s hierarchies by substituting a hierarchy of physical fitness. During the game, ‘a tall, thin Oberleutnant has kept his grey shirt on with the epaulettes’, as if to remind the soldiers of his superiority (302). In the game, however:

The Oberleutnant is one player among others. The ball does not obey orders. Jugel, a mere Soldat, the red-arse, the upstart recruit who had only just been conscripted, can outfox an officer at the net if he can manage it. (Ibid.)⁴⁹

The narrative undercuts the possibility of this ‘can’ and ‘if’ immediately: ‘He doesn’t manage it. The Oberleutnant is faster and can jump higher!’ (ibid.). As in *Ein Katzensprung*, the military hierarchy reasserts itself in the sporting arena, which draws the narrator and his fellow conscripts into the body-reflexive practice of ideal military masculinity. This process is represented in the narrative itself. Initially, Fuchs preserves distance through an intransitive verb, anonymous object and indeterminate number of players: ‘around ten or twelve players took part’ (ibid.). However, two paragraphs later, a three-word sentence states with resignation the narrator’s incorporation into the hierarchy on the court: ‘We’re playing volleyball.’

One further scene initially suggests that the naked body can disrupt the military’s masculine ideal, but Fuchs ultimately rejects this idealized conception of the body. Rather, he shows the military hierarchy and the uniform itself reasserting themselves through the soldier’s body. In the washroom, naked torsos are the required dress code. One evening there is an altercation

between Soldat Jugel, ‘in undershirt and gym shorts’ and Leutnant Meier, ‘a naked torso [*Oberkörper*], white, delicate, hairless, with freckles’ (79). Without his uniform, Meier’s naked torso cannot convey his power. Jugel fails to recognize that Meier is his superior and snaps, ‘Have you got something to say, or what...’ (ibid.). The narrator’s string of feminizing adjectives for Meier’s ‘naked torso’ further accentuates his emasculation when stripped of his uniform. Meier’s soon reasserts his position, which Fuchs represents in terms of the relationship between uniform and body: “We shall see! I am Leutnant Meier!” shouts the torso ... his shoulders twitch, as if at any moment the gold stars might appear’ (ibid.). Fuchs projects features of the uniform onto Meier’s body, blurring the boundary between body and clothing, and suggesting, as Flügel does, that consciousness of one’s self extends to include garments worn on the surface of the body. In Fuchs’s washroom episode, the body offers little challenge to military hierarchies, as Leutnant Meier’s body assumes the starred epaulettes of his absent uniform.

The body’s assumption of the uniform’s narrative is mirrored in the language of this scene. At first, neither soldier is named, referred to metonymically in terms of uniform or synecdochically as a ‘naked torso’, so that the uniform or body part replaces the soldiers’ identities. Fuchs recapitulates Meier’s initial disempowerment by decapitating him in his description, but Fuchs’s representation never fully disrupts Meier’s power any more than he is emasculated by his slim physique. Meier’s authority is implied by the resonance of ‘*Oberkörper*’ with ranks such as ‘*Oberleutnant*’ that use the prefix ‘*Ober-*’ to signal power within the masculine hierarchy. Fuchs makes frequent use of such synecdochic or metonymic substitution for names, staging in narrative form uniform’s claim to offer a self-contained narrative representation of a person. When the conscripts first obtain the uniforms, for example, Fuchs refers to them only as ‘track suits running by’ (50). Fuchs’s consistent use of such substitutions is deliberately ironic, but also recalls the identity crisis set in motion by the haircut at the opening of the novel, with any existing narrative of self or masculinity unsettled and even replaced by the uniform.

Fuchs’s novel picks up briefly on the costume motif from *Der Reserveheld* and *Ein Katzensprung*, but soldiers’ experience of uniform is always embodied and there is no suggestion that the uniform might be merely temporary or artificial. Whereas Dobberke focuses on the physical effects of the military’s imposition of its masculine ideals, the body in *Fassonschnitt* is used to represent the narrator’s psychological disturbance, as his existing self-understanding as a dissident poet is challenged and overwritten through body-reflexive practices and even through the assumption of the uniform’s narrative details. The depiction of uniform and its extension to hair and the naked body bring the physical and psychic effects of military service

together, recalling Freud's description of the ego as a projection of the surface of the body, in this case a surface transfigured by uniform. The efficacy of these psychological changes is perhaps encapsulated by a scene in which Fuchs's narrator informs on a struggling comrade to a Stasi representative. The narrator's actions are naive, almost inadvertent, and show the effects of disorientation on his ability to sustain resistance to state institutions. The profound effects of military service on the narrator are reflected in the difficulties of narration that pattern the text, and that Fuchs later picked up in his next novel, *Das Ende einer Feigheit* (*An End to Cowardice*, 1988).⁵⁰ Together with his other works, *Fassonschnitt* seems to represent an ongoing struggle to narrate military service that highlights Fuchs's lasting need to engage with and negotiate the military's imposition of its masculine ideals, even twenty years after his own military service.

Conclusion

The films I analysed in the previous chapter showed how physical vulnerability potentially unsettles the connection between the military body and ideal forms of military masculinity, while at the same time proving a man's commitment to these ideals and justifying the need to develop a hardened exterior. In those films, the coherence of ideal military masculinity depends on soldiers constantly negotiating situations that threaten that coherence, so that even in GDR-era films, the body shows the limits and careful construction of the socialist soldier personality, in physical as well as symbolic and psychological terms. The uniform is an important means of projecting certain masculinities onto soldiers' bodies, which in *Der Reserveheld*, *Ein Katzensprung* and *Fassonschnitt* has particularly profound effects because of the nature of conscription. Most of the NVA recruits depicted in these works are forced into enlistment, most clearly in *Der Reserveheld* and *Fassonschnitt*. The uniform symbolizes the masculine ideals governing conscripts' new environment, but in these works uniforms are usually applied to bodies that do not correspond with any ideal of a strong, hardened body, especially in the early stages of military service. These three works suggest ways of unsettling the hegemony of ideal military masculinity by showing the uniform being removed and changed or by associating it with the spectacular quality of military masculinity, which I discuss in more detail in the next chapter. Although the narratives denaturalize the ideals by presenting the uniform as costume, bodies themselves are shown to be vulnerable. Soldiers are injured, bruised, scarred and suffocated by interactions with the uniform, and their bodies shaped through these enforced body-reflexive practices during training. Their bodies never wholly live up to the socialist soldier personality, but nor do

these works hold out hope for the body to preserve symbolic associations with civilian or dissident masculinities.

These works show the uniform as a means of tailoring ideal masculinity to individual soldiers, so that their bodies are read primarily as representatives of the military institution. I have described this using the image of two competing narratives of masculinity. However, the works stage misreadings and misinterpretations that unsettle the link between the soldier and ideal masculinity, most notably for comic effect in *Der Reserveheld*. Above all, this technique reveals the uniform's role in constructing and communicating military masculinities. Inasmuch as the uniform is represented as constructed and artificial, these three works direct attention to the wearer's vulnerable body and explore its potential to communicate individual, even deviant masculinities that might disrupt the military ideal. Ultimately, the hegemony of the socialist soldier personality is not substantially disrupted and its lasting power is suggested by Fuchs's writing fifteen years after his service. Instead, military masculinities are shown being negotiated as a dialogue between the uniform's ideal, soldiers' existing ideal selves from civilian life, and the physical and psychological demands of the military's body-reflexive practices.

One way in which military masculinity is negotiated in relation to uniform is through care and maintenance, which can be viewed as body-reflexive practices in their own right. Cleaning, folding, ironing and polishing items of uniform help constitute the soldier's appearance. Because failure to live up to the required appearance can be punished, the soldier's appearance can be regulated directly and immediately, even though bodies themselves only change gradually. *Der Reserveheld* bases much of its comedy on the fact that Horricht conforms to the military's requirements through his comrades' efforts rather than his own. His appearance is thus uncoupled from the physical effort that goes into perfecting the masculine image displayed by the uniform. However, the uncomfortable-looking combat uniforms in *Ein Katzensprung* suggest that no amount of maintenance can disguise the fact that many uniforms are awkward and cumbersome. Dobberke renders the uniform inconvenient, focusing on the problems it creates for identifying individual soldiers in a group. The narrator's more intimate and bodily encounter with uniform in *Fassonschnitt* further disrupts the spectacle of ideal masculinity, in this case not because the uniform can be easily removed or because it has no physical effect, but because it is dirty and passed on from other soldiers.

Uniform can be understood through Fuchs's portrayal as an irritant, which the conscript must tolerate and maintain to avoid punishment, but which never entirely fits the body physically or symbolically. Yet in all three works, body and uniform are never as separate as my metaphor of two competing narratives of masculinity might at first glance suggest. On a symbolic level, *Der Reserveheld* reveals the simultaneous construction of meaning for

the uniform and the body through body-reflexive practices associated with certain forms of masculinity. On a corporeal level, the way in which the body fills out the uniform is easy to see; in addition, *Ein Katzensprung* and *Fassonschnitt* suggest that the uniform's symbolism profoundly influences the body. Fuchs's narrative goes one step further and focuses on the psychological effects of the military's attempts to overwrite existing identities by covering the surface of the body with uniform.

Despite the uniform's symbolic, physical and psychological impact on conscripts, particularly in *Ein Katzensprung* and *Fassonschnitt*, none of the three works accepts that military uniform is entirely homogenizing or that soldiers' existing identities become subsumed by the power associated with the uniform. Rather, they show a complex relationship, with body and uniform influencing each other in the construction of military masculinities, particularly in the early stages of conscription. *Ein Katzensprung* suggests that even career soldiers such as Riedel continue to negotiate identities that incorporate civilian masculinities and degrees of nonconformity. The psychological effects emphasized by Fuchs appear to be the result of the impossibility of entirely resisting the imposition of military ideals associated with the uniform. Only occasionally, as in the shower scene in *Fassonschnitt*, does nakedness provide spaces for tactile intimacy among the military's incorporation of the body into its disciplinary routine. As in Connell's account of body-reflexive practices or Butler's discussion of queer performativity, then, the potential for 'recalcitrant' bodies to subvert or challenge military ideals appears to be limited. Nonetheless, these representations suggest that the socialist soldier personality is sustained through a range of military masculinities that inevitably embody the ideal only imperfectly. The conflict between masculinities associated with the body and the uniform forces soldiers to negotiate conformity and resistance to the military's ideals, using body-reflexive practices to construct individual masculine identities that are complex, relational and dynamic.

Because the uniform offers an outward projection of one of the state's principal masculine ideals, the relationship between body and uniform offers useful insights into citizens' negotiations of the GDR dictatorship more widely. *Der Reserveheld*, *Ein Katzensprung* and *Fassonschnitt* correspond with recent social history of the GDR that complicates previous assumptions that citizens could feign conformity in public life and otherwise withdraw into a separate private sphere or a so-called 'niche society'.⁵¹ The relationship between body and uniform offers a visualization of the effects of such participation on citizens' sense of self. Even though certain acts of limited conformity could appear or be intended as insincere and self-aware, acts of accommodation to GDR institutions nonetheless shaped citizens' daily lives and affected their identities just as the uniform affects soldiers' bodies and

masculinities. Moreover, these works illustrate men's participation in the state's institutions and show that this participation was gendered: the military represents one context in which men negotiated institutions in substantially different ways from women.

Notes

An earlier version of this chapter appears as 'Narrative and the Body in Uniform: East German Military Masculinities in Claus Dobberke's *Ein Katzensprung* and Jürgen Fuchs's *Fassonschnitt*', *Modern Language Review* 110 (2015), 204–21. Used with permission from the Modern Humanities Research Association.

1. Connell, *Masculinities*, 52–53.
2. *Ibid.*, 57.
3. Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 61.
4. Luderer, *Der Reserveheld*; C. Dobberke (dir.), *Ein Katzensprung* (DEFA, 1977); Fuchs, *Fassonschnitt*.
5. On the cultural coding and symbolism associated with bodies, see P. Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
6. Niemetz, *Das feldgraue Erbe*, 292.
7. A. Bickford, 'Male Identity, the Military and the Family in the Former German Democratic Republic', *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 19 (2001), 65–76 (at 66).
8. N. Joseph, *Uniforms and Nonuniforms: Communication through Clothing* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986), 2.
9. Butler, 'Introduction', 2.
10. *Ibid.*, 244, note 7.
11. See Michael Lucey on first-person narration and identity: *Never Say I: Sexuality and the First Person in Colette, Gide, and Proust* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
12. J. Gaines, 'Costume and Narrative: How Dress Tells the Woman's Story', in J. Gaines and C. Herzog (eds), *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 180–211.
13. Luderer, *Der Reserveheld*: hereinafter referenced in the text.
14. F.-B. Habel, *Das große Lexikon der DEFA-Spielfilme: Die vollständige Dokumentation aller DEFA-Spielfilme von 1946 bis 1993* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2000), 482–83; Anon., 'Kinoprogramm vom 8.8. bis 14.8.1980', *Berliner Zeitung*, 7 August 1980, 10.
15. E.g. ch, 'Ein Komiker in Uniform: "Der Reserveheld" – ein Filmschwank der DEFA', *Neue Zeit*, 2 March 1965, 4.
16. Anon., 'Kontakt mit "Falstaff"', *Neue Zeit*, 3 March 1965, 4.
17. 'Wehrpflichtgesetz 1962', 2–6.
18. R. Strahl, 'Der Reserveheld: Bemerkungen eines Autors über "seinen" Film', *Neues Deutschland*, 28 February 1965, 9.
19. G. King, *Film Comedy* (London: Wallflower, 2002), 35.
20. P. Fussell, *Uniforms: Why We are What We Wear* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 4; Joseph, *Uniforms*, 183–84.
21. I discuss the theatricality of military masculinities further in Chapter 4.
22. B. Edwards (dir.), *The Pink Panther* (United Artists, 1963).

23. On uniforms and phallic symbolism, see V. Steel, *Fetish: Fashion, Sex and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 180.
24. C. Klötzer, 'Der militärische Bereich unserer Gesellschaft in der Filmkunst: Soldatengestalten der NVA im Spielfilm', unpublished thesis, Film and Television Academy of the GDR, Potsdam-Babelsberg (1970), 53.
25. The film's screenplay gives more detail, but lacks the comic effect of the final edit. The director explains: 'Because you'd need a whole pioneer regiment to build the bridge you've described.' BArch, DR 117/550, *Der Reserveheld*, screenplay I, 16 June 1964, 36.
26. Strahl, 'Der Reserveheld'.
27. Dobberke, *Ein Katzensprung*; hereinafter referenced in the text.
28. W. Flegel, *Ein Katzensprung* (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, 1976).
29. ADN, 'Theodor-Körner-Preis 1978 für verdienstvolle Künstler', *Neues Deutschland*, 1 March 1978, 3.
30. See the interview with Dobberke in Kahlau, *Volksarmee*, 162–84.
31. E.g. G. Sobe, 'Hauptsache, die Karre rollt...? Der neue DEFA-Spielfilm "Ein Katzensprung"', *Berliner Zeitung*, 6 July 1977, 4.
32. Dobberke describes his career-long interest in the conflict between the individual's values and social reality: Kahlau, *Volksarmee*, 179.
33. HU, 'Cowboys, Räuber und Rebellen: Blick auf das Programm der Sommerfilmtage', *Neue Zeit*, 6 July 1977, 4.
34. See Fenimore, *Sex*, 138; and films such as N. Ray (dir.), *Rebel without a Cause* (Warner Bros, 1955).
35. For a full history, see J. Craik, *Uniforms Exposed: From Conformity to Transgression* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 21–50.
36. E. Hackspiel-Mikosch, 'Uniforms and the Creation of Ideal Masculinity', in P. McNeil and V. Karaminas (eds), *The Men's Fashion Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2009), 117–29 (at 122–23).
37. Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', 11.
38. I have discussed Flegel and the NVA's interest in popular music elsewhere: Smith, 'Music, the GDR Military and the GDR Today'.
39. Joseph, *Uniforms*, 2.
40. Fuchs, *Fassonschnitt*; hereinafter referenced in the text.
41. P. Wensierski, 'In Kopfhöhe ausgerichtet', *Der Spiegel*, 17 May 1999, 42–44.
42. J. Fuchs, *Gedächtnisprotokolle* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1977); J. Fuchs, *Pappkameraden: Gedichte* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1981).
43. E. Loest, 'Inhaftierte Eroberer: In "Fassonschnitt" protokolliert Jürgen Fuchs den Alltag der Nationalen Volksarmee', *Die Zeit*, 30 November 1984.
44. M. Rogg, *Armee des Volkes? Militär und Gesellschaft in der DDR* (Berlin: Links, 2008), 390; H. Zaunstock, 'Die Zeit bei der "Asche": Erinnerungen von NVA-Soldaten als Gegenstand und konzeptionelle Herausforderung der zeitgeschichtlichen Forschung', *Hallische Beiträge zur Zeitgeschichte* 18 (2008), 63–79.
45. U. Fix, 'Widerständige Sprache in der Literatur der DDR am Beispiel Jürgen Fuchs', in M. Hermann and H. Pietzsch (eds), *DDR-Literatur zwischen Anpassung und Widerspruch: Tagungsband zum Jürgen-Fuchs-Literaturseminar am 26. und 27. November 2010 in Jena* (Jena: IKS Garamond, 2011), 67–95; A. Plowman, 'Experience, Military Fiction and the Shameful Self in Ingo Schulze's *Neue Leben*', in D. Clarke and A. Goodbody (eds), 'The Self in Transition: East German Autobiographical Writing before and after Unification: Essays in Honour of Dennis Tate', special issue, *German Monitor* 75 (2012), 253–66.

46. The haircut is a common trope in military narratives: S. Kubrick (dir.), *Full Metal Jacket* (Warner Bros, 1987), opens with close-ups of resigned recruits while their hair is shaved.
47. S. Freud, *Das Ich und das Es* (Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1923), 28: 'Das Ich ist vor allem ein körperliches, es ist nicht nur ein Oberflächenwesen, sondern selbst die Projektion einer Oberfläche.'
48. J.C. Flügel, *The Psychology of Clothes* (London: Hogarth, 1930), 34–37.
49. 'Red-arse' (in German 'Rotarsch') was usually a derogatory nickname for soldiers in their penultimate six months of service, who more experienced soldiers initiated with a blow to the buttocks. Here, Fuchs applies it to a new recruit.
50. J. Fuchs, *Das Ende einer Feigheit* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1988).
51. See G. Mueller, 'Re-imagining the Niche: Visual Reconstructions of Private Spaces in the GDR', in A. Saunders and D. Pinfold (eds), *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 197–213.

Chapter 4

RETRO MASCULINITY AND MILITARY THEATRICALITY



The portrayal of the NVA in *Der Reserveheld*, *Ein Katzensprung* and to a lesser extent *Fassonschnitt* reveals a second feature of military masculinities that potentially conflicts with the ideals promoted by most military organizations. By portraying uniform as costume, the works foreground the theatrical nature of military masculinities. Like many armed forces, the NVA nurtured a public display of strength and technological prowess through parades, documentaries and news bulletins. This spectacle was bound up with ideals of masculinity: documentaries and official images depict rows of barely distinguishable, uniformed men and occasionally women.¹ Photographs in military publications reproduce close-ups of handsome, well-groomed faces or images of strong, capable soldiers working or helping in the community.² In addition to these ubiquitous images of the ideal soldier, the NVA had strict rules governing comportment while on leave. Conscripts were to wear uniforms at all times and could be punished for compromising the NVA's reputation. The curious fact that women recruits were not required to wear uniform away from barracks underlines the importance of masculinity within the NVA's spectacle when soldiers returned to their communities.³ During training, conscripts were expected to demonstrate compliance with the military's masculine ideals. Not only was the ideal soldier physically strong, he also meticulously maintained his dress uniform, participated in choreographed rituals, and marched and saluted with overstated gestures. These embodied rituals and performances asserted and maintained the hegemony of soldiers in uniform, while performatively constructing masculinities that conformed to the NVA's ideals.

However, there is only a fine distinction between acts that assert gender ideals and those that reveal their nonessential nature. *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* (*To Hell with Harbolla*, 1989), directed by Bodo Fürneisen (b. 1950), and *NVA* (2005), directed by Leander Haußmann (b. 1959), present stylized and exaggerated images of the NVA for comic effect, set in the GDR's past in a retro style.⁴ At first glance, these comedies appear to present a sanitized and even flippant portrayal of the NVA, and yet their emphasis on the theatricality of military masculinities potentially challenges the NVA's ideals. In Fredric Jameson's and Jean Baudrillard's influential theories of retro cinema, they criticize retro films for their superficial approach to history. *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* and *NVA*, which combine humour and slapstick with more sombre depictions of military hierarchies and discipline, complicate Jameson's and Baudrillard's accusations that retro is a purely superficial mode of engagement with the past. In fact, as Kaja Silverman's analysis of retro clothing and gender identity suggests, a retro aesthetic can potentially unsettle the power of ideal military masculinity.

Defining Retro

Retro is an analytical category that draws attention to the theatricality of these films, but it also challenges the dominance of the term *Ostalgie* that persists in post-reunification scholarship. Since the mid 1990s, comic treatments of the GDR, including the film *NVA*, have often been described with the term *Ostalgie*, playing on the words 'east' and 'nostalgia'.⁵ The term has been used in many ways, most frequently to disparage portrayals of the GDR for being too sentimental or avoiding discussions of the state's oppressive institutions.⁶ More recently, interviews have found that the term *Ostalgie* remains ubiquitous in respondents' descriptions of their relationship with the GDR, even though most accuse only other Eastern Germans of *Ostalgie*, whilst denying being 'ostalgic' themselves.⁷ Some scholars have attempted to rehabilitate *Ostalgie* as a form of resistance to consumerism or to dispute its status as a purely postsocialist phenomenon.⁸ These revisions notwithstanding, labelling comic depictions of the GDR as nostalgic too often closes down detailed analysis. The category of *Ostalgie* poses particular problems for these two films. On the simplest level, *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* cannot be nostalgic for the GDR as it was produced in 1988 when the state's collapse was generally unforeseen. This earlier film has numerous parallels with post-reunification comedies, showing that trends in these comedies – and many of the jokes – were not new after reunification, even if their context changes after the events of 1989. Moreover, the emotive longing of nostalgia cannot be easily reconciled with the self-consciously irreverent

play that defines Fürneisen's and Hausmann's approaches to the past. The works are better understood through theories of retro, which can account for both Fürneisen's light-hearted style and Hausmann's more bitterly ironic portrayal of the NVA, while suggesting ways in which retro portrayals could challenge military ideals. Above all, a retro aesthetic is defined by theatricality, which can unsettle ideal military masculinity when used to depict military service.

A retro aesthetic in cinema is created by combining material from or symbols of the past, whether in the film's editing, mise-en-scène or other filmic techniques. Retro describes a detached and ironic approach to the past, which unashamedly and self-consciously presents itself as stylized and constructed. It is difficult to distil a list of the salient characteristics of retro, which vary from artwork to artwork, but Simon Reynolds's four criteria provide a useful starting point. Reynolds focuses on music, but his categories can be easily adapted for retro films. First, he argues that retro deals with the 'relatively immediate past', usually within living memory. This characteristic distinguishes retro film from heritage film or costume drama, which tend to deal with earlier periods. Second, Reynolds points to the advent of recording technology and digitalization, which enable the 'exact recall' of older music in a later production. In film, this 'exact recall' might entail using original documentary footage. The remastering of older material with contemporary technology can create aesthetic differences between the original and newer versions, ranging from minor differences in sound or image quality to more substantial changes in lighting or colour. If older footage is simply embedded within later material, a different incongruity emerges between the finishes of the different pieces of footage. Third, Reynolds describes retro's use of 'artifacts of popular culture', which in film frequently dominate the mise-en-scène in the form of objects or fashions. Fourth, Reynolds emphasizes that retro 'tends neither to idealise nor sentimentalise the past, but seeks to be amused and charmed by it'.⁹ This final criterion accounts for the detached, light-hearted irony of retro.

The concept of retro, based on Reynolds's definition, has four main advantages over *Ostalgie* in conceptualizing a subset of comic depictions of the GDR past. Above all, it locates comic depictions of East Germany within global aesthetic trends, in line with other playfully stylized stagings of pastness from *Grease* (1978) to *Mad Men* (2007–15). Second, retro overcomes the reliance on reunification as a caesura: there are substantial stylistic continuities between comic works about the GDR past from the 1980s and those produced since reunification. Third, retro explicitly designates an aesthetic approach, which directs the focus to the form of an artwork. Finally, the sentimental attachment implied by the root of *Ostalgie* in 'nostalgia' is not appropriate for representations of repressive institutions. Elizabeth Guffey has

most clearly summed up this crucial distinction between retro and nostalgia: she describes retro as a form of ‘unsentimental nostalgia’, differentiating the irony and playfulness of retro from nostalgia as a concept that is emotional and sincere.¹⁰ The Stasi, the police and the military have repeatedly featured in comic representations and it is difficult to describe a discussion of oppression, particularly a detached and humorous one, as sentimental or nostalgic. Many works that have been labelled ‘ostalgic’, including *NVA*, are overtly theatrical, playfully ironic and defiantly unsentimental. In other words, if the term *Ostalgie* is to be applied to such works, it must be emptied of the connotations of ‘nostalgia’. Retro, by contrast, denotes just such a playful, self-conscious and distanced comic portrayal of the past.

Retro treatments of the GDR have been an important trend since the 1980s: *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* is one of several late 1980s films dealing with the 1940s and 1950s, including Frank Beyer’s *Der Bruch* (*The Break-in*, 1989), a crime comedy set in postwar Berlin.¹¹ Since reunification, too, the term ‘retro’ has often been used off-hand to describe films’ approach to the GDR past, particularly with reference to *Sonnenallee* (*Sun Avenue*, 1999) or *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003).¹² However, critics generally have not explored in depth the effects of this retro aesthetic on the depiction of the GDR.¹³ In *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* and *NVA*, the theatricality and bricolage associated with retro present ideal military masculinity as stylized and constructed. Acts of conformity are represented ironically as staged, even parodic gestures, a technique that presents men’s negotiations of masculinity as a series of embodied performances. The two films acknowledge the profound effects of military training, while partially unsettling the *NVA*’s masculine ideals with their retro style. Retro can be used naively, but these works suggest that a retro aesthetic can accommodate a nuanced representation of military service and challenge gender ideals.

Superficiality and Surface

Much existing theoretical work on retro cinema has been more critical than Reynolds’s analysis of music. Baudrillard, one of the first theorists to use the term, applies it to historical films from the 1970s produced in a style he considers too glossy and idealized. Baudrillard accuses these productions of emptying out the substance and meaning of history through a hyperrealism ‘that makes it so that fundamentally they no longer resemble anything, except the empty figure of resemblance, the empty form of representation’.¹⁴ Baudrillard accuses the films he describes of demonstrating a fascination with history, fascism and war that empties them of their historical importance and turns history into myths on screen. These myths are divorced from history, and yet

as they circulate they come to stand in for history in the popular imagination. These myths are produced as ‘perfect remakes’ with ‘extraordinary montages’ that simulate history and mask the complexity of the subject.¹⁵ Baudrillard disparages retro films for their aesthetic that delights in the surface qualities of representation, but he does not discuss the ironic tone of retro or explore its play with authenticity.

Even though Baudrillard is dismissive of the retro style of historical films, his analysis can broaden Reynolds’s definition. His reference to ‘montages’ suggests in more concrete terms how a retro aesthetic might manifest itself in film. Baudrillard mostly refers to the contrast between historical material and current styles and technology, but retro can also juxtapose historical material from different periods using sound and editing as well as the visual image. Films can also mimic older styles of filmmaking, although as Baudrillard suggests, the quality of these retro productions generally marks them as present-day imitations. Just as Reynolds emphasizes ‘exact recall’, Baudrillard associates retro with hyperrealism, but argues that the retro image is too perfect and, he implies, stylized. However, he does not explore the self-conscious play with stylization and stereotype that Reynolds emphasizes more prominently. Indeed, Baudrillard allows for no self-awareness on the part of the filmmaker. As he describes it, retro is serious and disingenuous in its appropriation or ‘simulation’ of the past. He ignores the possibility for retro films to acknowledge and play with traces of their own inauthenticity, so that this key feature of retro is sidelined within his analysis.

Jameson pushes Baudrillard’s argument further in his discussion of post-modernism. He discusses cinema, which he categorizes as ‘nostalgia film’, which:

was never a matter of some old-fashioned ‘representation’ of historical content, but instead approached the ‘past’ through stylistic connotation, conveying ‘pastness’ by the glossy qualities of the image, and ‘1930s-ness’ or ‘1950s-ness’ by the attributes of fashion.¹⁶

As Guffey has suggested, the distinction between retro and nostalgia is complicated, but rests primarily on the contrast in tone between the detachment of retro and the sentimentality of nostalgia. Under this definition, Jameson’s description of an abstract and stylized ‘pastness’ seems to resemble retro more closely than nostalgia. While Baudrillard argues that retro film attempts to simulate reality, Jameson asserts that nostalgia films are never concerned with realism at all. For him, their stylized nature is not a by-product, but the primary means of engaging with the past, or rather with ‘pastness’. Moreover, his reference to the ‘attributes of fashion’ suggests that the importance of material culture discussed by Reynolds has direct application to film not just

through props and objects, but also through other aspects of *mise-en-scène*, including costume and make-up. Jameson's account of nostalgia film opens up retro to include an extravagant and self-conscious play with material and stylistic signifiers of pastness. Jameson's tone is nevertheless almost identical to Baudrillard's: just as Baudrillard disparages retro, so too does Jameson criticize nostalgia films for placing the past at a distance and confirming viewers' separation and safety in the present.

One of the primary criticisms of retro films, then, is their superficiality and obsession with manipulating and delighting in surface elements. However, *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* and *NVA* are both examples of retro being used to deal with more sensitive subjects. These films combine the 'amused and charmed' approach to the past identified by Reynolds and the 'stylistic connotation' described by Jameson with a discussion of one of the GDR's repressive institutions. The reception of both films was mixed and involved many of the same negative attitudes to retro demonstrated by Baudrillard and Jameson. Reviewers criticized both films for their unsubtle humour and their superficial and nostalgic outlook.¹⁷ In the case of *NVA*, such accusations dominated its reception. Many of Fürneisen's and a handful of Hausmann's reviewers did praise their humour, but positive reviews generally focused on the supposed authenticity of the films' portrayals, often neglecting their stylized nature.¹⁸ Critics only briefly commented on the films' retro aesthetics and their play with stylized symbols of the past, particularly with reference to the films' soundtracks.¹⁹ At first glance, *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* and *NVA* seem to reduce military service to a retro play with surface, but their use of retro is more complex when its effect on the representation of military masculinities is taken into account.

Zum Teufel mit Harbolla is based on a screenplay by Flegel, was produced in 1988 and premiered in February 1989.²⁰ It was only DEFA's second *NVA* comedy after *Der Reserveheld*. Subtitled 'A Tale of 1956' ('Eine Geschichte aus dem Jahre 1956'), *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* is set in the year of the *NVA*'s founding. The plot therefore unfolds before conscription was introduced, and its main conflict is between representatives of the old *KVP* and new recruits to the *NVA* who were better trained but inexperienced. The film opens showing Unteroffizier Harry Harbolla, who has apparently absconded from barracks, dancing to rock 'n' roll in a rural pub in his *KVP* uniform. Outside, military police wait to arrest him for absconding. The film then cuts to the other main character, Leutnant Gottfried Engelhardt, being fitted for the newly redesigned *NVA* uniform for his commissioning parade. Engelhardt is placed in an artillery regiment, where he assumes command of the platoon formerly led by Harbolla. His first task is to collect Harbolla from military prison in Oranienburg, where he is being held after his arrest, and escort him back to barracks.

Fürneisen depicts Oranienburg as a hub of clumsy black-market activity because of its proximity to West Berlin. Indeed, the film parodies SED rhetoric justifying the existence of the Berlin Wall as a barrier against Western corruption and ‘ideological diversion’.²¹ Old men are smuggling cigarettes over the border and even nuns are hiding records in their habits (*ZTH*, 10:18–10:55). When Engelhardt arrives, he instantly falls for the first woman he sees, Anita. Engelhardt’s efforts to escort Harbolla back to barracks are repeatedly thwarted as Harbolla refuses to cooperate and leads him on an odyssey around Oranienburg. They are ushered in by mistake to speak at an FDJ meeting and then attend a dance in the restaurant where Harbolla’s love interest, Heidelore, works. When a brawl breaks out, Harbolla rescues Engelhardt and continues to lead him around Oranienburg. Eventually, having missed the final train that evening, the two of them go back to Heidelore’s apartment to spend the night with Anita and Heidelore. Somewhat incredibly, Anita turns out to be a sex worker and leaves Engelhardt heartbroken. Heidelore then throws Harbolla out for his insincere approach to their relationship and the two men finally find each other on the train back to the barracks as the film ends.

Haußmann wrote the screenplay for *NVA* in collaboration with the author Thomas Brussig.²² The plot describes the military service of protagonist Henrik Heidler and his comrades in the late 1980s, among them Krüger, a rebellious figure obsessed with women, and Traubewein, a religious young man who develops a physical allergy to military service. The other cluster of characters consists of Henrik’s superiors: the base commander Oberst Kalt, the propaganda officer Hauptmann Stummel, the gay couple Oberfähnrich Lenk and Leutnant Laucke, the brash Hauptfeldwebel Futterknecht and the quieter, somewhat obsequious Unteroffizier Aurich. The officers are ridiculous, unintelligent, sinister and yet not inhuman. As in *Fassonschnitt* and many military films, novels and memoirs, Henrik’s arrival at the barracks is followed by a medical examination, uniform distribution, roll call, drill, punishments, abuses of power by more experienced soldiers and the first military exercise. During this exercise, Henrik becomes disorientated in his gas mask, falls into a river and is rescued by a group of nurses. He immediately falls in love with one of them, Marie, who turns out to be Kalt’s daughter. Meanwhile, Krüger is desperate to meet women, so feigns illness in order to escape the barracks and go dancing. He is eventually caught and sent to the notorious military prison in Schwedt, returning a broken man.

Unbeknownst to the ordinary soldiers, the protests and upheavals of the autumn of 1989 unfold in the background of the film, mediated via the officers’ radio. Soon after Krüger returns from Schwedt, for example, the officers hear the news of the decision to allow East Germans at the West German

embassies in Prague and Warsaw to enter the FRG (*NVA*, 1:13:54–1:14:36). At the end of the film, Henrik refuses to declare ‘I serve the German Democratic Republic’ in an official ceremony, leading to the young men simply walking away from the army without the officers doing anything to stop them. Henrik describes this dissolution of the unit happening in parallel to the opening of the Berlin Wall: ‘Then I discover that lots of others showed courage at that very moment, and that the country that they had forced us to serve and defend suddenly ceased to exist’ (*NVA*, 1:26:53–1:27:03). With the officers alone on the base, the film ends with a giant explosion when the entire arms stockpile is accidentally detonated and parts of the base are destroyed. The closing shot shows a dusty sepia image of the officers’ mess, as if frozen in time.

In line with Reynolds’s categories, both films deal with events in living memory, specifically the memories of Flegel and Hausmann. The unreliability of memory is even contemplated in Hausmann’s fantastical scenes involving Henrik and Marie, which are often shot in soft focus or blurred at the edges, a common technique in romantic films that in this case makes these scenes seem fantasized (e.g. *NVA*, 40:58–42:33). Both films playfully present a stylized version of the past: to adapt Jameson’s terminology, 1950s-ness in *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* and 1980s-ness in *NVA*. Both are light-hearted comedies whose irony prevents them from being sentimental or maudlin about military service. Above all, both films refer extensively to popular culture, in the form of objects, music and original recordings that generate the ‘exact recall’ that for Reynolds is characteristic of retro. Soundtracks are particularly influential in creating the retro aesthetic of each film. Fürneisen and Hausmann experiment with music from the recent past, which is essential for constructing the films’ very different approaches to retro. These soundtracks show how the films move beyond the superficiality that Baudrillard associates with a retro ‘simulation’ of the past.

Fürneisen described *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* as a ‘comedy with depth, surrounded by retro colour with an ironic twist’.²³ However, many reviewers disputed the depth of his comedy and focused entirely on the film’s retro aesthetic, which indeed appears to be the film’s organizing principle. Fürneisen saturates the film with details from 1950s popular culture, and his soundtrack particularly encapsulates the film’s self-conscious play with its own authenticity. The opening scene depicts a jukebox selecting and playing a record, a stereotypically 1950s image that signals the importance of music to Fürneisen’s evocation of the 1950s. The song clearly recalls the music of Elvis Presley, but is in fact a rock ‘n’ roll-style pastiche by Karl-Ernst Sasse, who wrote the score for the film. Sasse uses derivative Elvis-inspired riffs and formulaic and clumsy English lyrics, presumably for comic effect: ‘I wanna be your part/I wanna be your heart/I wanna be a part of your lovely heart’

(*ZTH*, 1:06–1:11). These lyrics are perhaps a wry comment on American music becoming garbled in performances by early GDR musicians who were not necessarily proficient in English.

Elsewhere, Fürneisen uses a *Schlager*-singing duo who reprise GDR songs from the 1950s in Heidelore's restaurant: Irma Baltuttis and Hanns Petersen's 'Wenn du wüsstest, ach, wie ich dich liebe' ('If You Knew, Oh, Just How Much I Love You', 1952) and 'Spatz und Spätzin' ('Mr and Mrs Sparrow', 1953), and Sonia Siewert and Herbert Klein's 'Wenn der Hafen Schlafen geht' ('When the Harbour Goes to Sleep', 1956) (*ZTH*, 31:34–34:13; 35:09–37:44; 44:19–46:50).²⁴ These numbers are interspersed with more of Sasse's rock-'n'-roll pastiche, this time with English-sounding nonsense lyrics (*ZTH*, 37:54–39:27). The singers are played by Katrin Sass, better known for her later role as Christiane Kerner in *Good Bye, Lenin!*, and Walter Plathe, who starred as Riedel in *Ein Katzensprung*. Their performance is heavily parodic, complete with cheesy grins, maracas in 'Wenn du wüsstest' and unruffled expressions as a brawl breaks out during 'Spatz und Spätzin'. The 1950s songs are characteristic of Fürneisen's use of historically accurate retro details of 1956 to lend authenticity to his portrayal more generally, including a Sparkasse advert and a radio announcement of famous East German cyclist Gustav Schur winning a race (*ZTH*, 18:07–18:48). Yet Sass's and Plathe's exaggerated delivery of the *Schlager* songs clearly renders them ironic, as does the abrupt contrast with Sasse's rock-'n'-roll pastiche. With this irony in mind, Fürneisen's aesthetic cannot be described in Baudrillard's terms as an attempted 'simulation' of the 1950s. Combined with Sasse's deliberately derivative 1980s score, the *Schlager* performances are part of the film's conscious play with retro, which clearly foregrounds its rejection of an authentic or historical depiction of the 1950s.

In contrast to Fürneisen's use of original items and recordings from the 1950s in his portrayal, the retro aesthetic of *NVA* is not confined to evoking any singular historical period. Hausmann enigmatically locates the film 'Somewhere in East Germany in the late 1980s' (*NVA*, 0:46). From this opening shot, he playfully anchors the film in GDR history while rejecting any link between the film and any specific historical reality. He even links it to his own biography, provocatively showing his own military identification card in the closing credits (*NVA*, 1:33:51) and saying in an interview that he had the idea for a film during his own military service: 'What on earth is this?, I thought, and imagined it was all unreal, it was a film.'²⁵ Whilst relating the film to his own military service, Hausmann emphasizes not the authenticity of his portrayal, but the unbelievable and surreal nature of the experience. Further resisting any simple equation between *NVA* and his own biography, he has insisted that the film is not a GDR film, but a critique of narrow-minded attitudes in the present, and has commented repeatedly that his cultural influences in the East were the same as those of his Western contemporaries.²⁶

Haußmann's ambivalence about the importance of a specific GDR past affects his use of retro, as exemplified by the soundtrack to *NVA*, which draws on a wider range of influences than that of *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*. Instead of using songs from only one period, Haußmann combines Western songs from various decades, from Creedence Clearwater Revival's 'Bad Moon Rising' (1969) and Cat Stevens's 'Oh Very Young' (1974) to Polyphonic Spree's 'Light and Day' (2003). The latter is a clear anachronism within the diegesis, while the other tracks were already retro by the late 1980s. The recurring use of the folk song 'My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean' perhaps sums up Haußmann's approach to the past. The version in the film is a 2006 cover in a retro synth style by Element of Crime, originally a West German band. The cover's more unusual lyrics, 'My Bonnie is over the ocean', draw on a version popularized in East Germany by Dean Reed, an American émigré to the GDR.²⁷ This network of covers and rereleases encapsulates a retro approach to the past based on constant sampling and revival, and demonstrates the extent of musical influences between the GDR and the West. Unlike in Fürneisen's film, retro songs in *NVA* are almost always nondiegetic, so there is no opportunity for ironic or parodic performances. Yet the *NVA* soundtrack is self-consciously and performatively retro through its playful combination of music from different eras. Haußmann's soundtrack demonstrates that memories and representations of a certain period are always refracted through later perspectives, meaning that experiences and cultural artefacts from many different eras interact and coalesce.

The soundtracks of the two films therefore challenge Baudrillard's and Jameson's mistrust of films that depict the past through popular culture. Far from attempting a glossy 'perfect remake' or a disingenuous 'simulation' of the past, each film foregrounds its playful and provocative disregard for authenticity. Thus, retro need not be understood only as a superficial obsession with surface details that signify pastness. The theatricality with which these two films exhibit their own inauthenticity is particularly important in their depiction of military masculinities. In an essay from 1986 on fashion, Silverman explores the theatrical quality of retro and argues for its radical potential for articulating gender identities.²⁸ For Silverman, retro's portrayal of the past is always 'stagey', in deliberately and provocatively taking artefacts of the past out of their original context and inserting them into incongruous combinations. Retro, she suggests, puts 'quotation marks' around the past to recontextualize it, retaining ironic distance and performing the citation and textual mediations that determine our access to the past.²⁹ She presents retro as a tool in the articulation of a feminist gender identity through clothes: retro displays the 'decades of representational activity' that coalesce to form identities as subjects continually represent themselves in varied and changing ways.

Silverman's discussion of retro perhaps places too much faith in its radical nature. She neglects the extremely popular and marketable nature of retro, which is now no longer as anti-establishment or as resistant to co-option by the fashion or advertising industries as she suggests in 1986.³⁰ Rather, Stephen Brown argues that the popularity of retro has boosted the advertising industry.³¹ GDR retro is an excellent example of the success of retro as a marketing tool. The satirical use of state symbols was not new with reunification: the language, insignia and even uniforms of the SED and its institutions were parodied in film, literature and cabaret in the 1980s long before they were commodified after 1990.³² After reunification, militaria and other official symbols were among the first aspects of the East German past to be commodified as retro kitsch, as in other postsocialist countries.³³ Even thirty years later, medals, uniform items and other military paraphernalia are on sale at the Brandenburg Gate and Checkpoint Charlie. Websites selling real and pastiche NVA uniforms have developed, targeting collectors, nostalgics and even the film industry.³⁴ Silverman's argument for the radical anti-establishment potential of retro must therefore be qualified. *NVA* was a film made as a consumer product, commercially funded and marketed as the sequel to *Sonnenallee*, and even *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* used its comic, retro mode to achieve popular success.

Notwithstanding such qualifications, Silverman's account of retro sheds an important light on the aesthetics of the two films. Her emphasis on the self-conscious theatricality of retro and its play with authenticity and identity helps to explain the films' soundtracks. The music in *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* and *NVA* is not simply a superficial element in the films' 'simulation' of history; rather, it is an important element of the directors' self-conscious and ironic approach to the NVA and to ideal military masculinities. Silverman's argument that retro can be used to explore identities outside conventional gender roles directs attention especially towards the representation of military masculinities in these films. The two films suggest that retro can indeed disrupt hegemonic masculinities, but they also highlight the difficulties and problems with combining the light-hearted tone of retro with a representation of an abusive and oppressive institution like the NVA.

Staging Ideal Military Masculinity

Zum Teufel mit Harbolla and *NVA* both show theatricality to be central to military masculinities in the NVA. In *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*, depictions of everyday military life are rare, with most of the film set in civilian environments. Where the military does feature, it is as spectacle. The film's second scene shows Engelhardt admiring the NVA's new uniforms in



Figure 4.1

Behind glass and on pedestals, uniforms are put at a distance from actual soldiers in *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* (1989). © DEFA Foundation.

early 1956 (*ZTH*, 2:29–3:11). This cut creates a sudden contrast with the previous scene, accentuating and exaggerating the differences between the masculinities associated with Engelhardt and Harbolla. Harbolla had been dancing drunkenly in a darkened pub with rock 'n' roll in the background, his uniform unkempt and dirty, representing the old KVP and its apparent lack of discipline or clear leadership. By contrast, Engelhardt is the new face of the NVA's first newly trained officer cohort. He is in a light, spacious room, filled with immaculately dressed mannequins in the NVA's new uniform, as one of the NVA's official marches plays in the background: Beethoven's March for Military Band No. 1, the so-called 'Yorck March'.³⁵ This contrast between Harbolla and Engelhardt is a central feature of the film, mirroring the contrast between the new NVA and the KVP, with the NVA portrayed in a positive light through Engelhardt and the KVP as more brutal and obsolete.

However, the newly formed NVA is presented in ridiculous and theatrical ways, and Engelhardt never really convinces as an effective officer. This portrayal begins with the scene featuring Engelhardt and the mannequins in the new NVA uniforms (2:34; see Figure 4.1). The mannequins are in glass display cases, which model and show off the new uniforms, but also make the room resemble a museum exhibition. Behind their glass cases, the uniforms are separated from actual soldiers and quite literally put on pedestals, making clear the stylized and idealized nature of the masculinity that they represent. The film cuts between high-angle shots of the exhibition space and low-angle close-ups of the mannequins, creating the sense that the uniforms are on display, their smart, pristine appearance unattainable for the soldiers on the other side of the glass. The close-ups show the mannequins' androgynous facial features accentuated as if wearing make-up, likening the uniforms to fashion. The fashion comparison is enhanced by the following

scene, in which Engelhardt is fitted for his uniform in a room that resembles a department store fitting room with long, high clothes rails and incidental background music. Two silent men bring Engelhardt one jacket after another as each proves too large for his slight physique (*ZTH*, 3:11–3:31). Fürneisen thus makes explicit the theatrical qualities of ideal military masculinities by staging the establishment of the new NVA as a fashion show. Not only do the mannequins' made-up faces jar with the rugged, masculine appearance required of soldiers, but the trainee officer Engelhardt also finds the dress uniforms incompatible with his own body.

The association between theatricality and the ideals of the new NVA is continued in the following scene at Engelhardt's commissioning parade. Newly commissioned officers are addressed by a commanding officer, whose speech is repeatedly interrupted by a vintage 1950s camera (*ZTH*, 3:31–4:06). The interruptions are both acoustic, through the shutter click, and visual, with shots showing the camera alongside the officers, or cutting to the camera in close-up on its own. The vintage camera is itself a retro object from popular culture, but it also reveals the creation of military spectacle, as the new army visually choreographs and records the commissioning of its first officers for posterity. The film's own camera angles mimic the composition of official photographs, by cutting abruptly between static wide-angle shots that take in the soldiers in formation with the officers and flags on the steps of a building. The speech itself is less important: the commanding officer's platitudes are eventually drowned out by a plane flying overhead. Fürneisen thus introduces ideal military masculinities as a spectacle from the film's opening. This spectacle valorizes the officers' masculinities in part, but it also exposes the NVA's careful construction of images of socialist soldier personalities. Conformity with the military's masculine ideals therefore appears dependent not on prowess in military training, which Fürneisen does not depict, but on display and the composition of photographs for posterity.

In the rest of the film too, Harbolla represents the now-superseded KVP and Engelhardt embodies the NVA's self-presentation as a smart, dynamic new military based on socialist principles. The film creates a stark contrast between these different masculinities. Yet the two men's friendship, which develops over the course of the film, appears to be based on parodic acknowledgements that they are less different than the military's values and hierarchies would have it. Their relationship involves a range of interactions from coldness and mistrust to friendliness and even intimacy, while conventional rank hierarchies are only acted out for comic effect. Indeed, the comic reversal of hierarchies is enhanced by the incompatibility of the men's physical differences with their roles in the rank hierarchy. Despite his inferior rank, Harbolla's physique, authority and confidence demonstrate that he has spent longer in military training than Engelhardt. Engelhardt,

by contrast, displays few signs of ideal military masculinity: he is clever and witty, but slight and rather incompetent, which diminishes any authority he gains through his position. In most of their interactions, the rank hierarchy is reversed, with Engelhardt frequently following Harbolla and being given instructions. Set against this inversion of rank hierarchies, Engelhardt makes theatrical attempts to assert himself and Harbolla parodically performs exaggerated subordination. These comic touches destabilize and denaturalize the rank hierarchy and the presumed superiority of ideal military masculinity by associating it with Engelhardt's awkwardness and ineffectualness.

Engelhardt enacts the NVA's ideals as a performance, which never appears natural and is frequently laughed off or ignored by other, more junior soldiers. For example, when he collects Harbolla from military prison, the two soldiers on duty cast aspersions on Engelhardt's authority: 'Tell him [Harbolla] that the Leutnant has a pistol.' The other responds: 'Well I suppose that's something, at least he's got something *there!*' (*ZTH*, 14:15–14:25). The soldiers' insulting joke implicitly relates Engelhardt's lack of strength or authority, via the comparison to the potentially phallic pistol, to a genital inadequacy that reflects a lack in Engelhardt's masculinity. Engelhardt responds by playing a role more befitting of an officer, bellowing 'Enough!', but the performance of power that follows is bizarre and incongruous. He shakes a matchbox by the two soldiers' ears, asking: 'Do you hear that humming?' (*ZTH*, 14:34–14:44) The two reluctantly answer with military propriety: 'Yes sir, Comrade Leutnant, humming' (*ZTH*, 14:44–14:49). Engelhardt replies, with a more laidback and confident tone: 'It's not a hum, it's a rattle. Surely you should have heard that' (*ZTH*, 14:56–15:00). Engelhardt assumes temporary control of the scene by acting out banal orders and calling for blind obedience, actions more usually associated with his rank. Engelhardt's exercise of power appears absurd as well as sinister: he abuses his power as an officer to embarrass junior soldiers over a trivial point of semantics. Yet this triviality ensures that the scene remains humorous and even ironizes Engelhardt's power. The effect of his performance of authority is short-lived: the soldiers' attitude to Engelhardt in the remainder of the scene is neither respectful nor subordinate. While Engelhardt can assert his power by enacting an ideal officer masculinity that befits his position, the implication is that this performance does not subvert or supersede the other soldiers' sense of superiority based on their experience in the military.

Harbolla, by contrast, parodies his subordination to Engelhardt in potentially subversive ways, each time undermining and ridiculing Engelhardt's authority. After Harbolla rescues Engelhardt from the brawl in the restaurant, Engelhardt tries once more to escort Harbolla to the train by barking orders: 'Get your things together. Jacket, belt, cap!' (*ZTH*, 50:00–50:04). When Harbolla laughs raucously, the camera cuts to show that Engelhardt

has accidentally picked up Harbolla's cap, which dwarfs his head and undermines his assertion of authority. Engelhardt again tries to assert himself: 'You'll be back in jail if you don't follow me!' (*ZTH*, 50:09–50:11). Harbolla barks his reply loudly and with a full salute: 'Yes sir, Comrade Leutnant, sir!' (*ZTH*, 50:11–50:13), before relaxing and wandering off, ignoring Engelhardt. Harbolla's exaggerated performance of obedience challenges Engelhardt's authority. His parodic citation of formulaic orders and salutes exposes the emptiness of the words and gestures, revealing that Engelhardt's authority rests on performative repetitions of predefined words and phrases. Engelhardt can easily enact the ideal military masculinity he has been taught during training. Yet with Harbolla's greater experience and the physical differences between the two men, Engelhardt's utterances become simply another humorous part of the film's light-hearted, retro portrayal of the NVA. Engelhardt's performances fail to bolster his authority over Harbolla, suggesting that authority and respect cannot simply be commanded theatrically, but are constructed performatively over time.

The relationship between theatricality and performativity in the construction of gender, which Fürneisen appears to explore in *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*, has been discussed most influentially by Judith Butler. Butler's work is ambivalent regarding the potential for parodic performances to destabilize normative gender categories. In *Gender Trouble*, her discussion of drag opens up the possibility for performances to expose the constructed nature of gender. She writes: 'Although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of hegemonic, misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalized and mobilized through their parodic recontextualization.'³⁶ Her emphasis on parody and recontextualization has clear resonances with the theatrical approach to gender in retro military films such as *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*. Even though the characters perform ideal military masculinity to assert power over one another, the theatricality of their actions reveals the contingent nature of the hierarchies. To quote Butler again, '*drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency*'.³⁷ The irony and parody of Fürneisen's retro aesthetic unsettle the military's attempts to naturalize the power of its masculine values and suggests, at least at first glance, that ideal military masculinity is insubstantial. Butler's account of drag has been widely criticized for privileging drag as uniformly or uniquely subversive of gender norms.³⁸ In line with such critiques, *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* shows that the theatrical assertion of ideal military masculinity does more than just make military gender roles appear ridiculous or artificial. As the contrast between the figures of Engelhardt and Harbolla demonstrates, exposing the performances that underpin ideal gender constructions can also reveal the longer-term, more profound changes that construct authority and military gender over time.

In *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler acknowledges that her earlier work left open the possibility for the concept of gender performativity to be confused with her discussion of the parodic performances of drag. She argues that:

performance as a bounded ‘act’ is distinguished from performativity insofar as the latter consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer’s ‘will’ or ‘choice’; further, what is ‘performed’ works to conceal, if not to disavow, what remains opaque, unconscious, unperformable.³⁹

Like Silverman, Butler associates theatrical performance with a sense of choice, in stark contrast to the unwilling, and often unconscious, performative acts that constitute gender. However, her distinction still allows for parodic imitations of gender roles to highlight their constructed nature and destabilize their power. Performances, in Butler’s definition, can work against the concealment and naturalization of gender by exposing the performative structure of gender. Butler’s account thus helps to explain Silverman’s suggestion that retro exposes the ‘decades of representational activity’ that constitute gendered subjectivity: this activity amounts to the performative construction of gender over decades. *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* shows that retro can indeed denaturalize ideal military masculinity through its focus on theatricality in the way Silverman and Butler suggest. Yet the performative constitution and reconstitution of masculinity during military service is still revealed in the relationship between Engelhardt and Harbolla.

In *NVA* too, the theatricality of military masculinities is used to disrupt the military’s ideals while still suggesting the more profound performative effects of military service. The officer figures offer some productive examples. In the previous chapter, I suggested that *Ein Katzensprung* associates officer masculinity stereotypically with certain physical attributes, but Haußmann shows that the performance of officer masculinity depends on more than just appearance. Officers’ assertions of authority are shown as a combination of gestures, utterances and tone, which appear affected and incongruous because the officers in *NVA* are otherwise incompetent and boorish. Haußmann’s irony here is generally unobvious, subverting more idealized images of officers in *NVA* publications and in literature such as *Härtetest* and *Es gibt kein Niemandsland*. Haußmann instead draws on the common joke that *NVA* officers lacked intelligence, a prominent stereotype across a range of post-reunification depictions of the *NVA*, as Mark Allinson has suggested.⁴⁰

The portrayal of Oberfähnrich Lenk and Leutnant Laucke is a key example of Haußmann’s negative portrayal of officer masculinities. Over the course of the film, it emerges that the two are in a gay relationship. Haußmann constructs these characters out of a series of performances of stereotypically

affected behaviour, from singing *Schlager* songs in a lecture to sharing skin-care tips (*NVA*, 15:28–15:36; 1:02:18–1:02:50). Perhaps because of their clear deviation from the NVA's ideal military masculinity, Haußmann does not show them giving orders at all: their entire characters appear theatrical and insubstantial. Lenk and Laucke are presumably included more for comic effect than to subvert or queer military command structures; after all, the gay stereotypes they act out are crude and potentially offensive. These figures are characteristic of a stylized and antirealist retro aesthetic, but are more superficial than the rest of Haußmann's film. Yet through these characters, Haußmann derides ideal military masculinity as insubstantial, a configuration of gender practice that, at least for some of the officers, depends on a combination of brutal discipline and camp performance.

Haußmann's officers also maintain authority through exaggerated performances of military rhetoric. Edith Disler has described how the formulaic use of language in military situations contributes to the construction of hierarchies and masculinity.⁴¹ Disler focuses on honorifics: in the GDR, these either took the form 'Comrade [rank]' or '[rank] [name]', as in 'Comrade Soldat' or 'Soldat Heidler'. The officers in *NVA* apply the honorific 'comrade' (*Genosse*), reserved only for SED members in wider GDR society, instantly and overzealously to the new conscripts. Henrik's discomfort with the term highlights the differences between civilian identities and the ideal military masculinity being rehearsed through such linguistic formulae. When he argues that he is not a 'Genosse', the propaganda officer Stummel emphasizes the military's control over language and its attempt to determine conscripts' identities: 'Who is a comrade is our decision, and our decision is that everyone here is a comrade' (*NVA*, 5:15–5:18).⁴² The confusing and circular syntax of Stummel's comment is characteristic of Haußmann's ironic use of language in characterizing the officers. Their authority is also asserted linguistically through repeated performances of official rhetoric and jargon. In the short opening scene, for example, the officers sit having tea in the mess and Stummel exchanges the following formulaic phrases with Futterknecht:

Stummel: 'Comrades, the geopolitical situation is extremely tense.'

Futterknecht: 'As ever [*Wie eh und je*].'

Stummel: 'Not as ever; more tense than ever before.'

Futterknecht: 'Exactly.' (*NVA*, 0:58–1:09)

Stummel imitates GDR rhetoric on 'the geopolitical situation', twice emphasizing the extraordinary and superlative nature of the threat, while never revealing what the threat actually is. Futterknecht's brief and equally formulaic replies set the tone for the officers' exaggerated and sometimes even meaningless language throughout.

The conscripts' first roll call shows this language to be part of the theatricality of hegemonic military masculinities. When the officers see that Krüger has avoided having his hair cut, Aurich bellows 'helmet off' (*NVA*, 3:59–4:03). His voice instantly changes to a roar, which renders the words incomprehensible, producing a parody of military orders that are commonly stretched or abbreviated beyond recognition. A shout of 'Attention!' then announces the arrival of Kalt, who marches with Stummel from the nearby building to the unexplained nondiegetic sound of a side drum (*NVA*, 4:15–4:23). The drumbeat suddenly foregrounds the film's careful use of military clichés to construct the officers' masculinities throughout these initial scenes. For example, Laucke and Aurich make an exaggerated show of saluting and announcing themselves and the platoon, formalities that Kalt interrupts and waves aside (*NVA*, 4:23–4:34). True to his name, Kalt is cool and distanced, although this seems to stem from melancholy rather than an unfeeling attitude. Haußmann subverts the trope of the emotionless commander by explaining Kalt's abruptness and strictness with oblique references to his emotions after his wife left him. Kalt's melancholy complicates what is otherwise a relatively superficial portrayal of officers. In contrast to his subordinate officers, who adhere to rituals and formalities as a protection from 'the geopolitical situation' as the GDR collapses around them, Kalt seems to exploit the theatrical nature of military masculinities in order to go through the motions while remaining melancholic about his ex-wife. His display of ideal military masculinity therefore does not disguise the more profound emotional effects of his time in the military.

The first roll call shows the officers teaching a sort of military performance to their conscripts as part of their socialization into the military system. In addition to the argument over Krüger's hair, Lenk and Laucke surround Krüger and Henrik to correct their posture after they are called to attention. The two officers talk over one another, barking instructions: 'Hands clenched in a fist ... eyes straight ahead, face tensed and expressionless' (*NVA*, 5:21–5:50). In a scene shortly afterwards, Haußmann makes clear that the conscripts are aware of the need to perform ideal military masculinities when Henrik and Krüger recite the Rifleman's Creed from the United States Marine Corps in the washroom. The two men stand facing one another and salute as Henrik shouts in English: 'This is my rifle. There are many like it but this one is mine'. Krüger replies, 'Sir, yes sir!' (*NVA*, 7:59–8:07). In the novel *NVA*, which Haußmann wrote at the same time as the film, he refers explicitly to Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*, a retro detail as it was released in the United States shortly before *NVA* is set.⁴³ *Full Metal Jacket* was largely responsible for establishing public awareness of the Creed, but Haußmann does not make the reference explicit in the film. Kubrick's film was never screened publicly in the GDR, so few conscripts

would have seen it, but Haußmann uses the reference to the Rifleman's Creed to emphasize the importance of Western influences on East German identities. Henrik and Krüger enact an ideal soldierly masculinity associated in Western popular culture with the Marines and with ritualistically chanted refrains. In the NVA, however, their exaggerated performance of US military masculinity works against the construction of US soldiers as enemies. The reference to *Full Metal Jacket* suggests the universality of military experiences and indicates that military identities are constructed in dialogue with films and other representations of soldiers. The incongruity of this reference and their exaggerated repetition of the English words further ridicule the NVA and its masculine ideals.

In both films, the playfulness that Silverman identifies with retro is combined with an equally irreverent approach to ideal military masculinity. Socialist soldier personalities are shown in both films to be constructed through performances of stereotypes and through ritualized gestures and utterances, but the irony that characterizes retro cinema means that these actions become parodic and laughable. The military ideal no longer appears natural or stable, even if its power is never entirely disrupted: Harbolla ultimately acquiesces to Engelhardt's efforts to return him to base and the conscripts in NVA are only able to overthrow the officers due to the collapse of the GDR. One way in which assertions of military power are parodied is through exaggerated contrasts between the characterization of officers and their extravagant issuing of orders. In *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* more than in *NVA*, this contrast draws attention not only to the theatrical nature of military masculinities, but also to the way in which authority and respect from subordinates are constructed over time and with experience. The theatricality of military masculinities highlights the performative nature of training, but the military's ideals are never purely superficial. The figure of Harbolla, like Weißenbach in *Ein Katzensprung*, demonstrates the physical effects of the military's performative training techniques. This performative construction of military masculinities affects soldiers' bodies as well as their authority within the military hierarchy. *NVA* attempts most clearly to dismiss the masculinities constructed by the military as ridiculous, and yet even in this film, characters such as Oberst Kalt gesture to potential negative effects of military service: melancholy and relationship breakdown.

Silverman attributes the radical potential of retro to its theatrical approach to identity, showing it to be a collage of experiences, memories and representations over several decades. At least with reference to these two works, Silverman appears to be justified in arguing that retro can highlight the construction of gender identity through its appeal to a range of artefacts and representations from various historical periods. Fürneisen and Haußmann

denaturalize ideal military masculinity in part through their retro portrayal. They present military discipline and hierarchies being sustained through exaggerated displays, which undercut the military's attempts to naturalize its gender ideals and promote strong and stoical masculinities. However, this playful approach to discipline and hierarchy is combined with sober depictions of the performative construction of military identities in *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* and of physical and psychological hardships in *NVA*. In this respect, Silverman's defence of retro perhaps overemphasizes subjects' conscious control over their own identities and creates an impression of freedom and choice. Retro in these films works more subtly, in line with Butler's discussion of drag and performativity. Neither director consigns military ideals to the past as a trivial retro detail, but rather they show them as part of ongoing, performative negotiations of gender, in which the films themselves play a role. The retro aesthetic allows the filmmakers to ironize and play with these negotiations while continuing to acknowledge their effects. This is clearest in the films' use of a light-hearted retro aesthetic to portray the abuses of military service, a technique that suggests productive ways in which retro can be used to heighten a depiction of everyday interactions with repressive institutions such as the NVA.

The Limits of Retro?

The abuses that feature in so many other accounts of NVA military service are not absent from these comedies, and they appear to play an important role in attempts to construct ideal soldiers. The acknowledgement of abuses, and the more sombre tone that often accompanies such scenes, is part of the collage of allusions and incongruity that characterizes retro. Both films intersperse sobering scenes with more farcical ones, and *NVA* even layers farce and more serious reflection on the hardships of military service within the same scene. The playfulness of retro remains, but juxtaposing light-hearted passages with portrayals of abuse heightens the contrasts in the film and makes the NVA's harsh discipline seem all the more absurd and senseless.

The storyline of *Harbolla* takes place primarily in civilian environments, and the everyday abuses of military service therefore play a minor role. Where the barracks are depicted, they are unwelcoming. Engelhardt is sent to an artillery base and arrives in the driving rain. When he peers out of the truck in curiosity, he is doused with the water that has collected on the truck's roof (*ZTH*, 4:39–4:42). The base's corridors are long, dark and empty (*ZTH*, 4:44), in stark contrast to the bright spaces of earlier scenes at Engelhardt's commissioning parade. The use of light and framing to create darker, more restrictive spaces immediately suggests that everyday military life is more

difficult and unpleasant than the spectacle and ceremony of the parade ground. Apparently due to the oppressive environment, the commanding officer whom Engelhardt meets appears weary and repeatedly takes pills, presumably to manage symptoms of stress (*ZTH*, 6:15–6:30). His tiredness and resigned tone again contrast with the energized, if formulaic speech of the officer at the commissioning parade. The association of weariness with military masculinities in an operational context serves to make the ideal military masculinity performed by Engelhardt and others in the film seem idealized, theatrical and unrealistic.

The officer entrusts command of Harbolla's old platoon to Engelhardt, before sending him to collect Harbolla from prison. Engelhardt's platoon is shown watching and jeering at a film, namely a nude bathing scene from Arne Mattsson's film *Hon dansade en sommar*, originally released in Sweden in 1951 (*ZTH*, 5:05–5:57).⁴⁴ Mattsson's open depiction of nudity and sexuality was controversial with censors and extremely successful with audiences.⁴⁵ In 1952, it was released in Britain as *One Summer of Happiness* and in both German states as *Sie tanzten nur einen Sommer*, the dubbed version that the soldiers watch in *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*. The film is part of Fürneisen's interest in including touches from the 1950s, but the choice of this scene reveals more undesirable aspects of life in the newly created NVA. The men's whistles and jeers at the actor Ulla Jacobsson show the misogyny and homosociality of the military environment in a negative light; the platoon appears crude and even threatening. Their poor discipline and hostility to Engelhardt demonstrate the unpleasant climate created by masculine rivalries on the artillery base. When the commanding officer introduces Engelhardt, the men's response to the religious resonances of his name is a repeated 'Amen', drawn out sardonically in mockery (*ZTH*, 8:23–8:32).⁴⁶ The recruits' lack of respect for authority corresponds to the irreverent irony of Fürneisen's retro aesthetic: the men empower themselves by subverting Engelhardt's authority and render Engelhardt's earnestness ridiculous. Fürneisen thus humorously subverts the military hierarchy while suggesting that authority cannot be based only on a performance of lessons from training, as reinforced by Engelhardt's later exchanges with Harbolla. From Engelhardt's point of view, military life is unpleasant, oppressive and requires him to negotiate masculinity and authority repeatedly, and theatrically, in power struggles with his superiors and subordinates.

The most sombre scene in *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* occurs between two of the film's more light-hearted and retro scenes, the FDJ meeting and the dance in the restaurant. As usual, Harbolla is walking on ahead of Engelhardt and refusing to go to the station. He ignores orders to halt and instead places a bottle in the road, and encourages Engelhardt to shoot at it and even at him:

First the warning shot, then aimed at me, do you hear? Those are the regulations. But it works the other way round too: first aimed at me, and then the warning shot. No one can check. Bullets aren't numbered. Try it. Go on, try it. (*ZTH*, 29:43–30:07)

Harbolla's cajoling tone does suggest that his actions are intended as black humour, but his calm, hushed voice creates an intensity that is only accentuated as Engelhardt's voice rises in despair, repeating the order 'stand still or I'll shoot!' (*ZTH*, 30:21–30:40). The long, darkened street recalls the darkened artillery base corridors and once again shows Engelhardt at a loss, as his theatrical assertions of authority fail to have any effect. The camera focuses on Harbolla walking away in medium close-up when a shot rings out with the sound of glass breaking, so that the viewer's surprise mirrors Harbolla's (*ZTH*, 30:41). As Flegel writes in the screenplay: 'Harbolla walks on, does not quicken his pace at all, but his face appears tense.'⁴⁷ In the end, there is no direct confrontation between Engelhardt and Harbolla, but this scene represents the closest that the two come to violence. Attached to this scene in one of the DEFA studio's copies of the screenplay, a note remarks: 'This shooting nonsense [*Ballerei*] is not very pleasant either.'⁴⁸ There is no indication of the source of this note, but it shows the potential discomfort caused by the disjuncture between the intensity and suspense of the shooting scene and other scenes in the film so far. As if to underline the importance of such contrasts, the film then cuts to the *Schlager* singers in Heidelore's restaurant. The light-hearted mood of the following scene only enhances the effect of the shooting scene, which shows brutality and violence to be a more sinister way in which military hierarchies are created and sustained.

During the production of *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*, censorship was still in place and military films were created in close collaboration with the NVA, so it is unsurprising that Fürneisen's portrayal stops short of showing physical abuse.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, he combines retro details like the scene from *Hon dansade en sommar* and humorous touches like Engelhardt being drenched by the rain with scenes that suggest that the military was an oppressive environment. Presumably the film's generally positive presentation of the new officer cohort in 1956 enabled its criticism of the oppressive environment of military service to pass the scrutiny of the NVA. The film could thus be interpreted as showing only the KVP as oppressive, while the socialist soldier personalities of the new army established a new, more professional atmosphere. However, in the shooting scene even the film's main subject, the power struggle between Engelhardt and Harbolla, is shown in the context of violence and abuse. By creating stark contrasts in tone, lighting and setting between scenes, Fürneisen jolts the viewer out of more sobering scenes and

prevents the film from lingering on abuses, while enhancing the impact of the starker scenes.

NVA focuses more explicitly on the brutality of military service, particularly through older soldiers' abuse of Krüger. The company's EKs punish Krüger for his cheekiness when the new conscripts move into a dormitory after basic training. Krüger and Henrik stand up to the EKs when they lock Traubewein in a locker and demand that he sing, a hazing practice known as 'music box'. When Krüger and Henrik repeatedly ask insulting questions, the EKs call reinforcements and the film cuts to the aftermath of a fight. By editing out the fight, Haußmann avoids depicting the violence, while also suggesting a gap in memory or conscious perception. The film only shows Henrik and his comrades after their beatings, with Henrik hanging from the lockers by his clothes (*NVA*, 21:52–24:25). This stylized and somewhat humorous tableau undercuts the tension of the preceding scene. However, the sudden switch in tone enhances the impact of the violence: an uncomfortable effect results from Haußmann's combination of dark, ironic humour and a serious representation of hazing with editing that passes over the moment of violence itself.

Although Haußmann's retro does not subvert the power dynamics in the dormitory scene, he suggests one way of doing so in a later scene in which Krüger is singled out for more abuse. EKs strap helmets to Krüger's knees and elbows and slide him along the corridor, a practice nicknamed 'tortoise' (*NVA*, 25:28–26:02). The film shows Krüger crash into a metal radiator at the far end of the corridor, but he remains irreverent, once more asking: 'I've got one more question.' Krüger's face is bloodied and injured, and yet by baiting the EKs, he gives the impression that he is enjoying the punishment. Krüger's pleasure appears to result not from submission to the beatings, but from his endurance and the increasing frustration of the EKs. His performance of defiance and continuing good humour subvert this unofficial military hierarchy and prevent these violent and abusive scenes from developing into pathos. Krüger's denial of pain or injury while his face streams with blood mirrors the stark contrast between the physical damage suffered by the men and the film's repeated reassertions of a light-hearted retro tone. This juxtaposition renders the abuse absurd: rather than reducing it to a joke or a retro detail consigned to the past, the film heightens the brutality of the NVA through the uncomfortable contrast between humour and violence.

Krüger's return from the penal unit at Schwedt combines the film's potentially subversive insistence on the theatricality of ideal military masculinity with sombre depictions of abuse that emphasize the profound effects of discipline and training. Haußmann does not show Krüger's time in Schwedt, unlike other less comedic representations, such as Uwe Tellkamp's novel *Der Turm* (*The Tower*, 2008).⁵⁰ The profound psychological effects of

Krüger's time at Schwedt are visible only when he returns to the barracks, immaculately dressed and with a regulation haircut for the first time in the film. Krüger responds to his roommates' friendly chatter with silence and an expressionless face. The contrast with Krüger's formerly extroverted and talkative character reveals the psychological effects of Schwedt. Krüger speaks only to bark out formulaic phrases: 'Attention! Comrade Unteroffizier, room 11 restoring the quarters to order [*bei der Herstellung der inneren Ordnung*]. Soldat Krüger reporting!' (*NVA*, 1:09:16–1:09:21). In suddenly sincere terms, the film shows Krüger to have internalized the discipline enforced in Schwedt, which appears to have imposed on him an 'internal order' (*innere Ordnung*) of another sort. Unlike Harbolla's theatrical displays of obedience, Krüger's obedience is not parodic but poignant, showing the profound psychological effects of the NVA's harsh discipline and rigid enforcement of masculine ideals. The brutality of the penal unit appears to have silenced aspects of his personality that contravened military norms. This moving scene clashes with the film's otherwise light-hearted tone in a way that accentuates the portrayal of the abuses suffered by Krüger.

The sobering mode of Krüger's return from Schwedt is resolved towards the end of the film by the return of a retro tone. His comrades attempt to restore him to his gregarious self by inviting dozens of women to visit him. Bemused and still silent, Krüger arrives at the visitors' room to find just one woman who has sent the others away: the nurse, Sonja, with whom he danced when he escaped from barracks. Krüger looks at a loss and, after the scene with the other women's frenzied arrival, the sudden slow pace of this scene again foregrounds his psychological torment. He does not respond to Sonja's advances, nor at first to her dancing along to a song on the record player. Suddenly, however, he hugs her desperately and cries on her shoulder (*NVA*, 1:17:24–1:18:57). Krüger's sudden crying appears to be in response to a change of mood caused by Sonja's appeal to retro. The music she plays on a scratchy record is a 1950s-style scat song from their earlier rendezvous, and is the only instance of diegetic retro music in the film. The memories and emotions connected with this music contrast with the generally more detached tone of retro, so it is difficult to determine whether Haußmann ascribes a therapeutic function to retro itself or just in this specific context. However, as in previous scenes, the film combines a retro touch with a serious and unflinching depiction of the hardships in the NVA. The film does not depict the rest of Krüger's recovery, but when he next appears in the final scenes, he seems back to his former irreverent self as the men escape the barracks.

Reynolds's definition of retro emphasizes the importance of a portrayal that is not sentimental about the past, but 'amused and charmed' by it. However, a retro film that remains entirely light-hearted and portrays the past only as charming would struggle to engage with the abuses and repression of the

NVA and would risk reducing it to a caricature. Fürneisen and Haußmann adapt retro for their own purposes in order to acknowledge the violence and abuse that were central to many experiences of military service in East Germany. *NVA* portrays abuse more directly and more frequently, undoubtedly due in part to the freedom afforded by Haußmann's perspective fifteen years after the NVA's dissolution. While the two films use retro in different ways, the techniques used to combine a retro tone with depictions of the brutality and hardships of military service are remarkably similar. Editing and lighting create stark contrasts by visually interspersing more humorous scenes with those depicting more unpleasant or harmful aspects of military service. The inclusion of retro objects or recordings integrates these scenes with the rest of the film, even though the light-hearted tone more usually associated with retro disappears momentarily.

These two films thus counter Baudrillard's and Jameson's accusations that films depicting a retro version of the past are superficial. Their representations of military masculinities remain stylized, based on displays of the power and authority associated with the NVA's ideals, but the irony and humour of retro still leaves room for portraying the violence experienced by recruits and conscripts over the NVA's history. In cases like the shooting scene in *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* or Krüger's abuse by EKs, violence is in itself a theatrical assertion of ideal military masculinity and is therefore inseparable from the films' retro aesthetics. Particularly in *NVA*, the tone becomes more serious as the film moves from superficial outward displays of military ideals to suggestions of the more profound physical and psychological effects of violence and discipline. Ultimately, representing unpleasant or abusive aspects of the NVA is an important part of the films' attempts to subvert the hegemony of ideal military masculinity by portraying the negative effects of abuses within the NVA.

Conclusion

In the works analysed in the previous chapter, the reduction of uniform to costume did not pose a challenge to the military's masculine ideals or its attempts to transform conscripts physically and psychologically. *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* and *NVA* explore the theatricality of military masculinities in more detail, focusing not primarily on the interaction between the uniform and the body, but on the place of performance, gesture and ritual in constructing military masculinities more generally. Both films look to the past in their depiction of the NVA, respectively to its foundation and its end, in an ironic rather than a nostalgic or historicizing way. Each presents a playfully self-conscious retro portrayal, which is essential to foregrounding the

theatricality of military masculinities and to the films' subversive treatment of the NVA's masculine ideals. Viewing these films through the lens of retro accounts for their irony and draws attention to the exaggerated, parodic performances of military identity that both films stage. The assertion of military hierarchies or of the socialist soldier personality through gestures or rituals is combined with such parodic irony in these films that ideal military masculinity appears insubstantial and artificial.

In this way, the two films attempt to subvert the hegemony of ideal military masculinities, with a limited degree of success. Officers are a particular target, although Engelhardt's failures to embody the military's ideals are treated with rather more nuance and sympathy than the caricatured, ridiculous officers in *NVA*. Exaggerated performances of an ideal military masculinity are in both films an important means of negotiating the power structures and hierarchies of military service. The intentions and success of these negotiations vary substantially. In *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*, Engelhardt ostentatiously performs the commands and gestures that he learned during training in an attempt to assert his authority. His performances generally fail to convince, due to the clear disparity in experience between him and Harbolla. By contrast, Harbolla's own, more clearly parodic performances of subordination directly subvert military hierarchies and ridicule the seriousness with which Engelhardt interprets his mission in Oranienburg and the military's ideals more generally. In *NVA*, officers' assertions of authority are also rendered ridiculous, this time by Haußmann's use of caricature, which robs the characters of any seriousness at all. The retro aesthetic of the two films thus foregrounds the theatrical form that military masculinities often take. This focus tends to make the military's ideals appear ludicrous, while simultaneously revealing the way in which conscripts, recruits and officers construct individual identities partly through such performances.

One more sinister aspect of the performances of ideal military masculinity in both films is violence. As discussed earlier in *Julia lebt*, *Drei Stern rot* and *An die Grenze*, violence plays an important role in establishing the boundaries of the military's gender ideals and in policing and punishing infringements. Fürneisen and Haußmann demonstrate the extent to which violence is one way of enforcing adherence to the NVA's ideals, but also a way of negotiating positions within a hierarchy of military masculinities. Both Fürneisen and Haußmann intersperse more flamboyantly retro scenes with threatening behaviour or violence, a technique that suggests an attempt to balance light-hearted retro with a sincere discussion of problems in the NVA. Scenes of violence are most prominent in *NVA* and the film combines a potentially disruptive emphasis on performance with a portrayal of the profound physical and psychological effects of military service. Combined with the clear suggestion in *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* that military authority

is built up performatively over time rather than through spontaneous individual performances, the films thus suggest that the theatricality of military masculinities does not make them temporary or superficial.

The performative construction of military masculinities is once more at the centre of these films. Far from being covered up by a superficial retro ‘simulation’ of the past, as Baudrillard might argue, the embodied performativity of gender is exposed by the films’ retro aesthetic. Fürneisen and Haußmann suggest a more nuanced and politicized way of using retro to reveal the constructed nature of gender identity and to denaturalize hegemonic masculinities. In the military context, they also demonstrate that combining irony with more sombre depictions of abuses can accentuate the impact of abusive acts on screen. These films both work by creating stark contrasts that break the flow of the narrative and encourage the viewer to engage with disparities and incongruities in the portrayal. In short, retro is not incompatible with more serious or politicized messages, and can be used to present those messages more effectively. Not all viewers will inevitably respond in this way: sudden shifts to a more light-hearted mode might eclipse the films’ portrayals of abuse, particularly in *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*, which only hints at abuse obliquely. However, the attention paid in both works to violence and to the performative effects of military service demonstrates an attempt to use retro in a more complex way than Baudrillard, Jameson or even Silverman have suggested.

An important feature of these films is their appeal to a wide audience: retro has been an extremely popular and marketable force in the last thirty years, and *NVA* in particular uses a wide range of international references to broaden the film’s audience. Other post-GDR films use similar techniques, such as Haußmann’s previous film *Sonnenallee* or Wolfgang Becker’s acclaimed *Good Bye, Lenin!* These films differ in their subject matter, but both use retro to accentuate, albeit mostly ironically, GDR citizens’ negotiations of state institutions. Christiane Kerner in *Good Bye, Lenin!* spends her days writing petitions to protest against clothes and products that are poorly made or conceived, while Micha in *Sonnenallee* continually uses charm and wit to avoid trouble with school, the police and the FDJ. *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* and *NVA* show these negotiations more clearly in light of the gender negotiations that go on alongside and as part of these negotiations of institutions. While Engelhardt develops his identity through theatrical performances of ideal military masculinity, Christiane’s petitions respond directly to the ignorance of and disregard for women’s bodies by the state’s clothing production monopolies.⁵¹

In all these examples, a retro aesthetic is used to ironize, often in the form of self-irony, the apparently trivial and everyday ways in which citizens negotiated institutions and went along with them where possible in order to

make life easier. Debates over the term *Ostalgie* or its applicability to films such as *Sonnenallee* or *Good Bye, Lenin!* have often been polarized and remain inconclusive, and these films' light-hearted tone and emphasis on theatricality is better understood using theories of retro. Retro portrayals of the GDR's more oppressive institutions also suggest that ritualized and theatrical actions contributed to bolstering the system through people's limited conformity, even when these actions were performed with ironic intent at the time. More than other contexts, the military shows that negotiations with GDR institutions were also negotiations of masculinity in a state whose institutions were so heavily reliant on images of strong, hardworking men and women.

In a contemporary world where satire and detachment are widespread in engagements with politics – nowhere more so than in the spike in viewing figures for *Saturday Night Live* and *The Daily Show* in the United States before and after the 2016 elections – these films remind us that ironic or detached interactions with power structures are not sufficient to subvert them. Retro's turn to the past can provide respite from the politics of the present, but these films demonstrate that it can also say rather more about how identities are built and shaped, and that retro narratives need not remain superficial.

Notes

1. See e.g. Potsdam-Babelsberg, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, AC 14026/1, VHS, 'Festveranstaltung 40 Jahre Grenztruppen', *Aktuelle Kamera*, 28 November 1986.
2. See e.g. *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins*, 101.
3. See Freiburg, Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, DVW 1/39515, minutes and agendas of the *Nationaler Verteidigungsrat* (1978), Dienstvorschrift 010/0/003 Innendienstvorschrift, para. 56.
4. Fürneisen, *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*; L. Haußmann (dir.), *NVA* (Universum, 2005).
5. C. Dieckmann, 'Zonenkindereien', *Die Zeit*, 29 September 2005, 49; D. Koch-Haag, 'Ostalgieische Milde', *tip*, 22 September 2005, 48.
6. E.g. T. Stecher, 'Sexy DDR', *Die Weltwoche*, 18 November 1999, 49; J. Bisky, 'Zonensucht: Kritik der neuen Ostalgie', *Merkur* 58 (2004), 117–27.
7. C. Hyland, "'Ostalgie Doesn't Fit!': Individual Interpretations of and Interactions with Ostalgie', in Saunders and Pinfold, *Remembering and Rethinking*, 101–15.
8. On *Ostalgie* as anticonsumerist, see C. Sadowski-Smith, 'Ostalgie: Revaluing the Past, Regressing into the Future', *GDR Bulletin* 25 (1998), 1–6; M. Blum, 'Remaking the East German Past: Ostalgie, Identity, and Material Culture', *Journal of Popular Culture* 34 (2000), 229–53. On *Ostalgie* as a Western phenomenon, see A. Plowman, 'Westalgie? Nostalgia for the "Old" Federal Republic in Recent German Prose', *Seminar* 40 (2004), 249–61; T. Ahbe, *Ostalgie: Zum Umgang mit der DDR-Vergangenheit in den 1990er Jahren* (Erfurt: Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Thüringen, 2005).
9. S. Reynolds, *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to its Own Past* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011), all xxx.
10. E.E. Guffey, *Retro: The Culture of Revival* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 11 and 21.
11. F. Beyer (dir.), *Der Bruch* (DEFA, 1989).

12. L. Haußmann (dir.), *Sonnenallee* (Highlight, 1999); Becker, *Good Bye, Lenin!*. See e.g. N. Hodgin, *Screening the Past: Heimat, Memory and Nostalgia in German Film since 1989* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).
13. Lynn Marie Kutch does not use the term ‘retro’, but her analysis deals with similar questions of popular culture, stylization and irony: ‘The Comic-Book Humor of Leander Haußmann’s *Sonnenallee*’, in J.E. Twark (ed.), *Strategies of Humor in Post-unification German Literature, Film and Other Media* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 202–23.
14. J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by S.F. Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 45.
15. Ibid.
16. F. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 19.
17. P. Ahrens, “‘Mensch ist ein Dienstgrad...’”, *Weltbühne*, 4 April 1989, 425–27; S. Andrer, “‘Problemchen’ der Anfangsjahre?”, letter in Filmforum, *Filmspiegel* 36(9) (1989), 30.
18. H. Knietzsch, ‘Oranienburger Odyssee anno 56 aus den Babelberger Studios’, *Neues Deutschland*, 27 February 1989; J. Grübl, ‘Heerscharen mit Pauken und Raketen’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 29 September 2005, SZ-Extra, 1.
19. E.g. P. Claus, ‘Rendezvous am Nierentisch’, *Junge Welt*, 24 February 1989.
20. Fürneisen, *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*: hereinafter referenced in the text as *ZTH*.
21. See e.g. E. Honecker, ‘Schlußbemerkungen Erich Honeckers auf der Tagung des Thomas-Müntzer-Komitees’, *Neues Deutschland*, 20 January 1989, 5. A recording of this speech is featured in Haußmann, *NVA*, 33:57–35:24.
22. Haußmann, *NVA*: hereinafter referenced in the text as *NVA*.
23. B. Fürneisen, ‘Auf der Suche nach neuen Wegen’, interview with K. Fiedler, *Neue Zeit*, 16 February 1989: ‘Komödie mit Tiefgang, umgeben von ironisch gefärbtem Zeitkolorit’.
24. On the function of *Schlager*, a genre of light rock and pop, in the GDR, see R. Rudolf, ‘Schlager in der DDR’, in S. Helms (ed.), *Schlager in Deutschland: Beiträge zur Analyse der Populärmusik und des Musikmarktes* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1972), 121–29; A.W. Herkendell, “‘Ein himmelblauer Trabant’: Studien zum DDR-Schlager”, *Beiträge zur Populärmusikforschung* 21/22 (1998), 139–59; C. Köhne, ‘Schlagerrevue und Schlager-ABC: Hörfunksendereihen zwischen Partei und Publikum’, in S. Trültzsch and T. Wilke (eds), *Heißer Sommer – Coole Beats: Zur populären Musik und ihren medialen Repräsentation in der DDR* (Bern: Lang, 2010), 139–58.
25. L. Haußmann, ‘Rote Seelen’, interview with K. Decker, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 29 September 2005: ‘Was ist das denn?, habe ich gedacht und mit [sic] vorgestellt, das ist alles gar nicht wahr, das ist ein Film.’
26. See e.g. L. Haußmann, ‘Schnecke und Grashüpfer’, interview with H.G. Pflaum and F. Göttler, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 29 September 2005, 15.
27. D. Reed, ‘My Bonnie Is over the Ocean: Lyrics’. Retrieved 30 May 2019 from <http://www.deanreed.de/texte/mybonnie.html>.
28. K. Silverman, ‘Fragments of a Fashionable Discourse’, in T. Modleski (ed.), *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 139–52.
29. Ibid., 150–51.
30. See e.g. L. Cochrane, ‘The Sweet Scent of Success: Calvin Klein is Back to the Future’, *The Guardian*, 13 January 2014.
31. S. Brown, *Marketing: The Retro Revolution* (London: Sage, 2001), e.g. vii and 7.

32. See e.g. S. Klötzer, *Satire und Macht: Film, Zeitung, Kabarett in der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006).
33. M. Nadkarni and O. Shevchenko, 'The Politics of Nostalgia: A Case for Comparative Analysis of Post-socialist Practices', *Ab Imperio* 5 (2004), 487–519 (at 499).
34. SCHA, 'DDR-Militaria: Im Supermarkt der NVA', *Berliner Kurier*, 5 July 2012.
35. The Yorck March ('Yorckscher Marsch') was one of the compulsory marches in the repertoire of every NVA band: Wenzke, *Ulbrichts Soldaten*, 634.
36. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 188.
37. *Ibid.*, 187. Emphasis in original.
38. See e.g. J. Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
39. Butler, 'Critically Queer', 234.
40. M. Allinson, 'Life in the Army: Reported, Represented, Remembered', in Saunders and Pinfold, *Remembering and Rethinking*, 229–44 (at 235).
41. Disler, *Language*.
42. 'Wer Genosse ist, bestimmen wir, und wir bestimmen, bei uns sind alle Genossen.'
43. L. Haußmann, *NVA: Roman* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2005), 24; Kubrick, *Full Metal Jacket*.
44. A. Mattsson (dir.), *Hon dansade en sommar* (Nordisk Tonfilm, 1951).
45. A. Lund, 'The Story of a Bad Girl! *Summer with Monika*, Sexploitation and the Selling of Erotic Bergman', in E. Björklund and M. Larsson (eds), *Swedish Cinema and the Sexual Revolution: Critical Essays* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2016), 11–20 (at 12).
46. 'Gottfried Engelhardt' draws on the German words for God ('Gott'), peace ('Friede(n)') and angel ('Engel').
47. BArch, DR 117/4378, *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*, screenplay with annotations, 16 December 1987, 65.
48. *Ibid.*, note attached to page 65.
49. See e.g. BArch, DR 117/29445, letter from Armeegeneral H. Keßler, 13 January 1988, with attachment: 'Gutachten zum Szenarium der DEFA-Filmkomödie "Zum Teufel mit Harbolla"'.
50. U. Tellkamp, *Der Turm: Geschichte aus einem versunkenen Land* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008). See my discussion in Chapter 5.
51. Becker, *Good Bye, Lenin!*, 1:05:50–1:08:49.

Part III

CHALLENGING FEELINGS

Chapter 5

**SHAME, EMOTIONS AND
MILITARY MASCULINITIES**



The texts I have analysed so far emphasize the serious and often long-lasting physical and psychological effects of military service that result from the sedimentation of military ideals through the embodied performativity of NVA routines and disciplinary practices. However, in *NVA*, Krüger's highly emotional response to the harsh discipline of Schwedt suggests that the psychological effects of negotiating the military's masculine ideals also have introspective, emotional dimensions that cannot be accounted for solely by the performative nature of training. Many of the narratives analysed in my previous chapters have suggested that desires and emotions that are experienced as profoundly personal are in fact closely interrelated with more external aspects of military training and discipline. Therefore, in my final two chapters, I investigate more closely the representation of internal experiences of shame and desire, their relationship to military socialization and the extent to which they reveal subordinate aspects of military masculinities.

Such introspective experiences become particularly prominent in post-reunification representations of military service, indicating the ongoing importance of intense emotions and desires in ex-conscripts' articulations of selfhood and gender identity. Representations repeatedly return to the ineffability of experiences of desire and emotions, and the struggle to express feelings caused by military service continues to occupy writers for decades afterwards. For this reason, the remaining chapters move away from film and its emphasis on the visual, instead comparing fictional or semi-fictional narratives with autobiographical narratives. Autobiographies and memoirs

deal more explicitly with the difficulties in expressing certain aspects of selfhood, shedding light on fictional narratives and revealing striking similarities between fictional and autobiographical texts.

Military masculinities are not commonly considered 'emotional' and are more often associated with heroic stoicism, and yet emotions have long been central to accounts of military experience. The importance of emotions in military masculinities is exemplified by Erich Maria Remarque's novel *Im Westen nichts Neues* (*All Quiet on the Western Front*, 1929), which has become a paradigm for twentieth- and twenty-first-century military narratives across the world.¹ Remarque's narrator, Paul, highlights the tension between soldiers' emotional experiences and the masculinity promoted by state institutions: 'while [our teachers] preached the service of the state as the greatest thing, we already knew that the fear of death is even greater'.² Whereas fear dominates Paul's experiences at the front, his rejection of ideal military masculinity is experienced as shame when his sister sees him in uniform while on leave: 'For a moment I feel ashamed and hang my head; then I take off my helmet and look up'.³ Paul appears to see himself through his sister's eyes and is ashamed of the military figure she sees. The only explanation for his shame is the reference to the iconic helmet that had come to symbolize German military ideals, which suggests that Paul may be ashamed that his military appearance aligns him with this militarism.

Im Westen nichts Neues reflects a common trend in film and literature of describing military experiences in emotional terms, from combat and deployment to the home front, basic training and military service. Fear and anxiety are the most prominent emotions in Remarque's novel and in most other depictions of warfare, which perhaps explains the dominance of fear in scholarship on emotions in war and military service across disciplines.⁴ Like Remarque, most writers, filmmakers and theorists focus on the warzone as a context that elicits particularly intense emotions from soldiers. Even in the Cold War German context in which neither the NVA nor the Bundeswehr engaged in active combat, fear of nuclear war still dominates historical work on emotions during the remilitarization of both Germany states.⁵ Yet the emotions associated with military training are rarely discussed in scholarship. I have repeatedly referred to the central role of emotions during military service, which emerges strongly in the GDR context. Perhaps surprisingly, while GDR films and literature portray soldiers experiencing a complex range of emotions, fear is mentioned only occasionally. Emotions often evade description and interpretation; post-reunification narratives in particular are dominated by the difficulties with representing emotional experience. The power and elusiveness of emotions in these narratives, as well as the fraught focus on selfhood, suggest that writers are exploring shame, an emotion that goes to the heart of literary form. This shame stems in part from soldiers'

negotiations of military ideals and is a key factor in the ongoing nature of engagements with military service in film and literature.⁶

The NVA's masculine ideals generally aimed to suppress powerful negative emotions such as shame. However, just as for Paul visiting his family in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, NVA conscripts' shame often reflects an ambivalent relationship to the military's masculine ideal, albeit in several interrelated and even contradictory ways. I analyse shame in three post-reunification literary works: *Einstrich-Keinstrich: NVA-Tagebuch (One Stripe No Stripe: NVA Diary)*, 2006), an autobiography of military service by Joerg Waehner (b. 1962); *Tausend Tage (Thousand Days)*, 1997), a novel by Christoph D. Brumme (b. 1962); and *Der Turm (The Tower)*, 2008), a bestselling novel by Uwe Tellkamp (b. 1968).⁷ Many difficulties exist when representing emotions in language, given that simple statements such as 'I feel ashamed' do not necessarily label shame correctly, nor do they adequately represent the experience itself.⁸ The texts therefore explore how to represent shame, depicting it in circumspect and elusive ways. These works reveal how the military provoked, exposed and exploited conscripts' emotions, suggesting that shame was central to experiences of the NVA and remains influential in retrospective negotiations of the military past.

Shame and GDR Military Masculinities

Military ideals often encourage recruits to suppress negative emotions such as shame, with insults and hazing rituals associating displays of emotions with feminization or homosexuality.⁹ In many military environments, misogynistic and homophobic insults do not simply discipline physical weakness, but ridicule men for revealing emotions. John Hockey has observed in British infantry regiments, for example, that 'women were caricatured as people who cried, broke down, and refused to go on'.¹⁰ However, militaries cannot exclude expressions of emotion and even depend on them to train recruits and maintain hierarchies. Hockey describes how extreme events during training or deployment create 'subcultural spaces' for soldiers to express emotions and share empathy and intimacy. He uses an example from his participant observation in Northern Ireland of a soldier who breaks down after a comrade's death and is watched over by his superior.¹¹ Once soldiers return to their formation, Hockey argues, their ability to carry on reaffirms their masculinity. In such cases, emotional outbursts neither destabilize nor transgress military ideals. Rather, emotions reinforce men's loyalty and unite them in channelling their emotions against the enemy.

The pressure on soldiers to control their emotions is illustrated by Wilhelm Reich's military metaphor of a 'character armour' in his *Charakteranalyse*

(1933).¹² Reich describes how the ego protects itself from external threats and libidinal forces by constructing a protective armour of compliance with societal ideals and values that hides the ego's inadequacies. However, when the ego is weak, its armour can become restrictive as it is combined with an overactive, punitive superego.¹³ Many of Reich's patients become ashamed when they cannot live up to the ideals represented by their character armour, including one whose ideal appears in dreams as a fearless soldier.¹⁴ Applied to military contexts, Reich's analysis suggests that military training aims to develop soldiers' character armour, using punishment and discipline to suppress aspects of masculinity that violate military ideals, including excessive displays of emotion. Shame remains peripheral to Reich's analysis, as just one constituent of more complex neuroses, but his description of a self split between conformity to ideals and its own failures has been highly influential.

Silvan Tomkins's work further suggests the specific relevance of shame to military contexts. While Reich is concerned primarily with shame as a by-product of psychological phenomena, Tomkins emphasizes physiological aspects of shame: lowering the eyes or face, as in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, and blushing. He argues that although these symptoms originate in a desire to hide, the blush reflects the impossibility of hiding by drawing attention to the face and exposing one's shame.¹⁵ Tomkins links this bodily exposure to an exposure of inadequacies of the self. Because of the importance of exposure, theorists have frequently associated shame with critical observation, although Stephen Pattison suggests that 'one can have the sense of *audience* or the *critical other* entirely on one's own and in private'.¹⁶ In such cases, as in Reich's armoured ego, society's criticisms are internalized: as Didier Eribon has suggested, shame is 'produced by the social order and inscribed in the head and on the body of different or deviant individuals'.¹⁷ In other words, shame marks individuals who deviate from societal norms. Tomkins focuses more explicitly on the body than Reich or Eribon, and his theories help conceptualize shame as a phenomenon caused by interplay between body, psyche and social ideals.

Tomkins describes the internalization of the ideals of a critical society as a splitting or dissolution of the self. He argues that shame results in a 'bifurcated self' where the individual holds herself in contempt for inadequacies.¹⁸ Tomkins illustrates this splitting with a military example:

the enemy within becomes as dangerous and terrifying as the enemy without. This is further heightened by the splitting of the self into a passive, victimized helpless self, [and] an evaluating, disgusted dissmelling, angry contemptuous self who cannot tolerate that inferior self when the evaluating self acts as an internalized representative of the adversarial culture's values.¹⁹

Tomkins is referring to militaries encouraging shame as they train soldiers to overcome fear by dismissing it as ‘cowardice’. He points to shame playing an important role in military masculinities due to an opposition between the individual and ‘the adversarial culture’s values’. Not only does he implicitly relate shame to military gender ideals, then; military values are also shown in conflict with the soldier’s sense of self.

Reich’s and Tomkins’s military examples suggest that the relationship between shame and societal norms has particular relevance in the military context. Tomkins primarily describes cases in which a subject identifies with certain ideals and is ashamed of failing to live up to them. This attitude has clear applications within the NVA context. For example, Sylka Scholz has investigated emotions in descriptions of violence by ex-NVA conscripts.²⁰ She argues that superiors used violence to confront conscripts with their own vulnerability and to feminize them, resulting in shame at failing to live up to ideals of toughness. For some, hazing rituals prompted a desire for respect that led to increased compliance with masculine norms.²¹ Such acts of humiliation can produce a variety of emotions, but Scholz suggests that shame was a prominent result of humiliation, and that it was exploited to increase obedience.²² Failing to live up to masculine ideals may be the clearest source of shame during military service, as Scholz argues, but it cannot alone account for variation in attitudes to gender ideals or in representations of the NVA.

Shame need not entail identification with military ideals. Gabriele Taylor argues, for example, that when a subject rejects the ideals of a group, she becomes ashamed if she is associated with that group.²³ This may explain Paul’s apparent shame in *Im Westen nichts Neues*: in military uniform, even a reluctant soldier appears to represent military ideals, which could be shameful if the soldier’s self-understanding is based on resistance to military norms. Scholz’s interviews suggest that this attitude was widespread, with most men seeing military service as an unpleasant but unavoidable obligation.²⁴ Few of Scholz’s interviewees reject the NVA or its values entirely, but, for those who did, Taylor’s analysis suggests that being associated with hated ideals could be a cause of shame. This could become particularly relevant after reunification: as the state’s abuses have come to light, ex-citizens increasingly reject values associated with repressive institutions such as the NVA, meaning that conformity during military service, however passive, can become shameful.

Anthony Giddens offers a further way in which ambivalence towards military ideals could be shameful. He suggests that the proliferation of potential identities in modern societies causes a ‘[l]ack of coherence in ideals, or the difficulty of finding worthwhile ideals to pursue’.²⁵ He argues that the inability to navigate conflicting and competing ideals can cause shame in societies that demand clear biographical narratives from individuals. Scholz’s narrative interviews, like literature and film depicting the NVA, create a

complex picture, with soldiers drawing on various military and civilian ideals. Interviewees fondly remember a sense of community, while rejecting the NVA's brutality and emphasizing the continuity of their civilian identities.²⁶ These retrospective attempts to narrate military service are part of ex-soldiers' attempts to construct coherent selves and, in Giddens's terms, when they cannot construct a coherent 'trajectory of self' from these conflicting ideals, shame is one possible response.²⁷

The importance of internalized social ideals in feelings of shame suggests that emotions are indispensable to training and to soldiers' retrospective self-positioning with respect to the military's masculine ideals. As Tomkins has shown, and as I have suggested in earlier chapters, emotions demonstrate the profound effect of societal values and norms on the body as well as the psyche. Emotions illustrate the gendered physical and psychological effects of young men's negotiations of military service, because conscription made many soldiers suddenly aware of conflicts between different ideals of civilian and military masculinity. The potential causes, forms and effects of shame are diverse, complex and highly individual. Films and literature therefore offer a productive case study because their individual focus enables detailed analysis of specific cases and because shame influences the very form of the narratives.

Articulating Military Shame in the GDR

The diverse forms of shame outlined above share an anxiety regarding the display and articulation of selfhood. Tomkins describes a paradox in shame's effects on the ability to communicate: shame interrupts and impedes communication, while in many cases simultaneously displaying itself through the blush.²⁸ Tomkins's focus is on visual, bodily communication, but Scholz's interviewees also draw attention to difficulties in communicating shameful experiences in narrative. As one interviewee describes being punished during military service, he breaks off: 'You just can't find the words for it.' Scholz suggests that this difficulty in narrating the experience might be part of his response to shame.²⁹ Timothy Bewes goes further, suggesting that narrative disruption and inadequacy are defining features of shame. Shame appears, he argues, in moments of failed articulation and formal inadequacy that reflect the 'profound disorientation of the subject'.³⁰ In other words, the pressure on and even dissolution of the shamed subject impedes or destroys her ability to articulate an identity. Bewes draws particular attention to literature, where shame is overtly displayed 'as the text's experience of its own inadequacy'.³¹ By drawing attention to shame being signalled by failures in communication, Bewes suggests how representations of military service can offer important insights into the place of emotions in military masculinities.

Official East German representations of military masculinity did not entirely repudiate emotions; rather, publications used them to encourage discipline and loyalty and reinforce the NVA's ideals. For example, *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins* acknowledges the importance of emotions in military training and calls for emotional control. The manual describes emotional confusion as a danger on a par with the weakening of the state itself: 'Significant imperialist forces continue trying to weaken our socialist state, to disrupt our progress, to confuse our thoughts and feelings.'³² To resist these dangers, conscripts are encouraged to restrain their emotions: the manual describes the ideal soldier as 'brave' and repeatedly calls for 'courage', qualities that imply a suppression of fear and other negative emotions.³³ As well as encouraging emotional suppression, *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins* appeals to conscripts' emotions. On the one hand, conscripts are indirectly reminded of their love for wives, girlfriends, colleagues, friends and relatives through references to the need to protect the happiness of the people. On the other hand, imperialist enemies are described planning 'their hate-filled [*hasserfüllt*] attacks'.³⁴ Sara Ahmed has described how hate is generated when another person is constituted as hateful, suggesting that describing the enemy as 'hate-filled' is an attempt to encourage conscripts to feel hate.³⁵ Emotional control was thus not limited to suppressing emotions in order to appear brave; conscripts were encouraged to channel their emotions into support for the GDR and its military.

In line with this emphasis on control, limited expressions of emotions are important for maintaining the NVA's masculine ideals in the works analysed in the previous chapters, but shame is conspicuously absent in GDR-era films and literature. By contrast, shame is central to much post-reunification film and literature depicting the NVA. Drawing on Bewes's emphasis on the affinity between shame and formal inadequacies, this chapter analyses three post-reunification texts that present protagonists' shame and are shaped by the difficulties of representing it. These works indicate that the shattering of the self through shame is closely related to conscripts' attitudes to the military's ideals of masculinity. All three texts experiment formally with ways of representing shame, resulting in complex and elliptical narratives. *Einstrich-Keinstrich* demonstrates the difficulties in describing military service in retrospect as the author uses the text to work through and display the shame he experienced. By contrast, *Tausend Tage* and *Der Turm* use fiction to experiment with ways in which literary representations can do justice to shame. All three texts depict shame as a central feature of military service, despite the NVA's efforts to encourage emotional restraint.

Joerg Waehner, *Einstrich-Keinstrich: NVA-Tagebuch* (2006)

Waehner's memoir *Einstrich-Keinstrich*, named after the NVA's green- and brown-striped service uniforms, presents a collage of documentary forms from diary extracts to chronicle-style dates and transcriptions of Stasi documents.³⁶ Waehner presents his autobiography as a retrospective attempt to work through his military service and to reconcile his memories with, to quote Alison Lewis, the 'hostile, unauthorised biography' that he finds in the Stasi files.³⁷ In contrast to the bureaucratic tone of the Stasi documents that Waehner includes, his diary extracts evoke shame and other emotions. His depictions of shame are complex, rarely explicit, intertwined with other emotions and bound up with gaps, breaks and inadequacies in his autobiographical narrative. His collage style foregrounds such breaks, and its layers move between different temporalities in a refusal of any coherent narrating self. Often emotions are implied in the arrangement of material, in cuts between sources and in what remains unsaid. Although shame predominates, it is usually combined with a mixture of sadness, shock, frustration, fear, anxiety and outbursts of anger. Waehner fragments his experience and his emotions into layers of narrative, staging shame's effects on his ability to remember military service and articulate those memories.

The work opens with Waehner describing his interrogation by the Stasi soon after leaving school, which eventually leads to his conscription. The Stasi accuses him of 'agitating against the state', 'public vilification' and 'planned escape from the GDR' (12).³⁸ When no proof can be found, the Stasi decides to isolate him by bringing forward his conscription. The book then alternates diary extracts describing Waehner's military service with documents of his surveillance, interspersed with reports of geopolitical events. *Einstrich-Keinstrich* was received positively in the press and praised in passing by academics and other writers.³⁹ However, with the exception of Andrew Plowman's discussion of Waehner's 'sinister reworking of the basic conscription narrative from [Fuchs's] *Fassonschnitt*', the text has received little detailed attention.⁴⁰ Praise for the autobiography centres on its honesty, particularly the narrative's sober tone and the absence of hate or anger.⁴¹ In fact, Waehner does describe his emotions, including anger. Shame leaves the greatest mark on the narrative in the form of a narrating self split, as Tomkins describes, between a present evaluating self and an emotionally vulnerable past self. Waehner's inclusion of Stasi documents even presents a third self refracted through the Stasi's investigations.

Waehner first describes his emotions after his interrogation: 'At their mercy [*Ausgeliefertsein*]. They have looked into my innards. I struggle to concentrate, waves of heat when reading, panic attacks [*Angstzustände*] at night. Cannot speak of what happened' (12). Waehner refers explicitly to

fear or anxiety in the German word for panic attacks, 'Angstzustände', but his tone suggests a complex experience of which fear and anxiety is just part. Waehner powerfully describes his 'Ausgeliefertsein', a state of complete vulnerability, which he relates to a sense that his innermost nature has been exposed. His corporeal metaphor compounds this exposure by comparing the Stasi's scrutiny to physical violation, either invasively or as a disembowelling.⁴² The intensity of his description of his exposure to the Stasi suggests that shame may be the cause of his anxiety and his difficulties discussing the events. His hot flushes are reminiscent of Tomkins's account of the blush and its potential to affect the body as a whole, rather than simply the face.⁴³ Even though Waehner writes about his emotional response after the fact, the fragmented narrative suggests that he still struggles to overcome the silencing he experienced at the time: 'I remain silent all day, not a word to anyone' (12–13). In line with Bewes's suggestion that shame is expressed primarily in inadequacies of form and language, Waehner's shame after his interrogation may well be the emotion with the most lasting effects on his ability to articulate his identity, long after his fear has subsided.

Waehner's initial impression of the NVA is a pervasive sadness: 'Wherever I look, grey-green sadness. Shock' (26). The colours refer to uniforms, but also evoke a dull melancholy, which is instantly contrasted with shock. His shock perhaps reflects his sudden alienation in his new environment, but the incongruous juxtaposition of sadness and shock encapsulates the emotional confusion that suffuses his account: 'The army confuses me with its strange customs [*Gepflogenheiten*], my emotions are all jumbled' (44). Despite attempts in *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins* to associate emotional confusion with the enemy's tactics, the strangeness of the NVA itself stirs up Waehner's confusion. He presents his disorientation as a response to being confronted with a world of 'strange customs', an ethnographic-sounding formulation that emphasizes the foreignness of this environment. He goes on to describe the desire to flee that accompanies this confusion: 'Feel like a hunted dog that is trying with all its strength to find a way out somewhere, an escape' (ibid.). Waehner's simile comparing himself to a dog evokes his emotional confusion, suggesting that shame is an important part of this reaction. For example, the passage recalls Tomkins's emphasis on shame causing a desire to hide, which Pattison has elaborated to include 'the *impetus to hide, disappear or flee*'.⁴⁴ Furthermore, comparing himself to a dog highlights Waehner's helplessness. He reduces himself to a typically tame, obedient animal, suggesting an acceptance of his subordinated position in the military hierarchy that hunts him. Alongside these signs of shame, the dog's frantic attempts to escape imply fear and perhaps anger and frustration. Waehner again does not describe his shame directly, but it pervades his language and imagery. The place of shame within his emotional confusion might be understood in Giddens's terms as a

response to the confusion of ideals on entry into the military and his sudden inability to articulate a coherent sense of self.

Wahner's confrontation with conflicting ideals and practices makes him feel that military training is changing him, and he is increasingly unable to dissociate himself from ideals that he rejects. Wahner writes: 'Language is decimated into a few formulaic phrases [*Worte*] ... That makes me furious. The worst is, though, that it is affecting me too [*greift auch auf mich über*]' (52). Wahner describes anger explicitly, caused by the alienating effect of the army's violent 'decimation' of language. However, he describes the feeling that his own language is being influenced by military slang as worse than anger. This feeling triggers fragmentation in the narrative: a cry of '*I want to get out*' follows this passage, before the narrative cuts to an extract from Wahner's Stasi file and a chronicle-style report of Pope John Paul II's visit to Argentina during the Falklands/Malvinas conflict, which relates Wahner's suffering during military service to victims of conflicts on a global scale. The narrative fragmentation reflects the profound disorientation of Wahner's sense of self as the military's language 'greift auf mich über': he is first and foremost a poet, which may explain the intensity of his reaction to being alienated from language. Wahner's alienation need not be purely a result of shame, as his emphasis on anger demonstrates, but combined with the fragmentation of his narrative and his apparent distance from himself as he assumes the military's language, it is impossible to ignore the links between these emotions. Wahner's anger at the inadequacies in language foreground his emotional confusion, while shame at his failure to resist the power of the military's symbolic codes is reproduced or amplified as he comes to write about his experiences.

Shame affects the form of *Einstrich-Keinstrich* more than the other emotions Wahner describes. When Wahner receives a letter from a friend, Friedo, a conscientious objector serving as an unarmed *Bausoldat*, Wahner is explicit about his shame and the feelings of inadequacy and failure that accompany it: 'Friedo's letter makes me ashamed. Didn't act as consistently as him. This burden weighs on me' (147). Elsewhere, Wahner describes his decision to revoke his declaration that he was a conscientious objector (32). Friedo's letter reminds Wahner that he failed to resist, highlighting the disjuncture between a dissident ideal self and his conformity to the NVA's requirements to avoid further punishment.⁴⁵ Wahner does not elaborate on his shame at Friedo's letter, instead quoting it at length and almost immediately moving onto another friend's letter about Friedo. This diary extract ends with a report on the arrest of a Red Army Faction terrorist in West Germany. The formal shifts and lack of explanation of the different sources suggest that ongoing shame at not having resisted military service continues to shape Wahner's attempts to represent his experiences.

Wahner's narrative suggests the dissolution of his sense of self by refracting the narrating voice into multiple temporal perspectives, alongside Stasi documents and chronicle-style dates that dispense with his first-person voice altogether. Wahner's narrative imitates an official GDR diary, with important anniversaries in the socialist calendar in italics (e.g. 146). His diary entries are supplemented with quotations from letters from friends, family and lovers, which once again suspend Wahner's first-person narrative. Some entries are followed by a news bulletin in a different font; these often relate to Wahner's narrative, but several are apparently unrelated:

+++ 6.6.83 SPIEGEL Cover "Deadly AIDS Epidemic – The Mysterious Disease" +++ (244)

These passages create connections between Wahner's diary and world events, and contribute to themes of persecution, violence and isolation in the narrative. In a third font, he reprints extracts from the Stasi investigation into him, Operation Stamp (*Stempel*), to which he gained access in 1993. A final layer of narrative is created by diary entries, which show signs of having been edited and expanded with hindsight. For example, when Wahner's girlfriend Inka is allowed to emigrate to the West in order to isolate him further, he begins the entry with 'Today Inka leaves the country', before beginning the subsequent paragraph 'Two months later' (50). After this entry, an undated comment in the present tense highlights his speechlessness after Inka's departure: 'For three days silence reigns within me' (ibid.). Although these examples make clear through temporal references that they were added later, most of Wahner's diary extracts move imperceptibly between original and retrospective comments.

The refraction of Wahner's narrative voice into so many layers performs the splitting of the self that Tomkins associates with experiences of shame. By juxtaposing diary entries with extracts from Stasi reports, Wahner creates a part-scathing, part-empathetic post-reunification editing persona, who exposes and mocks the naivety of his past self. For example, when he befriends another soldier, Leif Rheinsberg, he describes their open friendship: 'There seem to be no false inhibitions, pretences or lies between us' (165). Wahner follows this image of idealized comradeship with a transcription of the Stasi's assessment of their relationship, which ends sinisterly: 'Review and assessment of the person Rheinsberg, Leif for unofficial cooperation [*inoffizielle Zusammenarbeit*] with the MfS' (ibid.). Wahner does not divulge whether Rheinsberg became an informant, but the bureaucratic, emotionless Stasi texts lend bitter irony to Wahner's descriptions of comradeship and deride his attempts to form bonds with fellow conscripts. The frequent jumps between Stasi officialese and Wahner's more naive diary entries fragment

the narrative, denying any coherent voice and rejecting the reliability of his memories.

The juxtaposition of these texts suggests frustration with and even self-reproach for his earlier naivety and indiscretion. Waehner's mocking of his past self and rejection of his memories recall Tomkins's description of the 'bifurcated self' caused by shame. The Stasi files reveal how naive Waehner was, and their inclusion even suggests feelings of guilt for befriending Rheinsberg and exposing him to Stasi investigations. This guilt mingles with Waehner's shame over his naivety and sadness at betrayed friendships. Unlike Tomkins's description of a harsh evaluating self or Reich's overactive super-ego, Waehner's post-reunification narrative voice is empathetic despite its occasionally mocking tone, as if compiling the autobiography is helping him to work through shame at his naivety and conformity.⁴⁶ Bringing different elements of his fragmented sense of self together in *Einstrich-Keinstrich* could even be viewed as a productive reconciliation with himself, which retains the elusive quality of his shame without effacing it or forcing coherence on his identity.

The difficulties of communication associated with the ongoing effects of shame continue to influence his representation of events. He often reveals his disposition without describing emotions directly, instead allowing his or others' letters to suggest that he is more affected than the diary entries imply. For example, one girlfriend, Nicole, writes that 'on Saturday you were weird, somehow. As if you were devouring and bottling up [*hineinfressen*] everything happening around you' (77–78). Waehner leaves these remarks uncommented, so that his emotions can only be inferred, suggesting that certain memories are still affected by difficulties of communication. The above example relates to Waehner's confusion over how to display an affectionate, emotional masculinity after having been changed by military values during training. As Waehner remarks: 'Am I supposed to tell her all about tanks, or launch myself at her?' (77). His formulation recalls Reich's restrictive character armour – in German 'charakterliche Panzerung', where 'Panzer' means 'tank' – and connects the military's effects on his masculinity to sexual aggression. Of the two options appropriate to ideal military masculinity, neither seems suitable, causing the emotional disorientation that Nicole describes as 'weird', and once again presenting a confusion of masculine ideals. The gaps in the text are such that it is difficult to infer which emotions Waehner might be experiencing, but the episode shows that his text conceals, or 'bottles up', the full extent of the NVA's emotional effects.

Shame in Waehner's account is a complex phenomenon that frequently combines with other emotions and reveals itself through the fragmentation of the narrative. His collage technique mirrors and performs a profound disorientation when faced with conflicting ideals and the constant spectre

of Stasi surveillance. Shame is particularly reflected in the bitterly ironic juxtapositions of Stasi files with his memories, as he exposes his own prior naivety and conformity in opposition to the dissident identity that he built up before and since military service. The expression of emotions in the text bears traces of the difficulties of communication associated with shame, with some of his emotions implied so elusively as to frustrate any interpretation. Shame is initially shown as a response to the humiliation of interrogation and training, but Waehner increasingly appears preoccupied with shame for not resisting and for allowing military discipline and masculinity to encroach on his sense of self. Any coherent autobiographical self is fragmented, and yet the text explores ways of representing military service without effacing the profound effects of shame on his identity.

Christoph D. Brumme, *Tausend Tage* (1997)

Brumme and Tellkamp use the novel form to evoke intense experiences of shame, without the explicit retrospective self-assessment of Waehner's account. Brumme's novel, one of the earliest post-reunification accounts of NVA service in any genre, explores shame in relation to the emotional suppression encouraged by the NVA's masculine ideals.⁴⁷ The novel's reception was mixed, with reviewers often praising Brumme for engaging with the NVA, but criticizing his naive or simplistic style.⁴⁸ Brumme presumably draws on his own three-year military service as an NCO, but unlike Waehner he has not written or spoken publicly about his personal experience of the NVA. He instead uses fiction to explore the NVA's masculine ideals, the requirement for conscripts to restrain their emotional expression and ways of representing shame in writing. The result is a stark and critical portrayal of increasing brutality and psychological deterioration as his protagonist, Kian, strives to suppress his emotions and emulate the masculinity expected of an NCO. Brumme's novel suggests that a desperate and self-destructive form of shame results from Kian's attempts to suppress his emotions, but this shame is rarely displayed directly until the novel's final sections.

Brumme's novel is written in the third person and its narrative remains close to Kian's perspective at all times. Brumme's language is generally simple, stark and matter-of-fact, which perhaps mirrors the imperative for conscripts to control their emotions, but which also heightens Kian's shame when Brumme's narrator allows a glimpse of it. In Tanja Nause's discussion of 'staged naivety', she has discussed the novel's naive perspective at length, but in attributing it too closely to Kian, she neglects the importance of the third-person narrator.⁴⁹ Their precise relationship is elusive. The narrator is unnamed and moves in and out of Kian's perspective, sometimes

imperceptibly, while simultaneously reproducing and mocking his naivety and apparent impassivity. Brumme uses the distance between the narrator and Kian to critique and ironize Kian's actions, with the narrator remaining emotionless as Kian becomes ever more brutal and psychologically troubled. The narrative at times both condemns and sympathizes with Kian. In places, the novel's lack of emotion appears to mirror Kian's brutalization and emotional suppression in his attempt to fit in with the military's ideal masculinity, while elsewhere the impassive tone seems to discipline Kian's emotions or critique his actions.

Kian volunteers for an extended three-year service as an NCO, apparently motivated by a desire to escape his unhappy family: 'Leaving his parents was not difficult for him. And he would survive the three years. Others had survived them, after all' (63). The perspective of this emotionless comment is unclear and exemplifies the dynamic between Kian and the narrator. It may express Kian's resigned acceptance and unsuspecting naivety about how difficult military service will be, or it may be the narrator's or the parents' voices dismissing Kian's unexpressed concerns. The narrative then describes Kian's thousand days in the NVA. As his responsibilities increase, Kian grows attuned to military expectations and practices, becoming increasingly brutal towards conscripts. The narrative describes his brutality starkly, distancing the reader while refusing to condemn or excuse his actions. Towards the end of the novel, Kian's emotions are revealed when he meets a girlfriend, who is never named. His letters to her express an emotional response to military service, which for the first time is not suppressed by Kian or the narrator. When his girlfriend breaks up with him, he invents a snowballing lie that she has died, and then that he helped her die, until finally he is forced to confess when his superior goes to report Kian to the military prosecutor. The novel's final episodes thus suggest that *Tausend Tage* has previously suppressed Kian's emotions, echoing the NVA's requirement for emotions to be controlled. While Kian's letters to his girlfriend reveal a connection between Kian's shame and his desire to conform, the narrative itself enacts a suppression of emotions until Kian's psychological deterioration at the end of the novel.

When Kian enters the NVA, he is struck by the military's jargon. In contrast with Waehner's shame and anger at realizing that he has unconsciously absorbed military language, Kian actively attempts to approximate the NVA's masculine ideals by internalizing its language. He studies newspapers to absorb set phrases: 'He immersed himself [*steigerte sich hinein*] in the slogans, first haltingly, then with enthusiasm. He even added his own comments, in language just like the articles' (84). The verb 'sich hineinsteigern', to immerse oneself intensively in something, resonates with 'hineinsteigen', to enter, indicating that Kian's mastery of the military's symbolic codes initiates him into its world. The NVA's language comes to represent Kian's desire to impress

his superiors and appears to leave little room for emotions. After basic training, the passage describing his specialization as a generator mechanic repeats the unwieldy German term ‘Stromversorgungsaggregatemechaniker’ almost robotically: ‘As a generator mechanic, he was to service and repair generators. Generators generated power for temporary camps and, in case of war, maintained the power supply’ (101).⁵⁰ The excessive repetition is humorous but enigmatic: it is unclear whether the narrator is satirizing the NVA’s language, mocking Kian for his unquestioning pride in his job title, or a mixture of the two. Such passages therefore ironize Kian’s eager internalization of the military’s language without the visible traces of emotions that characterized Waehner’s first encounter with the military’s jargon.

The second stage in Kian’s internalization of discipline comes when he begins training conscripts, when the narrator juxtaposes their visible emotions with Kian’s impassivity. The narrative portrays Kian as oblivious to the conscripts’ feelings as he exacts brutal and humiliating punishments, in order to impress his superiors and live up to the strictness expected of an NCO. Yet Kian cynically exploits his new conscripts’ emotions, suggesting that he understands them from his own training: ‘As they marched into the barracks, he could see how he had felt for the first few days. Once the barber had attended to them, at the latest, they hung on his every word’ (111). The emotions that Kian and these new conscripts experience are not described explicitly, but the narrative emphasizes the haircut, a moment in which the military imposes an ideal appearance on new conscripts.⁵¹ The conscripts’ susceptibility to manipulation implies that they are shocked by entering the NVA, and the imposition of a new masculine ideal through the haircut may even have resulted in shame that the narrative suppresses. Just as the narrative effaces the soldiers’ emotions, Kian abruptly enforces emotional suppression when one soldier cries because he was conscripted on his wedding anniversary: ‘We shall all congratulate you now, and then forget your wedding’ (112). Kian’s disbelief that the soldier can cry with his comrades watching him is the novel’s first indication of shame: ‘And what a way for the poor lad to expose himself’ (*ibid.*). The fear of exposure is central to Tomkins’s concept of shame, and in this comment, apparently in free indirect style, Kian may even be ashamed on the conscript’s behalf for his uncontrolled display of sadness. This throwaway comment suggests that Kian’s unfeeling response to the conscript’s tears may reflect Kian’s own fear of being exposed, perhaps even providing a glimpse of ‘how he had felt for the first few days’. This impression suggests that an attempt to conform to the military’s ideals may have caused Kian’s desire to hide his shameful emotions, which the narrator further enacts by suppressing Kian’s emotions in the text.

Kian’s approach to discipline is not just emotionally manipulative but also increasingly brutal. In one instance, Kian singles out one soldier, Tsciscang,

for humiliation due to his Chinese name: ‘With a name like his, he’d have done well to keep quiet’ (116). The narrative describes Tsciscang’s emotional response to Kian’s harshness: ‘this person exuded nothing but protest. At the slightest admonishment, he would blush, probably with outrage that he had been spoken to at all’ (116). The tone of this passage suggests free indirect style, starkly presenting Kian’s misinterpretation of Tsciscang’s blushing as disgust or outrage. Blushing is not confined to experiences of shame, but Tsciscang’s blush is more probably a mark of shame than outrage, given that Kian publicly exposes his inadequacies. After misreading Tsciscang’s blush, Kian subjects him to humiliating punishments, listed euphemistically with the verb ‘dürfen’: ‘the next evening, he had the privilege of occupying himself with the toilet’ (ibid.).⁵² Tomkins suggests that shame is contagious and can provoke other emotions in the onlooker; Kian wields humiliation in response to what he perceives as arrogance, but it is also possible to interpret his assault on Tsciscang as a violent rejection of his own shame on seeing Tsciscang blush.⁵³ Kian’s severity seems calculating, vindictive and racist: ‘Perhaps this Chinese guy [*der Chinese*] would think carefully in future about whether he wanted to spend every evening scrubbing away at the toilet bowl’ (117). By repeatedly signalling free indirect style, the narrator portrays Kian as brutal and cynical in targeting Tsciscang and attempting to augment his shame at his inadequacies. Yet the narrator also suppresses Kian’s emotions, making him seem more calculating, but also potentially justifying his actions through a disingenuous suggestion that he is simply emotionally illiterate.

However, towards the end of the novel, Kian’s emotions begin to exceed their suppression in the narrative when he develops a relationship with an unnamed school friend. His letters to her display his emotions clearly for the first time in the novel. In the letters, Kian invents fairy tales that suggest feelings of shame. In one letter, Kian describes a world of feuding green and white men, with a black dwarf caught amidst the feud:

Sometimes he would change his colour, himself becoming green or white, but he was always very uncomfortable in these colours, even though he was otherwise teased by the others for his appearance.

The dwarf became smaller and smaller, because he hoped he could hide ...

One day, he disappeared entirely and was never seen again, no matter how hard the little men looked for him. (188–89)

The black dwarf’s disappearance recalls Tomkins’s and Pattison’s links between shame and the desire to hide or disappear, and apparently results from shame at his inability to conform. Kian’s girlfriend emphasizes the dwarf’s difference when she guesses the moral of the tale: ‘You mustn’t be different from the others, or it’ll end badly for you’ (189). The emotional intensity of this

dreamlike letter stands out from the narrative's previously impassive tone. The colours of the men – green and white – further suggest a link to military service as they are constituent colours of the NVA's uniforms. Alternatively, one might associate the two groups with conflicting masculine ideals, with the black dwarf unable to fit in with either. Kian's story is ambiguous, but the dwarf's desire to disappear may reflect his shame due to the others' rejection and his inability to live up to the ideals they represent. The emotions that Kian projects onto the dwarf reinforce the sense that Kian is less unfeeling than he has so far appeared, pointing to emotional suppression either by himself or the narrator.

Kian's emotions become more excessive when his unnamed girlfriend ends their relationship. He is visibly upset, skipping dinner and confining himself to bed. His sadness quickly turns to anger, as he slams the door when a commanding officer refuses him leave to see his girlfriend. These emotions give way to depression, as Kian neglects his duties and refuses to engage with comrades: 'He didn't talk anymore' (199). The narrative retains its simplicity and distance, but abandons its previous irony, producing a stark portrayal that highlights Kian's emotions. Although the military's masculine ideals do make space for expressions of emotions, particularly when it comes to love for wives and girlfriends, as in *Härtetest* and *Es gibt kein Niemandsland*, Kian's are excessive and even pathological. They are linked to an apparent psychological deterioration, as Kian begins to lie rather than admit the break-up, announcing that his girlfriend is suffering from cancer. Kian's superiors sympathetically give him leave to visit her, but when she refuses to speak to him, Kian's emotions overwhelm him and he goes to hang himself: 'The future was a black hole into which all desires vanished' (201). In a darkly comic reversal of the end of Georg Kaiser's expressionist play *Von morgens bis mitternachts* (1912), a power cut means that Kian does not go through with his suicide.⁵⁴

Kian's sadness and self-hatred in this episode are intense. These emotions seem to be accompanied by shame, with the black hole recalling the black dwarf's desire to disappear. Kian further suggests shame by relating his suicide plan to insults he has received: 'In any case, no one would insult him anymore. He had insulted others too and he regretted it. It was like being on a carousel: you were thrown around and could not get off' (202). The image of getting caught up in a carousel seems to absolve Kian of responsibility for his brutality, depicting it as a result of his own injury by other people's insults. Eribon has argued that, for queer subjects, insults establish a 'wounded consciousness, ashamed of itself', based on their difference from societal norms.⁵⁵ If Eribon's analysis is extended to other subjects whose difference results in insults and rejection, then Kian's emotional breakdown, his attempted suicide and even his previous brutality might be understood in relation to shame at feelings of inadequacy caused by others' insults.

When Kian returns to barracks, the narrative sardonically suggests that inventing a dying girlfriend allows Kian to revel in sadness in a way that a mere break-up would not: 'In the barracks he once again acted the depressive. It did not require much in the way of deception' (202). However, he soon feels uncomfortable with the sympathy, so in order to avoid further special treatment, he pretends that she has died. When an officer then offers emotional support, Kian becomes scared of being found out: 'All it needed was for someone to be conscripted from his hometown and he would be exposed' (207). His comrades' sympathy demonstrates a tolerance of displays of emotion in extreme situations, in line with Hockey's suggestion that militaries create 'subcultural spaces' where emotional expression is permitted. However, Kian is overcome by fear of being discovered and exposed, which suggests that his fear is partially a fear of shame. He goes to confess his lie to the sympathetic officer, but instead lies that he assisted his girlfriend to die. His compulsive lying is presented through increased use of dialogue, uncommented by other narration, which starkly displays Kian's awkward attempts to save face. The irony that has pervaded the novel disappears as the dominant narrative voice is disrupted. When the officer reports Kian to the military prosecutor, Kian shields his head in his hands and cries out: 'Kian shouted out incomprehensible sounds' (210). His uncontrollable outburst combines the desire to hide and the disruption of language associated with shame with the 'cry of terror' that Tomkins connects with fear.⁵⁶ Only after this release does Kian confess his lie and return to his troops, where he flouts military discipline for the remainder of his military service. His lies demonstrate a range of emotions, including frustration, fear of punishment and even pleasure in expressing his sadness. However, shame is perhaps the most constant, beginning with Kian's shame at his sadness, which motivates the first lie, and turning into a fear of further shame if his lies are exposed.

The centrality of shame to Kian's story is supported by analysis of his name. Kian is a common name in Irish and Welsh, meaning 'ancient', and the choice of a foreign name perhaps underlines his outsider status in GDR society. However, the name's resonances in German are more instructive. Nause has pointed out that 'Kian' resonates with 'kein', which she connects to the narrative's emptiness and distance, as well as with Cain (German: *Kain*), comparing Kian's lie about killing his girlfriend with Cain's fratricide.⁵⁷ However, these resonances can also be read as signs of a shame that defines Kian's self: the mark of Cain is a common metaphor for shame, and 'kein' could also be understood as evoking the dissolution of identity that shame can cause.⁵⁸ The emptiness and dissolution of Kian's self is further suggested by the 'black hole' that represents his future (201) and in his feeling when his parents move him out of his bedroom that 'he was a nothing' (90).

Kian's status as 'a nothing' is also visible in the narrative itself. The narrator oscillates between criticizing and absolving Kian, and one of his primary goals appears to be the suppression of Kian's emotions. The effects of this suppression vary between presenting Kian as an ideal soldier with control over his emotions and presenting him as vindictive and calculating. Yet the narrative also suggests that Kian is brutalized by the military system and at the mercy of an elusive, critical and unpredictable narrator. The narrative offers no explanation for the sudden revelation of Kian's emotions in letters and after their separation, but these passages reveal a shamed, victimized self dreaming of disappearing into nothingness. Shame thus emerges as the key emotion in *Tausend Tage*, partly due to Kian's instrumentalization of shame to assert power over his subordinates, but also because the NVA's requirement that conscripts control their emotions makes Kian and Tsciscang ashamed to show evidence of emotions.

Uwe Tellkamp, *Der Turm: Geschichte aus einem versunkenen Land* (2008)

The title of *Der Turm* is taken from the nickname of an area of Tellkamp's fictionalized Dresden, home to a cultured, bourgeois community that initially seems insulated from the reality of decline in the GDR of the 1980s.⁵⁹ The narrative is focalized through three characters, usually in the third person: Christian Hoffmann, his father Richard and uncle Meno Rohde. Tellkamp gradually shows the privileged, sheltered freedom of the 'Tower' to be illusory, revealing residents' involvement with GDR power structures. Richard is approached and blackmailed by the Stasi, Meno realizes that his work as an editor is harming authors' self-expression rather than facilitating it, and even Christian's girlfriend, Reina, is suspected of being an informant. Christian's military service is the novel's lengthiest and most striking example of the residents' entanglement in negotiations of GDR institutions. Under pressure from a schoolteacher, Christian volunteers for three years instead of the compulsory eighteen months. Christian's first encounter with the military is at a 'Wehrlager', a premilitary camp for young men in their last years at school, where he is punished for reading the autobiography of a Nazi U-boat commander. The family procures a lawyer and Christian still obtains a place at medical school, but first he is conscripted to a tank regiment. During this time, he has two major accidents, first while driving a tank onto a transporter and then during an amphibious crossing of the Elbe. When a comrade, Jan Burre, is killed in the second accident, Christian goes to attack his commander and is imprisoned for saying: 'This could only happen in this fucking country' (799). He serves his sentence first at the military prison

in Schwedt and then in a carbide factory. His military service is extended until the autumn of 1989, when he is deployed for riot control in Dresden and comes face to face with his mother protesting. His military service ends shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall, at which point the novel ends with a colon, opening onto the future.

Der Turm is among the most influential post-reunification novels dealing with the GDR. It topped bestseller lists, won the German Book Prize in 2008 and was adapted into a television drama.⁶⁰ Tellkamp's writing is dense, poetic and saturated with descriptive details, thematic motifs and intertextual references, with nods to E.T.A. Hoffmann, Thomas Mann, Marcel Proust, Wolfgang Hilbig and many others. In addition to this intertextuality, scholars have also focused on Tellkamp's use of space and time.⁶¹ The NVA has not been overlooked; critics have argued that the narration is most intense in descriptions of Christian's military service, arrest and imprisonment.⁶² However, this intensity depends on Tellkamp's evocation of Christian's emotions, particularly shame, which has not been discussed as a structuring force in the novel. Military passages in *Der Turm* are dominated by shame that threatens to dissolve Christian's sense of self. Tellkamp foregrounds emotions in Christian's military service and explores how narrative can acknowledge the limitations involved in representing shame while still depicting its intensity.

The novel emphasizes Christian's feelings by focalizing the narration through his perspective. When he first dons an NVA uniform before attending the 'Wehrlager', free indirect style highlights Christian's complex emotional response: 'He was not wearing this uniform out of pride, but because he wanted people to pity him' (435). His self-pity is mixed with defiance and with sadness at leaving his parents:

to himself, he said: I am wearing these clothes, I even have short hair, I am doing more than required, and you [the NVA] still have no power over me. He passed over the real reason: to make leaving more bearable, he started wearing the uniform beforehand. (ibid.)

The narrative depicts Christian, like Waehner and Fuchs's narrator in *Fassonschnitt*, in a state of emotional confusion when confronted with the uniform. He gains pleasure from being pitied, while defiantly convincing himself that his excessive obedience preserves his own identity. However, he also conceals his sadness at leaving his family, even from himself. This episode demonstrates Christian's disorientation amongst conflicting ideals. He is desperate to resist, but his defiant dignity is entirely commensurate with the stoicism valued by the military and even his family: "He has to persevere with the military camp, that's what we told him ... If he wants the university place, he will pull himself together for these two weeks", said Richard' (448).

Even Christian's father leaves little room for emotions and prescribes the same suppression as the military out of concern for Christian's studies.

Once Christian enters the 'Wehrlager', his emotional confusion gives way to shame when he is exposed to mockery in the shower. Unteroffizier Hantsch expresses his disgust at Christian's acne, already a source of shame earlier in the novel, which is exacerbated in the enforced exposure of the communal shower. In this scene, the military strips the young men down and Hantsch enforces through insult the military's ideal of the masculine body. Christian's shame is so acute that his whole body blushes, as Hantsch jeeringly points out: 'now he's so red that the spots are almost invisible' (439–40). Christian's most intense reaction to the 'Wehrlager' comes when he is caught reading the U-boat commander's book. He is initially paralysed with fear, which mingles with shame when castigated by his father: 'Christian cowered, made himself small, pulled his head and arms into his body; he was determined to say nothing' (451). Cowering is a symptom of fear, while Christian's desire to shrink into himself and hide his face recall Tomkins's and Pattison's descriptions of shame, and he further suppresses any response to his father's tirade. Christian's 'Wehrlager' episode establishes shame as a theme that runs throughout Christian's military service.

Der Turm shares with *Einstrich-Keinstrich* an interest in how emotions can be represented. Passages describing Christian's military service perform the crisis of communication associated with experiences of shame. Tellkamp's narrative style is generally described as heterogeneous, compiling styles from different literary models and distinct perspectives.⁶³ Andrea Jäger, though, has also commented that these different styles and voices are subordinate to a remarkably homogeneous narrative instance.⁶⁴ However, chapters describing Christian's military service are significantly more heterogeneous than the rest of the novel, even sidelining the narrative instance altogether. These chapters each have an epigraph from *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins*, which, as Plowman observes, 'emphasizes the discrepancy between the ideal and the reality of soldiering'.⁶⁵ The epigraphs interject the NVA's official language into the narrative, emphasizing Christian's struggle to articulate a sense of self in an environment where official norms were so rigidly promoted and enforced.

The construction of the chapters further reflects Christian's struggle to articulate himself. For example, Chapter 55, which describes Christian's two tank accidents, is a collage of orders and insults, letters and free indirect style. The stylistic shifts highlight Christian's difficulty processing events. In his first accident, as the tank slowly tips after he fails to guide it onto the train, the narrative cuts to Richard's perspective before returning to Christian's narrative (760–61). In the second, the chapter does not describe Burre's death or Christian's outburst directly: it ends with a short letter to Reina, mentioning Burre's death and Christian's attack on his superior without

explanation (777–78). This narrative fragmentation contrasts with chapters describing Christian's visits to Dresden on leave, in which the more uniform third-person narration returns (594–623). The disjointed narrative therefore becomes associated solely with Christian's military service. The narrative's previously unified perspective fragments into shifting and elliptical voices, which perform Christian's shame as his sense of self is disrupted by military service.

In light of these difficulties of communication, Tellkamp explores ways of representing shame empathetically without diminishing its intensity. As with many of the novel's themes, *Der Turm* uses spatial metaphors to evoke Christian's shame. Anne Fuchs has investigated how the novel's spaces 'represent their inhabitants' emotional and psychological worlds'.⁶⁶ Fuchs and other critics limit their discussion to Tellkamp's symbolically charged, fictionalized Dresden. However, spaces during Christian's military service are also imbued with emotional significance. Plowman has drawn a comparison between Christian being caught reading the U-boat commander's book and his later solitary confinement in Schwedt, in the prison called the 'U-Boot'. Plowman convincingly relates these submarine references to Jules Verne's *Vingt mille lieues sous les mers* (*Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*, 1870), whose protagonist is a submariner. He also highlights a further parallel: early on in Christian's military service, he is nicknamed 'Nemo', which is also the name of Verne's submariner.⁶⁷ Tellkamp's connections between Christian's military service and submarines merit further investigation: the submarine motif can be read in particular as a spatial motif for Christian's experiences of shame.

The submarine's armoured shell recalls Reich's concept of 'character armour', particularly in Klaus Theweleit's interpretation of the armour as a corporeal and psychological barrier against disruptive fluidities associated with femininity and homosexuality.⁶⁸ Theweleit's analogy suggests how the submarine metaphor might emphasize the importance of Christian's body in the shame experience, in contrast to Waehner and Brumme's accounts, where shame appears largely in psychological and narrative guises. Just as Reich describes the armour of neurotic subjects as overly restrictive, the submarine is a stifling, confined space, which evokes the shamed self turning in on itself. Moreover, a submariner's communication with the outside world is impeded and disrupted, a key feature of shame: there is no possibility of venturing outside, and even seeing outside is virtually impossible in the dark underwater. The submarine's dive suggests an investigation of the depths of the self more generally, but also echoes the desire to disappear associated more specifically with shame. The submarine motif anchors Christian's shame in the military context, and Tellkamp associates it with moments when Christian's emotions exceed the limits of ideal military masculinity.

Christian gains the nickname ‘Nemo’ as part of a so-called baptism after beginning his military service: older soldiers wrap him in bedclothes to immobilize him and drive a tank over him (651–52). Christian remains passive during this terrifying ritual, observing the tank’s underside in slow motion: ‘Popov started up the engine and rolled over Christian as he lay immobile on the ground. He saw the hull rolling over him, saw screws, the emergency escape hatch’ (652). This episode connects the tank with the oppressive Reichian ‘Panzerung’: instead of being protected in battle by the tank and psychologically by character armour, Christian is in danger of being crushed by the tank and the military ideals it represents. Yet his perspective illuminates and exposes the tank’s underbelly, emphasizing the vulnerability of conscripts who superficially appear to embody the military ideal.⁶⁹ Christian’s matter-of-fact perspective does not betray emotions, but his nickname, which is Latin for ‘nobody’, suggests vulnerability and subordination. His nickname is imposed on him by older soldiers and symbolizes the slow, violent dissolution of his identity. The nickname’s reference to Verne’s submariner even links the initiation to Christian’s shame after being caught reading the U-boat commander’s autobiography. This reference sets up a comparison between the tanks in Christian’s unit and the submarine as a spatial metaphor for shame: like the submarine, Christian’s tanks are confined, armoured spaces, which represent the military’s masculine ideals that he rejects. Even more explicitly than the resonances of ‘Kian’ with ‘kein’, Christian’s nickname, Nemo, emphasizes the military’s assault on his identity, turning him into a nobody, which he comes to accept as his shame increases and his sense of self is shattered.

The comparison between tanks and submarines is made explicit during an amphibious crossing of the Elbe, which leads to Christian’s imprisonment. He remarks, as the tank is underwater: ‘Strange that a tank had similarities with a submarine’ (775). During the crossing, the tank’s pump, unlike a watertight submarine, cannot cope with the increasing volume of water. Christian even compares the tank to himself, likening the water trickling in to his own sweating: ‘Oh good, it’s sweating too, it’s so hot in here’ (774). In light of this comparison, the leak suggests the breakdown of Christian’s defences and anticipates his emotional response to the impending accident. His comment recalls Theweleit’s metaphorical ‘armour’, protecting the self against fluid femininities. Christian’s emotions are difficult to interpret: the narrative shows no signs of panic, but it twice breaks off and skips to one of Christian’s letters. His letter to Reina, which ends the chapter, is the only indication at this point of what happens: ‘My driver was injured in an exercise and died in hospital. I did something stupid, attacked my company commander’ (777–78). The break in the narrative and matter-of-fact letter conceal Christian’s outburst, perhaps reflecting his inability to process the

intense emotions of the situation. Only later is the extent of Christian's anger and frustration revealed: he threatens his commander with an axe and shouts 'This could only happen in this fucking country' (799), the line that results in his arrest and imprisonment.

Because of Burre's death and Christian's outburst, the tank becomes a site of emotion, but Christian's response to the accident is concealed until a later chapter. When Reina visits, Christian shows signs of shame, with a desire to hide and a paralysed speechlessness: 'It was as if he was paralysed; he would have had the words, but they had to get over his tongue, which was steep and lumpy, the words refused to climb over it' (786). This shame is mixed with anger with Reina, described with powerful metaphors of electricity:

An attack of anger was an eruption, the explosion of a hard crust, heat fizzed through the blood, a dark electricity seemed to flood into the finger tips from a generator, loaded them with power and madness, sharpened the vision onto a single goal to be achieved with a stab or a punch or a blow of an axe. (791)

The axe implies that Christian is re-experiencing his anger from his attack on his commander, with a sudden rush of heat and energy that corresponds with Tomkins's description of anger increasing circulation and heart rate.⁷⁰ Tellkamp's image of anger is embodied, with Christian feeling electricity surging through his body and into his fingertips, focusing on a target that conflates Reina and his commander. The image of an 'explosion of a hard crust' once more resonates with Reich's 'character armour', with Christian's emotions breaking through his attempts to remain calm and stoical.

Christian is consumed by anger and attacks Reina, perhaps even raping her. Tellkamp's portrayal of domestic violence is stark and moving, but he neglects Reina's perspective as a victim and writes her out of the novel from this point. The incident is presented as a stage in Christian's emotional deterioration rather than an act with physical and emotional consequences for Reina. Christian's anger gives way not to remorse or guilt, but to shame and exposure: 'He saw himself looking at himself naked in the mirror: the sickening, pustule-covered skin that longed for a touch and feared it' (792). His focus turns on himself with disgust, his self-contempt once again directed at his acne. His emotions appear to combine remorse for Burre's death, shame at his own failure as a tank commander and for his attack on Reina, more abstract shame and self-hatred symbolized by his body in the mirror, and a recurring anger.

Christian's shame culminates during his imprisonment in solitary confinement, known as the 'U-Boot'. In the darkness of solitary, he is struck by his layers of imprisonment and a sense that 'he must have arrived in the system's innermost realm':

He was in the GDR, which had fortified borders and a wall. He was in the NVA, which had barracks walls and checkpoints. He was an inmate at Schwedt Military Penitentiary, behind a wall and barbed wire. And in the penitentiary he was sitting in solitary [*im U-Boot*], behind windowless walls. (827)

At the centre of the GDR's repressive apparatus, Christian feels reduced to a naked self: 'It must be more than just having arrived: He must, Christian thought, be himself. He must be naked, a stripped, bare self' (*ibid.*). On its own, this description could be read in an affirmative light, but Tellkamp describes Christian's imprisonment in desperate and corporeal terms, denying any higher meaning and describing only his sensations of cold, hunger and thirst. He is reduced to increasingly disoriented sensations, noticing 'that the ear then starts producing noises for itself, that the eye keeps trying to light flames' (*ibid.*). His self is stripped bare, disconnected from external meaning and metaphorically submerged in an 'U-Boot' at the centre of the GDR, itself the 'sunken land' of the novel's subtitle.

The submarine metaphor and Christian's layers of imprisonment show him submerged and subsumed by the state's power, a situation that exposes his own essence and the essence of the disciplinary regime. This moment represents Christian's final loss of self, as he accepts his nickname: 'Now, Christian thought, I really am Nemo. *Nobody*' (*ibid.*). The exposure and interiority of this passage powerfully evoke the intensity of Christian's shame experience. By accepting his powerlessness and shame, Christian surrenders to self-dissolution. He returns to his unit unable to express thoughts or emotions, in part because his alienation from language reduces the narrative to platitudes that are poignant in their simplicity and lack of emotion: 'Speaking became strange to him. When it was unavoidable, he restricted himself to essentials ... The bread tasted good. His comrades were nice, especially the goldsmith. The tanks were good. The sun was nice' (877). The internalization of military discipline seen in *NVA* when Krüger returns from Schwedt is here depicted from Christian's internal perspective, thereby providing a more profound sense of his shame.

By using spatial metaphors for Christian's emotions, Tellkamp explores means of depicting shame without neglecting the difficulties of communication it causes. Unlike *Tausend Tage*, in which Kian's emotions are largely suppressed by the narrative, Tellkamp's narrative heightens Christian's emotions during military service. Passages in the NVA are the most stylistically varied in the novel, with the dominant third-person narrative frequently disrupted by shifts in perspective. This disjointed narrative performs the difficulties of communication associated with shame and emphasizes Christian's struggle to maintain his sense of self. Simultaneously, the narrative portrays Christian's increasing shame from the 'Wehrlager' to his imprisonment in Schwedt using

the emotionally defined spatial metaphors of the submarine. More than Waehner and Brumme, Tellkamp depicts shame as a bodily phenomenon by associating it with images of tanks and submarines, metaphors for Christian's body and for the inability of conscripts' hardened exteriors to protect them from their emotions.

Emotions, Military Service and Representation

These texts offer different approaches to the representation of shame. The elusive nature of this powerful emotion is in stark contrast to the theatrical performances of ideal military masculinity discussed in the last chapter. Just as the theatricality of *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* and *NVA* attempted to subvert the socialist soldier personality, so too does the focus on shame counteract the NVA's ideals, which attempted to suppress soldiers' emotions. These texts present shame as a result of soldiers' negotiations of the military's ideals and expectations, but this shame can also violate these ideals when even brash, conformist soldiers like Kian are unable to control their emotions. In contrast to the retro films, which aimed to reveal the nonessential nature of the military's ideals, *Einstrich-Keinstrich*, *Tausend Tage* and *Der Turm* appear more interested in the profound emotional effects of conscripts' initiation into the NVA as their bodies and identities are changed performatively by military service. The texts analysed here offer particularly vivid accounts, but their emotionally charged approaches are broadly representative of wider post-reunification literature and film depicting the NVA.

The shift in interpretations of the NVA after reunification may present an important reason for the prevalence of shame, despite its absence from GDR-era films and literature depicting military service. Since reunification, the NVA has been largely discredited, and depictions of military service must therefore come to terms with moments of even limited conformity.⁷¹ Many conscripts like Waehner and Christian chose the path of least resistance to evade punishment, but having complied with military requirements may, in retrospect, cause or amplify shame at having participated in and therefore partially supported the regime. This post-reunification reassessment of military service is clearest in Waehner's memoir, which includes a self-critical narrative voice in the present that is absent from either novel.

Waehner, Brumme and Tellkamp show shame playing an important part in imposing military masculine ideals. In particular, Kian's relationships with his subordinates and Christian's 'baptism' present attempts to cause and manipulate shame that are built into the disciplinary apparatus. All three texts use the military's imposition of ideal masculinity to foreground emotions in their depictions of conscription. Only Kian deliberately internalizes

the ideal, which results in a desire to suppress his emotions. *Tausend Tage* suggests his inability to overcome his emotions or his feeling of difference, resulting in shame at failing to emulate the NVA's unachievable ideals. Waehner internalizes the ideal unwillingly, and the autobiographical genre enables him to show himself realizing in retrospect his partial absorption of military ideals. While Waehner explicitly rejects military gender ideals, Tellkamp shows Christian longing to fit in despite his rejection of military values. As Giddens suggests, his shame may therefore result from a loss of confidence in his ability to construct a coherent masculine narrative from the diverse ideals he is faced with. The many forms of shame discussed by theorists and represented in these three works therefore appear united by a troubled and self-critical relationship to social ideals.

Shame takes a range of forms, even within a single text, and is extremely elusive. These works reinforce Bewes's insistence that shame is associated with the inadequacy of form and language, but they also reveal the complications and uncertainties involved in interpreting representations of shame. Shame is more difficult to define or describe than is suggested by Tomkins's reliance on physiological symptoms or Bewes's elucidation of instabilities of form. The embodied and narrative qualities of shame are combined in the texts' attempts to display it in their form, on the body of the text. Waehner and Brumme generally do not make analogies between text and the human body in shame. By contrast, the intensity of Tellkamp's representation is achieved through spatial metaphors that evoke shame's complexity as an embodied emotion as well as a narrative and psychological phenomenon. The submarine metaphor shows how restrictive masculine ideals can damage, disorientate and even dissolve the subject through shame. Yet Tellkamp also uses the submarine as an analogy for conscripts' bodies, with Christian's shame related to his disgust at his own body and the water pouring into the tank representing the breakdown in his self-control and identity.

Waehner, Brumme and Tellkamp present emotions as an important and complex part of conscripts' adaptation to military service and their attempts to reconcile conscription with closely held ideals and identities. *Fassonschnitt* and the two retro films analysed in the previous chapter have already suggested that these negotiations of military ideals do not end with military service, but become central to future representations of the military. Aleida Assmann has suggested that emotional experiences are among the most easily remembered, and the intensity of emotions depicted in *Einstrich-Keinstrich*, *Tausend Tage* and *Der Turm* may be an important reason for men's continued engagements with military service.⁷² Yet these texts suggest that intense emotional experiences are also among the most difficult to represent. The intensity of shame undoubtedly changes with time and circumstances, and

Wahner's memoir suggests that over time shame may develop into a productive impulse to write about and remember experiences.

Most importantly, these works demonstrate that participation in the state's systems of repression did not, or not only, take the form of knowing, cynical or theatrical actions without longer-term consequences. For millions of NVA conscripts and perhaps many other citizens besides, negotiations of institutions could be emotional and involve relations of identification and disidentification. Assmann's theory suggests that even when emotional relationships to GDR institutions were shameful and negative, they can account for the continuing urgency with which ambivalent relationships to the GDR are negotiated. Furthermore, given the highly gendered nature of expressions of emotion, these accounts of military service suggest that negotiations of GDR institutions, even retrospectively, are inseparable from the gender ideals promoted by those institutions. The case of shame demonstrates that even when ideals of masculinity or femininity are entirely rejected, the emotions associated with this rejection are an important factor in individuals' continuing, retrospective engagements with the GDR's institutions.

Notes

1. See B. Murdoch, 'Introduction', in *German Literature and the First World War: The Anti-war Tradition* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 1–21.
2. E.M. Remarque, *Im Westen nichts Neues* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1929; repr. Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1998), 18. Translation from E.M. Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, trans. by B. Murdoch (London: Vintage, 1996), 9.
3. Remarque, *Im Westen*, 111. Translation from Remarque, *All Quiet*, 113.
4. See Bourke's wide-ranging analysis: *Fear: A Cultural History* (London: Virago, 2005). For a range of national perspectives, see J. Plamper, 'Fear: Soldiers and Emotion in Early Twentieth-Century Russian Military Psychology', *Slavic Review* 68 (2009), 259–83; C.H. Hamner, *Enduring Battle: American Soldiers in Three Wars, 1776–1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 66–94; V. Wilcox, "'Weeping Tears of Blood": Exploring Italian Soldiers' Emotions in the First World War', *Modern Italy* 17 (2012), 171–84.
5. F. Biess, "'Everybody Has a Chance': Nuclear Angst, Civil Defence, and the History of Emotions in Postwar West Germany", *German History* 27 (2009), 215–43; C.T. Müller, 'Im Bann der Bombe: Überlegungen zu Luftschutz und Zivilverteidigung in der DDR', in B. Greiner et al. (eds), *Angst im Kalten Krieg* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2009), 94–122.
6. On shame in literature about the NVA, see also Plowman, 'Experience'.
7. J. Wahner, *Einstrich-Keinstrich: NVA-Tagebuch* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2006); C.D. Brumme, *Tausend Tage* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1997); Tellkamp, *Der Turm*.
8. See William Reddy's discussion of statements of emotion: *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 99–108.

9. Psychological research in the Anglo-American context suggests that suppression of emotion is widespread in military environments; see e.g. G. Green et al., 'Exploring the Ambiguities of Masculinity in Accounts of Emotional Distress in the Military among Young Ex-servicemen', *Social Science and Medicine* 71 (2010), 1480–88 (at 1484).
10. Kubrick, *Full Metal Jacket*; J. Hockey, 'No More Heroes: Masculinity in the Infantry', in Higate, *Military Masculinities*, 15–25 (at 17).
11. Hockey, 'No More Heroes', 23–24. See also Das, *Touch and Intimacy*; Crouthamel, *An Intimate History*.
12. Reich, *Charakteranalyse*.
13. Ibid., 180–96.
14. Ibid., 259–60.
15. S.S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition* (New York: Springer, 2008), 352.
16. S. Pattison, *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 72.
17. D. Eribon, *Une morale du minoritaire: Variations sur un thème de Jean Genet* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), 294.
18. Tomkins, *Affect*, 369.
19. Ibid., 960, original punctuation. 'Dis smell' is Tomkins's neologism for a form of contempt: 'If disgust is an appropriate word signifying a bad taste, dis smell is its analog for a bad smell' (629).
20. S. Scholz, 'Gewaltgeföhle: Überlegungen zum Zusammenhang von Männlichkeit, Gewalt und Emotionen', *Feministische Studien: Zeitschrift für interdisziplinäre Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung* 26 (2008), 106–21.
21. Christian Müller highlights the prevalence of bodily exposure and sexual abuse of junior conscripts: 'Die "EK-Bewegung"', 568.
22. On humiliation, see P. Leask, 'Humiliation as a Weapon within the Party: Fictional and Personal Accounts', in M. Fulbrook and A.I. Port (eds), *Becoming East German: Socialist Structures and Sensibilities after Hitler* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 237–56.
23. G. Taylor, *Pride, Shame, and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 63–64.
24. Scholz, *Männlichkeit*, 189.
25. A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 69.
26. S. Scholz, 'Wehrdienst und die Konstruktion männlicher Identität', in J.-R. Ahrens, M. Apelt and C. Bender (eds), *Frauen im Militär: Empirische Befunde und Perspektiven zur Integration von Frauen in die Streitkräfte* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005), 173–91.
27. Giddens, *Modernity*, 70.
28. Tomkins, *Affect*, 360.
29. Scholz, 'Gewaltgeföhle', 115.
30. T. Bewes, *The Event of Postcolonial Shame* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 2–3.
31. Ibid., 3.
32. *Vom Sinn des Soldatseins*, 9.
33. Ibid., e.g. 15 and 75.
34. Ibid., 20 and 52.
35. S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 13.

36. Waehner, *Einstrich-Keinstrich*: hereinafter referenced in the text.
37. A. Lewis, 'Reading and Writing the Stasi File: On the Uses and Abuses of the File as Autobiography', *German Life and Letters* 56 (2003), 377–97 (at 383).
38. Waehner echoes the GDR's officialese: 'staatsfeindliche Hetze', 'öffentliche Herabwürdigung' and 'geplante Republikflucht'.
39. E.g. U. Seidler, 'Picknick mit Spitzeln', *Berliner Zeitung*, 24 July 2006; F.T. Grub, "... unliebsame, aber immer noch wichtige Erinnerungen": Autobiographische Texte von Wehrpflichtigen in Ost und West', in *Autobiographisches Schreiben in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, 3 vols (Munich: Iudicum, 2006–9), vol. 2: C. Parry and E. Platen (eds), *Grenzen der Fiktionalität und der Erinnerung* (2007), 318–33 (at 321); S. Nadolny and J. Sparschuh, *Putz- und Flickstunde: Zwei Kalte Krieger erinnern sich* (Munich: Piper, 2009), 50.
40. A. Plowman, "Eine Armee wie jede andere auch"? Writers and Filmmakers Remember the Nationale Volksarmee', in R. Rechten and D. Tate (eds), *Twenty Years on: Competing Memories of the GDR in Postunification German Culture* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), 114–25 (at 119).
41. See e.g. F. Meyer, 'Biografisches Dokument einer Grenzerfahrung', *Deutschlandradio Kultur*, 2 June 2006. Retrieved 30 May 2019 from http://www.deutschlandradiokultur.de/biografisches-dokument-einer-grenzerfahrung.950.de.html?dram:article_id=134050.
42. The potential for a literal interpretation may be intentional; the Stasi's investigation techniques do take physically invasive forms in some portrayals, e.g. C. Petzold (dir.), *Barbara* (Piffel, 2012).
43. Tomkins, *Affect*, 352.
44. Pattison, *Shame*, 75.
45. See J. Waehner, 'Ich fühlte mich dreifach isoliert', interview with E. Aretz, *Tagesschau.de*, 30 July 2010. Retrieved 30 May 2019 from <http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/meldung130908.html>.
46. This more sympathetic evaluating self is similar to that described by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in 'Shame and Performativity: Henry James's New York Edition Prefaces', in D. McWhirter (ed.), *Henry James's New York Edition: The Construction of Authorship* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 206–39.
47. Brumme, *Tausend Tage*: hereinafter referenced in the text.
48. E.g. H. Steinert, 'Das brennende Ei', *Die Zeit*, 2 October 1997; E. Rathgeb, 'Tausendmal ist nichts passiert: Christoph D. Brumme dient', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4 November 1997, L5.
49. T. Nause, *Inszenierung von Naivität: Tendenzen und Ausprägungen einer Erzählstrategie der Nachwendeliteratur* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2002), especially 87–113.
50. 'Als Stormversorgung aggregatemechaniker [sic] hatte er Stromversorgungsaggregate zu warten und zu bedienen. Stromversorgungsaggregate versorgten Feldlager mit Strom und hielten im Kriegsfall die Stromversorgung aufrecht.'
51. See my discussion of the haircut in Chapter 3.
52. 'Am nächsten Abend durfte er sich mit der Toilette beschäftigen.'
53. Tomkins, *Affect*, 402–4.
54. G. Kaiser, *Von morgens bis mitternachts* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996).
55. D. Eribon, *Réflexions sur la question gay* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 31.
56. Tomkins, *Affect*, 932.
57. Nause, *Inszenierung*, 93.
58. K. von Kellenbach, *The Mark of Cain: Guilt and Denial in the Post-war Lives of Nazi Perpetrators* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 14.

59. Tellkamp, *Der Turm*: hereinafter referenced in the text.
60. BLK, 'Bestseller: Uwe Tellkamps "Der Turm" auf Platz eins: Bestsellerlisten vom 27. Oktober 2008', *Berliner Literaturkritik*, 27 October 2008. Retrieved 30 May 2019 from <http://www.berlinerliteraturkritik.de/detailseite/artikel/bestseller-uwe-tellkamps-der-turm-auf-platz-eins.html>; C. Schwochow (dir.), *Der Turm* (Universum, 2012).
61. See e.g. D. Clarke, 'Space, Time and Power: The Chronotopes of Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Turm*', *German Life and Letters* 63 (2010), 490–503; A. Fuchs, 'Psychotopography and Ethnopoetic Realism in Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Turm*', *New German Critique* 116 (2012), 119–32; S. Horstkotte, 'Von Ostrom nach Atlantis: Utopisches in Uwe Tellkamps *Der Turm*', in N.O. Eke (ed.), "'Nach der Mauer der Abgrund'? (Wieder-)Annäherungen an die DDR-Literatur', special issue, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* 83 (2013), 323–41.
62. C. Breger, 'On a Twenty-First-Century Quest for Authoritative Narration: The Drama of Voice in Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Turm*', *Germanic Review* 86 (2011), 185–200 (at 198); J. Hell, 'Demolition Artists: Icono-Graphy, Tanks, and Scenarios of (Post-)Communist Subjectivity in Works by Neo Rauch, Heiner Müller, Durs Grünbein, and Uwe Tellkamp', *Germanic Review* 89 (2014), 131–70 (at 164).
63. Horstkotte, 'Von Ostrom nach Atlantis', 334–35; Hell, 'Demolition Artists', 158–60.
64. A. Jäger, 'Die Wiederbelebung des Historismus in der literarischen Geschichtsschreibung über die DDR: Bemerkung zu Uwe Tellkamps *Der Turm*', in Eke, "'Nach der Mauer der Abgrund'?", 343–55 (at 347).
65. Plowman, "Eine Armee", 121.
66. Fuchs, 'Psychotopography', 121.
67. Plowman, "Eine Armee", 121–22.
68. Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*; see also Chapter 2.
69. Julia Hell describes Tellkamp's descriptions of the undersides and interiors of tanks as a 'demolition' of symbols of Soviet imperialism: 'Demolition Artists', 165–68.
70. Tomkins, *Affect*, 688.
71. On the discrediting of the NVA in the post-reunification public sphere, see Bickford, *Fallen Elites*.
72. A. Assmann, 'Stabilisatoren der Erinnerung: Affekt, Symbol, Trauma', in J. Rüsen and J. Straub (eds), *Die dunkle Spur der Vergangenheit: Psychoanalytische Zugänge zum Geschichtsbewußtsein* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 131–52.

Chapter 6

SAME-SEX DESIRE, ARCHIVAL NARRATION AND THE NVA'S CLOSET



Although I have focused so far largely on violent, exploitative and even manipulative relationships between NVA members, military service is also an experience shaped by desire and even intimacy. In the works I have analysed so far, desires for women have consistently been used to disrupt or at least contrast with discipline and the development of ideal military masculinities, from Fichtner's desire for Friederike in *Es gibt kein Niemandsland* to Kian's relationship in *Tausend Tage*. However, close, even physically intimate friendships between men also feature prominently in twenty-first-century representations of GDR military service. These works draw on existing depictions of intimacy, such as Fuchs's narrator washing Jugel's back in *Fassonschnitt* and Harbolla washing Engelhardt in a momentary relaxation of their rivalry in *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*.¹ Recent literary and historical scholarship has emphasized that such intimacy and even desire between men are common features of military experiences, with significant implications for military masculinities.² Jason Crouthamel has even argued that service in the trenches made homosexual soldiers identify with military masculine ideals and contest the simple identification between military masculinities and heterosexuality.³ However, military training is often ignored or sidelined in such work, with love or desire between soldiers being attributed to the uniquely extreme conditions of the warzone.

Literature and film depicting queer experience and same-sex desire during NVA training present an important contribution to such debates by showing desire and intimacy as products of military environments more widely, rather

than just the extreme situations of war.⁴ Since 1990, numerous fictional and autobiographical accounts show negotiations of masculinity during military training that include and are shaped by men's desires and sexualities.⁵ These negotiations are often mirrored or performed in the texts, which demonstrate particular difficulties with writing retrospectively about experiences that were largely closeted at the time. In this final chapter, I contrast two works that foreground these tensions: the novel *Neue Leben* (*New Lives*, 2005) by Ingo Schulze (b. 1962) and the memoir *Hinterm Horizont allein – Der 'Prinz' von Prora* (*Alone beyond the Horizon – The 'Prince' of Prora*, 2005) by Stefan Wolter (b. 1967).⁶ Schulze and Wolter both present narratives made up of letters and other sources, and explore ways of revealing queer sexualities and same-sex desire.

Because of the importance of sources in both works, we can describe them as archival narratives, albeit with contrasting approaches to the documentation and articulation of desire. Same-sex desire emerges through gaps in the sources, suggesting the influence of closet dynamics on processes of documentation and archivization. José Esteban Muñoz's discussions of queer evidence and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory of the closet provide useful insights into both texts, while also revealing a close relationship between the structures of the archive and the closet. As other post-1990 texts have shown, negotiations of military ideals did not cease with reunification. Ongoing tensions and engagement with military service are central to Schulze's and Wolter's texts, even once same-sex desire could be discussed with greater openness. These texts reveal the performative, often textual nature of these negotiations, by experimenting with masculinity, identity and the notion of authentic selfhood. Schulze's novel playfully satirizes post-reunification biographies by creating a complex, multilayered narrative that shows identities being changed and rewritten after 1990.⁷ His fictional editor scours biographical sources for evidence of same-sex desire, which he uses to attack his protagonist. By contrast, Wolter's memoir subverts the association of sources with revelation or authenticity, using them instead to prompt a considered, empathetic engagement with his own same-sex desire during his service and with questions of queer evidence and archivization.

Archival Narration and Same-Sex Desire

Neue Leben is an epistolary novel, presented as a collection of the letters and writings of Enrico Türmer, a businessman in the town of Altenburg in the 1990s, edited by 'Ingo Schulze'. Links soon emerge between Enrico and the editor from their schooldays: he describes his romantic interest in Enrico's sister, Vera, and his envy and admiration for Enrico's attempts to become

a writer before reunification. The integration of the editor into the fiction reveals the distance between the author and his editor alter ego.⁸ The editor introduces Enrico as the head of a substantial business after reunification. When it collapses in 1998, Enrico disappears, leaving only his letters to Vera, his best friend, Johann, and a Western journalist, Nicoletta, with whom he became romantically involved. Letters to Vera and Johann document Enrico's business ventures in early 1990, while those to Nicoletta describe his upbringing in the GDR. The editor compiles the letters chronologically, supplementing them with a foreword, acknowledgements, footnotes and an appendix. The appendix consists of seven stories, supposedly written by Enrico, which echo events in the letters. The editor claims that Enrico abandoned the stories and wrote to Nicoletta on the reverse of the paper, a device consciously drawn from E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Lebens-Ansichten des Katers Murr* (*The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, 1819–21) and reminiscent of a similar conceit in Irmtraud Morgner's *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz* (*The Life and Adventures of Trobadora Beatrice*, 1974).⁹

The resulting structure is extremely complex, with the reader skipping between chronological levels, paratexts complicating the boundaries of Schulze's fiction, and letters to each recipient adopting a different tone. The juxtaposition of perspectives reveals discrepancies and omissions, raising questions about how to understand the source material presented. The editor positions the text in part as an archive of Enrico's life: he claims to have gathered and ordered the sources for the first time and to present them with minimal changes (*NL*, 9–12). An archive might be defined as a repository for source material that is preserved, ordered, grouped and presented for consultation, much like the editor's narrative. However, the text is also presented as a scholarly edition that interprets and evaluates Enrico's documents, complete with editorial clichés: 'Errors in spelling or grammar have been emended without comment' (*NL*, 12). The novel therefore does not fall entirely into the category of an archive, since these interpretative steps and amendments are generally outside the remit of the archivist. Nevertheless, processes of archivization shape the narrative in significant ways, so that it might be described as an archival narrative.

I will use the term 'archival narrative' for a text structured largely or entirely around interplay between different types and levels of sources, and governed by similar processes to an archive. Archives of the GDR come in various forms, from the large official archives of the Stasi and other institutions, which have received the greatest attention from scholars, to smaller private archives collected and organized by individuals, sometimes in secret or in opposition to official archives.¹⁰ These diverse archives are all shaped by power dynamics: as Michel Foucault has argued, processes of archivization ensure that sources 'group themselves together in distinct figurations,

arrange themselves according to their multiple relations with one another, maintain their integrity or blur [*se maintiennent ou s'estompent*] according to their specific regularities'.¹¹ In other words, archivists select and preserve sources while also organizing them within systems of categorization, which can establish the value of a given archival trace or diminish its integrity or individual significance, for example, by merging files. In the case of same-sex desire, dynamics of ordering and collection are combined not just with the possibility that sources 's'estompent' (*fade* or *blur*), but with the potential for the archive or archivist to actively suppress material. In some ways, all narratives depend on processes of selection and organization, but archival narratives are distinguished by their range of sources and their explicit focus on archival processes.

As Schulze's novel indicates, archival narratives stand in a complex relationship to archives. Archivists preserve sources and reveal information, but also relegate some material to less easily accessible sites and even reject or destroy material that cannot be accommodated or that goes against the archive's institutional focus. In many archives, this suppression of material is invisible to the user, whereas narratives may more clearly display acts of suppression. In *Neue Leben*, for example, the rehabilitation of Enrico's stories demonstrates the complex relationship between preservation and suppression in the dynamics of archivization. Like a narrator or autobiographer, many archivists also reserve the right to advance the first interpretation of archival material, and yet these interpretations do not generally become part of the archive itself.¹² An archival narrative can therefore differ from an archive in combining sources with interpretations or evaluations: Schulze's novel presents itself simultaneously as the first collection of Enrico's documents and as an edition with interpretations. Furthermore, an archival narrative is also shaped by the qualities of narration. For example, *Neue Leben* brings the stories and letters into a linear, paginated structure that determines the order in which sources are read. Crucially, an archival narrative can be fictional while still staging the operation of archival dynamics. Schulze creates fictional sources that raise questions of authenticity and demonstrate the layers of text that constitute a life, but he writes these sources with narrative dynamics of suspense and digression in mind, as well as a clear circular structure.

The play with fiction and authenticity is central to Schulze's archival narration, which fragments the story into multiple partial perspectives. He saturates the novel with autobiographical references, with Enrico and the editor both displaying obvious parallels to Schulze's life, beyond just the editor's name.¹³ Before reunification, Enrico is an aspiring writer and dramaturg in Altenburg, like Schulze was. The novel begins with Enrico's depression after the utopian excitement that he and his partner, Michaela, experienced in October and November 1989. His depression only lifts when he renounces

his literary ambitions. Instead of writing literature, he sets up a newspaper, the *Altenburg Weekly News* (*Altenburger Wochenblatt*), and converts it into a more profitable advertising sheet during 1990, almost exactly matching Schulze's own biography.¹⁴ In the novel, the business achieves great success, primarily because of the input of a mysterious Mephistopheles figure, Clemens von Barrista.¹⁵ During this time, Enrico meets and falls in love with Nicoletta and leaves Michaela, who marries Barrista. The novel closes when the letters finish in July 1990, but the editor explains that Enrico later goes bankrupt and disappears at the 'turn of the new year 1997/98' (*NL*, 7), exactly the time when Schulze's previous novel, *Simple Storys*, was published. In the fictional conceit of *Neue Leben*, then, the editor's work occurs in the same time period as the novel's actual production by Schulze.

Parallel to this story, Enrico narrates his upbringing and life in the GDR in letters to Nicoletta, including a substantial section recounting his military service. His attitude to military service is another autobiographical echo, this time of Schulze's hope of finding 'his own unmistakable voice' as a writer while in the NVA (*NL*, 423).¹⁶ In his 2007 Leipzig poetics lecture, Schulze describes his struggles with articulating his identity in relation to military service:

the actual feeling [*das Eigentliche*], the thing that weighed heavy on my soul and had me lying awake long before the alarm, this feeling remained silent. Only on very rare occasions did I experience how satisfying it is to capture in writing something that otherwise remains unspoken and can only be spoken in a story.¹⁷

The difficulties in describing the profound experiences of military service, which Schulze describes as an ineffable 'Eigentliche[s]', dominate many portrayals of the NVA, particularly regarding violence or shame. Schulze's final comment asserts the importance of fiction in expressing what 'otherwise remains unspoken', but despite his confidence in storytelling, he describes his difficulties with the structure of *Neue Leben* in the same lecture.¹⁸ Schulze therefore suggests that military service not only affected his literary negotiations of identity at the time, but also his later efforts to write about military service. Plowman has demonstrated Schulze's particularly playful approach to fictionality and authenticity in sections set in the NVA.¹⁹ The result is a novel less about military service than about someone failing to write about it, and within the narrative Enrico's desires are central to these difficulties.

Same-sex desire in *Neue Leben* has received little attention, despite being a prominent theme, particularly during Enrico's military service, which encapsulates the novel's formal fragmentation and questions around archival narration. Enrico's descriptions of the NVA are particularly diffuse, split

between his letters to Nicoletta and three of his seven stories. Schulze has explicitly described the importance of desire for Enrico's rewriting of his life and for the novel's structure around letters to Vera, Johann and Nicoletta: 'The three addressees ... represent for [Enrico] three possible loves, three different versions of his life [*Lebensentwürfe*].'²⁰ The novel's epistolary structure itself points to the importance of desire: letters actively seek a reader, just as desires often seek reciprocation by an object.²¹ The reciprocal nature of Enrico's desires for all three addressees is always in question: Johann appears never to share Enrico's love; Nicoletta appears not to have responded to Enrico's letters; and his apparently incestuous desire for Vera seems entirely one-sided. Enrico's potentially unrequited desires may partially explain the compulsiveness of his letter writing. More importantly, his relationships with the addressees determine the content of his letters, resulting in inconsistencies and contradictions, which the editor highlights with apparent glee: 'It will not escape the attentive reader that the letter writer Türmer depicts one and the same event in wildly differing versions, depending on the addressee. Evaluating this is not a matter for the editor' (*NL*, 11). Nonetheless, the editor's footnotes do draw attention to these inconsistencies throughout the novel.²²

However, the novel is structured by desire in two further ways, which relate more specifically to Enrico's desire during his service. First, Enrico's letters are shaped by attempts to suppress same-sex desire, particularly in letters to Nicoletta, which rewrite his upbringing within the GDR's institutions. This suppression is clear from comparison with Enrico's stories, which represent queer experiences during military service more clearly, perhaps playing with the potential for greater freedom and distance in fictionalizations of autobiographical experiences. Although the editor suggests that Enrico discarded the stories because of their poor quality, the wider suppression of desire in Enrico's letters suggests that the urge to suppress his transgressive desires may also have been a motivating factor. Second, as suggested by the editor's elevation of the stories to the same narrative plane as Enrico's letters, *Neue Leben* is structured by the attempts of an antagonistic editor to use Enrico's desires against him. He reinstates the stories and instructs the reader to use them, 'from time to time to improve the understanding of matters that are left out or only touched upon in the letters' (*NL*, 11). His footnotes then seize eagerly on inconsistencies and comment on the gaps in Enrico's letters.

Enrico's relationship with Nikolai in the NVA offers the clearest example of the structural influence of Enrico's suppression of same-sex desire on the novel and on his negotiations of identity. Nikolai moves into Enrico's dormitory and he and Enrico become close. Nikolai's name resonates with Nicoletta, perhaps suggesting that Enrico's unrequited love for Nicoletta offers a chance to suppress past desires by writing his affection for Nikolai

out of his biography. Nikolai himself appears in two forms. First, in a letter to Nicoletta, Enrico describes ‘perhaps the most remarkable physiognomy in the company. The end of his long, thin nose pointed harshly downwards and gave his face something of a ram-like quality [*etwas Widderhaftes*]’ (NL, 289). ‘Widderhaft’ also resonates with the more common ‘widerlich’, or ‘repulsive’, underlining the negative and even racialized nature of Enrico’s description of Nikolai, who is half-Armenian. This first description contrasts starkly with Nikolai’s appearance in letters to Vera and Johann as ‘my handsome Nikolai’ and ‘the handsome Armenian’ (NL, 517 and 522). In case the reader misses this inconsistency, the editor adds a footnote to the letter to Vera: ‘This characterization of Nikolai differs substantially from the one T. [Enrico] gave to N.H. [Nicoletta]’ (NL, 517). The editor does not explain the discrepancy, but Enrico’s concern to play down same-sex desire in letters to his new female love interest provides one explanation.

The editor frequently uses footnotes to reveal Enrico’s attempts to suppress his desire for Nikolai in letters to Nicoletta. First, Enrico describes a business relationship, with the two men creating pornographic portraits and love letters for comrades’ girlfriends. However, Enrico supposedly decides after an argument over creative differences ‘not to tolerate him near me in future’ (NL, 294). Nevertheless, as the editor points out, in Enrico’s next letter to Nicoletta, he is already sharing Nikolai’s art studio as a safe space in which to write (NL, 307–8). It is unclear how Nikolai obtained an art studio, as this was hardly standard practice in the NVA, and this episode seems to signal a combination of memory and fantasy. Enrico’s description of young men modelling for Nikolai adds to this impression: ‘you will hardly believe my naivety, but I did find it curious that his models were all very boyish and often confusingly similar looking’ (NL, 308). Only when Enrico makes explicit his naivety, albeit probably feigned, does the editor comment on Enrico’s concealment of his desire: ‘T. attempted, understandably, to conceal his homoerotic relationship with Nikolai, but clearly does not wish to dispense with Nikolai as a character’ (ibid.). The editor highlights and affirms Enrico’s attempts to suppress same-sex desire as ‘understandable’, and points to the tension between concealment and his apparent compulsion to include Nikolai in the narrative of military service. The editor intends to discredit Enrico for his desire, and in doing so reveals Enrico’s attempts to adapt this aspect of his military service in order to reconstruct his masculinity and identity through his epistolary exchange with Nicoletta.

Nikolai’s final appearance in letters to Nicoletta is after military service when the two men holiday together. While Enrico claims ‘I did not know how I would survive these two days with him’, the editor comments: ‘According to matching statements by V.T. [Vera] and Johann Ziehlke, Nikolai and T. seemed like a couple in the early days after the army’ (NL, 313). By quoting

Vera and Johann and drawing out inconsistencies, the editor attempts to give his project more authenticity than Enrico's letters alone, once again demonstrating Schulze's play with fiction and authenticity. Enrico's ambivalence about his attraction to Nikolai and secrecy about the nature of their relationship demonstrate an attempt to reconcile the centrality of same-sex desire to his military experience with the need to suppress it, perhaps due to prohibitions in the NVA and his pursuit of Nicoletta. The editor's footnotes then supplement the letters with other sources of information on Enrico's life, asserting knowledge and therefore power over Enrico as editor, but also as an archivist selecting texts and determining how they should be ordered. The structure of the novel therefore draws attention to Enrico's same-sex desire by foregrounding inaccuracies and incompleteness in Enrico's attempts to rewrite and recontextualize his military service to fit his new masculine values in the 1990s. The interplay between letters and stories, as well as the dialogue between these sources and the editor's interpretative commentary, reveal and refuse Enrico's attempts at suppression. The editor uses this technique to expose, discredit and attack Enrico, with the apparent assumption that the reader will reject his same-sex desire.

In contrast to Schulze's playful fictional text, Wolter's memoir presents itself as an autobiographical, even historical contribution to documenting the NVA. The generic conventions within which the two authors operate are therefore substantially different. Yet despite clear differences in the two texts' relationship to facticity and historical accuracy, Wolter's memoir demonstrates remarkably similar concerns to Schulze's novel, including authenticity, the relationship between sources, and the place of same-sex desire in the NVA and later negotiations of masculinity.

Wolter describes his service as a conscientious objector in an NVA construction unit and focuses especially on his intimate relationship with a fellow *Bausoldat* named Thomas. This text too is governed by archival dynamics of collection, preservation, organization and suppression, but draws on genuine sources from Wolter's military service amassed over his life. He reproduces letters and photographs primarily, but also documents, drawings and poems, which he describes having numbered, grouped together and stored at his parents' house (*HHA*, 18). Wolter supplements these sources with narrative reflections based on his memories. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi has insisted that: 'The documents in an archive are not part of memory; if they were, we should have no need to retrieve them; once retrieved, they are often at odds with memory.'²³ Wolter's archival narrative indicates ways of including memories among more conventional written sources, while retaining the tension that Yerushalmi describes. He uses his memories for an 'unsparing reflection' on the sources, an interpretative step that marks the book as an archival narrative rather than simply a published archive of sources (*HHA*, 32). As in

the editor's critical commentary in *Neue Leben*, Wolter evaluates his sources and dispenses with the idea that archive sources can guarantee authenticity. Rather, the sources documenting his military service are associated with the suppression of his relationship with Thomas.

Another important difference that distinguishes *Hinterm Horizont allein* not only from *Neue Leben*, but also from the other texts I have analysed, is Wolter's focus on *Bausoldaten* rather than soldiers in regular units. He describes his eighteen-month construction service between 1986 and 1988. From 1964, conscientious objectors in the GDR were conscripted into construction units.²⁴ The men still wore military uniforms, lived in barracks and were trained by NVA officers, but were unarmed and worked on infrastructure projects in gruelling conditions. Wolter worked on the harbour in Prora on Rügen. The Prora site was conceived as a National Socialist holiday camp in the 1930s, but was still unfinished when war broke out. During the war, the partially finished constructions housed a police battalion, communications workers and even forced labourers.²⁵ The GDR converted the partially completed buildings into a military base in 1956, and by 1982 they housed the largest contingent of *Bausoldaten*.²⁶ Construction units comprised a higher proportion of political and religious dissidents than other NVA units, meaning that solidarity between conscripts and resistance to the NVA hierarchy are more explicit in *Hinterm Horizont allein* than in other texts. Post-reunification museums and historical accounts initially neglected *Bausoldaten*, and Wolter conceived his book as an urgent and personal contribution to the history of the GDR and of Prora: 'On the life of *Bausoldaten*, there is generally very little information' (*HHA*, 18). Professionally, Wolter is an historian, so his concern for factual accuracy and his detailed attention to the reliability of sources must be understood in the context of the memoir's historical aims.

In light of the substantial generic and contextual differences between *Neue Leben* and *Hinterm Horizont allein*, the similarities between the two texts are compelling. Like *Neue Leben*, Wolter's memoir is structured around interactions between different types of sources. The theme of same-sex desire only emerges from the dialogue between Wolter's memories and the archival material he accumulated after his service. In a prologue, he describes his inspiration to write about his time in Prora after visiting again in 2004. The prologue also describes events before his conscription, interspersing his reflections with photographs from his 2004 trip and documents from 1986: a reproduction of his conscription order and transcriptions of diary entries and letters. Wolter divides the rest of the narrative into chapters by month and depicts in strict chronology the monotony of daily life and his interactions with other *Bausoldaten*. Each chapter begins with Wolter's reflections, followed by transcriptions of the letters he wrote to his family. Photographs

are interspersed throughout the text, along with facsimiles of documents and pages of letters.

In addition to displaying Wolter's collection and organization of material, his alternating structure between reflections and letters directs attention to experiences suppressed from the documents. Rather than using sources to demonstrate the authenticity of his memories, he explicitly identifies the bias in his archive. For example, moments of happiness and natural beauty assume a disproportionate place: 'In my letters, I liked to mention experiences that made life sweeter' (*HHA*, 122). Wolter's reflections thus comment on and supplement the somewhat sanitized portrayal of Prora in his letters. Conventional archival sources become inseparable from their omissions and gaps, and the interplay between these sources and Wolter's reflections structures the entire work. The most prominent omissions in his letters concern his same-sex desire and intimacy. Wolter's reflections present his relationship with Thomas as a positive experience that made his time in Prora more bearable. Yet this experience is almost entirely suppressed by his letters, in which Thomas appears only as a friend.

The clearest example of such an omission is their first kiss. Although a letter from the previous day announces 'I was going to go on day leave with Thomas tomorrow' (*HHA*, 293), Wolter's next letter neglects the evening entirely. Unlike Wolter's other evenings in the local town, his leave on this occasion is omitted from his correspondence with his parents. However, it is described in vivid terms in his reflections. Wolter remembers dancing with Thomas because no girls would dance with them. Wolter's portrayal is extremely intimate: 'Our eyes found each other, having seen so many of the same things [*so viel Gleiches*] of late, and our hands found each other, seeking comfort in sameness [*in Gleichem*]' (*HHA*, 285). Repetition of 'gleich' (*same*) gestures to same-sex desire, but more importantly suggests a relationship of equals and relates their intimacy to their shared experience of Prora and their shared subordination within the NVA hierarchy.

They are eventually ejected from the bar for their physical intimacy: 'We don't need gays here' (*HHA*, 286). When they then stumble and fall walking through the woods on the way back to barracks, they land on top of one another: 'As I felt a hot flush from being so close to someone with whom I had long had an inward connection, I felt a gentle bite on my neck ... Our lips met. Trusting my older friend, I gave way to this tenderness' (*ibid.*). Unlike the heat of anger that rushed through Christian in *Der Turm*, Wolter's flush is a physical manifestation of desire and closeness. He is initially reluctant when Thomas kisses him, before he gives way and experiences a physical and emotional release. The language of these passages is incongruous, using a less matter-of-fact tone than earlier reflections and relating their physical intimacy with great pathos. Wolter's reflections thus reinstate experiences

of desire that were suppressed from his personal archive, while his flush and intense, incongruous prose gesture to physical and emotional qualities that remain unarticulated.

Schulze and Wolter each explore the different ways in which same-sex desire during military service in the NVA can be negotiated as part of ongoing constructions of identity and masculinity through writing. Instead of turning to archival sources to legitimize or support their accounts of military service, they reveal their inadequacies and omissions, which become particularly noticeable in sections describing same-sex desire. *Neue Leben* and *Hinterm Horizont allein* both use archival narration to create a dynamic of suppression, revelation and interpretation that foregrounds the difficulties in reconciling desire and intimacy between soldiers with accounts of military service. As I will go on to discuss, the strategies and motives for focusing on same-sex desire in these texts are contrasting, if not directly contradictory. However, both signal the need for representations of military service to account for the presence of such desire, and to engage with the reasons for and nature of its suppression from archival sources and personal accounts.

Queer Archives and the NVA's Closet

Initially, the association between archive sources and omissions in Wolter's narrative recalls Jacques Derrida's prominent discussion of suppression in the functioning of archives. Derrida describes archival structures in psychoanalytic terms as an interplay between disorderly and contradictory drives: an archive drive to recover and preserve and a destruction drive, associated with the loss that occurs when something is articulated. These drives produce a mania that he calls 'archive fever' or 'mal d'archive'. Material that is not preserved, he argues, is not simply repressed, which would amount to archivization in the unconscious, but suppressed, a more conscious and destructive silencing.²⁷ Derrida's essay does not differentiate particularly between different forms of archive, and although his model offers a productive way into a more personal archive like Wolter's or a fictional case like Enrico's, an application of Derrida's analysis requires some qualification. As the archive of an individual, Wolter's can plausibly be understood in terms of individual drives and compulsions, and it is equally possible to extend psychoanalytic interpretations to the archival relationship between Schulze's editor and Enrico. Yet the suppression of experiences of desire and intimacy in sources across both texts cannot be solely accounted for in terms of the archive's structural dynamics, even where these relate to the psychology of an individual. The wider context must be considered, as the expression of same-sex desire in the

NVA and after reunification is circumscribed in specific ways that influence the appearance of desire and intimacy in the two narratives.

There are a number of potential reasons for Wolter's suppression of same-sex intimacy in his letters during military service. Conscripts could never be sure whether their post was being read by officers, which in fact seems to have been unusual, or the Stasi, which was very common.²⁸ Wolter may have worried about repercussions if his commanders discovered his relationship with Thomas by reading his letters. Yet elsewhere the letters describe his working conditions at length, despite the prohibition on describing military installations, so the omissions of his same-sex desire from letters cannot be explained by fear of punishment alone. More probably, same-sex desire is suppressed because of wider prohibitions on homosexuality in GDR society, which are exacerbated by the fact that Wolter's family was religious and did not accept homosexuality: 'In Eisenach, in my religious circles, there was no place for that' (*HHA*, 42). In this context, Wolter's letters may well have suppressed same-sex desire even if he had not been a *Bausoldat* at the time.

Yet the highly normative context of the NVA appears to intensify Wolter's fear of leaving traces of same-sex desire. The military was seemingly more concerned than wider society to prosecute homosexuality, with its leaders vigorously opposing the GDR's liberalization of antihomosexuality laws when prosecutions were effectively stopped in the 1950s and homosexuality was finally legalized in 1968.²⁹ Even after decriminalization, homosexuals were considered unsuitable for military careers and were routinely dismissed.³⁰ Yet institutional archives reveal that same-sex desire was by no means ignored; homosexual acts, at least, were discussed extensively in official investigations into soldiers suspected of homosexuality.³¹ After a 1988 reform established legal parity between homosexuality and heterosexuality, the military even issued secret guidelines on surreptitiously circumnavigating the law to continue dismissing homosexuals from full-time military careers.³² Wolter's reflections repeatedly place his relationship with Thomas in the context of the NVA's rejection of homosexuality. Even though he and Thomas find space to express their desire, this is always in hidden, unobserved places: 'Whenever we were alone, one of us would take the other into a dark corner, where we would embrace, unnoticed by the others' (*HHA*, 288). Wolter thus foregrounds the difficulties in expressing same-sex desire in the construction unit and relates them to his struggle to integrate his relationship with Thomas into his account of his service and his later identity.

The NVA's prohibitions on same-sex desire appear less central to *Neue Leben*, perhaps due to the novel's fictional nature: Schulze playfully combines realistic and fantastical elements, as in Enrico's relationship with Nikolai, without the concern for historical accuracy that shapes Wolter's memoir.

However, the fact that Enrico's letters are written in the first half of 1990 is significant. By early 1990, queer East Germans not only had legal parity with heterosexuals, they could also travel freely and experience the Western gay and lesbian scene.³³ One might therefore expect Enrico's stories, supposedly begun during or shortly after military service, to conceal and suppress same-sex desire, and for his letters to reveal these omissions retrospectively. Yet the dynamics of suppression in *Neue Leben* are precisely the opposite of those in *Hinterm Horizont allein*. Wolter's letters are written at the time of his service and his post-reunification treatment of his military service reveals and compensates for the desires suppressed in his letters. Although Enrico's letters also suppress same-sex desires, they are written after reunification as a revision of his more candid, albeit fictionalized, representations of desire in his stories. This difference highlights the generic differences between the short story, the letter and the memoir. Like Wolter's letters, Enrico's present a partial and edited view of himself that depends on the recipient and the intended effect. However, unlike Wolter's reflections, which attempt to present a truer version of his construction service, the layers of fictionalization in Enrico's stories mean that they offer only an oblique view of his desires, even when parallels to his own experiences are obvious.

Whereas Wolter explores his desires in the openness of post-reunification Germany, Schulze sets Enrico's suppression of his desires in the context of his reinvention of himself as a businessman. His life in 1990 is dominated by environments associated with hegemonic capitalist masculinities. He takes his sister to Monte Carlo on Barrista's insistence, for example, where she is given a menu without prices in it, presenting the ostentatious display of wealth and generosity towards women as masculine traits (*NL*, 381). Even Enrico's love for Nicoletta is part of these negotiations of capitalist masculinities, given that she is a successful Westerner whom Enrico is keen to impress. Enrico thus uses his letters to reconcile his life in the GDR with his capitalist aspirations in the early stages of reunification, and his same-sex desire seems as difficult to reconcile with ideal masculinities in Western capitalism as it was with the NVA's military masculine ideal.

The suppression of same-sex desire in *Neue Leben* and *Hinterm Horizont allein* must therefore be interpreted in the context of wider prohibitions in the GDR, which act alongside and through the archival dynamics of suppression described by Derrida. In the two narratives, prohibitions on the expression of same-sex desire appear to be internalized and the desire closeted. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, however, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick emphasizes the interplay between this internalized need to suppress queer desires and the spaces and freedoms that the closet can create.³⁴ The queer subject engages in recurring, performative acts of concealment or coming out, and others also participate in this play of knowledge and ignorance by exposing or refusing

to acknowledge queer desires.³⁵ The workings of knowledge and power in Sedgwick's concept coalesce around the figure of the 'glass closet':

The glass closet can license insult ('I'd never have said those things if I'd *known* you were gay!' – yeah, sure); it can also license far warmer relations, but (and) relations whose potential for exploitiveness is built into the optics of the asymmetrical, the specularized, and the inexplicit.³⁶

Sedgwick's metaphor emphasizes the power imbalances implied by the open secret of same-sex desire, as the walls of the closet can be more or less transparent. By describing relations centred on 'the inexplicit', she relates these power imbalances to uncertainties around evidence of queer desires: these uncertainties generate space for same-sex intimacies by protecting them from prohibitions, but they also present difficulties for the documentation and articulation of same-sex desires in narratives such as Schulze's and Wolter's.

The closet governing same-sex desire in the NVA and wider GDR society is thus an important structuring factor in Schulze's and Wolter's archival narratives. The uniquely fraught place of same-sex desire within archival structures has been explored by the queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz, whose work helps illuminate the particular combination of closet and archival dynamics in *Neue Leben* and *Hinterm Horizont allein*. According to Muñoz,

leaving too much of a trace has often meant that the queer subject has left herself open for attack. Instead of being clearly available as visible evidence, queerness has instead existed as innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments, and performances that are meant to be interacted with by those within its epistemological sphere.³⁷

For him, the expression and archivization of queerness are shaped by danger: rather than simply suppressing or effacing queer desire, as Derrida's model might suggest, archivization enables evidence to be mobilized against the queer subject. This danger shows how archives and their structures of revelation and concealment are complicit in, and yet also shaped by, the exploitation of knowledge and ignorance that defines the power of the closet.

Neue Leben could therefore be seen as a representation of the danger of 'attack'. Enrico's repeated fictionalization and suppression of his same-sex desire is an attempt to sustain a closet around his desires, which transfers the closet's dynamic of concealment and revelation to the writings he leaves when he disappears. The editor exploits the glass walls of this closet by scouring the sources for evidence of Enrico's indiscretions, especially highlighting his attempts to suppress his same-sex desire. More urgently than in Enrico's fictional case, Wolter's suppression of same-sex desire in his letters is one response to the danger that any textual trace of his relationship with

Thomas might be used to punish him and to define his sexual identity against his wishes. However, Wolter's archival narrative in fact suggests ways of acknowledging this suppression while negotiating a post-reunification masculinity that allows space for queer experiences as well as memories of military service. The dynamics of both texts are set in motion by the closeting of same-sex desire during military service, but the negotiations of masculinity and desire appear to be sustained by the lasting effects of closet dynamics once transferred to archival traces of military service.

Ingo Schulze, *Neue Leben* (2005)

Chronologically, Enrico's first narrative negotiations of his masculinity take the form of short stories, which the editor appends to the letters and which epitomize the dynamic of suppression and revelation that characterizes both the archive and the closet. The stories contain the clearest evidence of Enrico's same-sex desire and are the height of Schulze's structural play. Five of the seven stories deal with military themes: 'Schnitzeljagd' ('Schnitzel Hunt') describes a military-style manoeuvre in a GDR youth organization, 'Titus Holm' describes a schoolboy's failure to resist conscription and 'Jahrhundertsommer' ('Summer Heatwave'), 'Der Spitzel' ('The Snitch') and 'Letzte Übung' ('Last Exercise') describe military service directly. Within the stories, Enrico is fragmented into numerous alter egos, so that the close relationship between Enrico's fictional protagonists and his own biography mimics his fictionalized biographical links with Schulze. The stories also contribute to Schulze's play with aspects of his own biography: 'Titus Holm' began as a draft novella dealing with Schulze's schooldays (*NL*, 699–782).³⁸ Schulze thus foregrounds his fictionalization of his biography and draws attention to the potential consequences of Enrico's own efforts to convert his experiences into fiction. The stories demonstrate Enrico's attempts to fragment his identity and to absolve himself of certain traits and desires by projecting them onto his characters. In addition to practising writing to develop 'his own unmistakable voice' (*NL*, 423), Enrico uses fiction at once to explore and suppress desires that arose during military service. 'Jahrhundertsommer' and 'Der Spitzel' offer the most productive examples of Enrico's fictional negotiations of same-sex desire, which are echoed in the events described in the letters.

'Jahrhundertsommer' suggests that underlying the homosocial relationship between two conscripts is latent desire, which expresses itself in the projection of effeminacy onto a third conscript and ends with an orgasmic simulation of sex (*NL*, 667–72). The two conscripts, Vischer and Salwitzky, are alone in the dormitory and Vischer is writing at the window. The two accuse each other of desiring a younger conscript, referred to only as 'Rosi' and 'd[ie] Tunte', a

usually insulting word similar to 'queen' or 'sissy' in connotation (*NL*, 670). The young conscript apparently gave massages to the men, who now argue over who enjoyed them more. Salwitzky accuses Vischer: 'I saw how you were lying here and couldn't control yourself anymore' (*ibid.*). Salwitzky also accuses Vischer of 'moaning all over the place' and of masturbating afterwards. Vischer counters that Salwitzky was even more 'excited to be massaged by Rosi' (*ibid.*). Despite their insulting language, the figure of Rosi suggests that physical intimacy and the young conscript's perceived queerness are accepted by the two other characters. Rosi's feminine name and their loud and vehement protestations may even allow this intimacy to be enjoyed tacitly.

In a queering of Sedgwick's analysis of relationship triangles to demonstrate the homosocial desire that operates between men, Schulze has Enrico depict Vischer and Salwitzky using their argument over Rosi to assert their own adherence to military ideals and their dominance over one another.³⁹ Their dialogue implies that loss of self-control is more damaging to the men's abilities to conform to an ideal military masculinity than physical intimacy with Rosi. However, sexual desire is entirely rejected: accusations of groaning, masturbating and arousal are used to accuse the other of not living up to standards of homosocial masculinity. Yet Sedgwick suggests that homosocial desire between men is intimately bound up with their assertions of power over one another and, collectively, over women.⁴⁰ By transferring femininity onto the absent Rosi, Vischer and Salwitzky sublimate their latent desire for each other into an argument over who desired Rosi most. The text only hints that they watched each other being massaged, but this implication adds to the suggestion of eroticism between the two conscripts.

The end of 'Jahrhundertsommer' appears to confirm and externalize this latent desire. Salwitzky rocks his bunk and pushes against the top mattress with his feet, repeatedly shouting 'Rosi, you bitch [*Sau!*]' as the bed rocks, squeaks and ultimately collapses (*NL*, 671). The scene transforms the implications of the men's arguments – that they desire Rosi or each other sexually – into a loud, destructive mock sex scene. Rosi's presence in the story demonstrates the failure of the insults and accusations in 'Jahrhundertsommer' to truly establish the soldiers' adherence to the military's strongly heterosexual masculine ideals. Nor does transferring queerness onto Rosi allow the two to closet their desire for one another, which is revealed in Salwitzky's exaggerated sexual pantomime.

'Der Spitzel' is another example of displaced same-sex desire and sexual pleasure, this time with narrative perspective playing a greater role in suggesting eroticism (*NL*, 673–81). The third-person narrative is focalized through the perspective of Edgar, a conscript cleaning the floor of the barracks corridor on Christmas Eve. In one dormitory, a crowd of men are watching the punishment of a suspected informant, referred to only as 'snitch' or 'Spitzel',

a word for a Stasi informant. Edgar describes how the conscript's writing and note-taking drew the attention of an older conscript, Mehnert, who planned the attack apparently out of a mixture of suspicion and anti-intellectualism: 'you know so many words, intellectual words, lovely little snitch words' (*NL*, 674). Edgar overhears Mehnert and the assembled crowd interrogating the conscript, insulting him by highlighting his weakness – 'he's just going to start blubbing' (*NL*, 675) – and suggesting homosexuality: 'He only gets letters, Mehnert said, from his mother and from a guy' (*NL*, 679). Intellectualism, emotional weakness and a lack of a girlfriend are all ways in which the alleged 'snitch' has failed to live up to military ideals, and this deviation from ideal masculinity seems to motivate the punishment more than his note-taking.

The physical and sexual abuse of the 'snitch' is described through Edgar's perspective, which is limited due to the men's jeering and his viewpoint from the corridor where he is still polishing the floorboards. First, he hears the young conscript being forced to eat his notes. After this point, Edgar no longer hears what is going on, but as he polishes with an ever-quicker rhythm, he imagines the sexual abuse according to the graphic details of Mehnert's original plan. He imagines the 'snitch' being stripped and tied to a bed while his buttocks are coated with shoe polish and buffed with shoe brushes. Finally, 'Mehnert was going to "milk the snitch"' by stimulating his penis with the brushes (*NL*, 680). Plowman has linked Edgar's 'masturbatory frenzy' here to the 'pleasure of furtive observation'.⁴¹ Edgar's pleasure gradually ceases to be the pleasure of the voyeur and becomes that of the sadomasochistic fantasist as he increasingly cannot see or hear the beating. Edgar's rhythmic buffing of the floor with his own brush suggests sadistic pleasure in imitating the humiliation of the 'snitch' and imagining himself as the aggressor. This sadistic fantasy alternates with suggestions of an eroticized admiration of Mehnert 'in the role of his life', a metaphor that draws on the motif of performance and theatricality discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 (*NL*, 679). Edgar even displays masochistic envy of and desire for the 'snitch': 'The snitch came out of the room. The snitch did not seem angry or furious, not even sad. The snitch had not cried out, he had not even cried' (*NL*, 681). Edgar stops spellbound and repeats 'the snitch', apparently in admiration of the man's calm acquiescence to humiliation and the silent power of his abject position.

The dynamics of same-sex desire in these two stories are complex and based on rejection, disidentification and abjection. Enrico's use of the fictional mode allows these desires to be expressed without them being clearly attributed to him. However, his short fiction is a site not only of expression of these desires but also of the repeated violent suppression of same-sex desire and queerness. The insults of 'Jahrhundertsommer' and the humiliation of 'Der Spitzel' perform the suppression associated with the closet, even as fiction opens up the spaces for queer desires that Sedgwick describes.

However, in early 1990, when Enrico abandons his identity as a dissident and a writer, the stories themselves are overwritten and rendered abject within the archive of Enrico's writings. By writing on the reverse of the stories, Enrico conceals the desires they reveal within the archival traces of his life, while reinterpreting his military service in letters to Nicoletta on the other side. The stories are suppressed, and yet writing on the reverse ensures that they remain inseparable from Enrico's epistolary reimagining of his life. His act of concealment preserves the stories as an alternative archive, recalling Derrida's discussion of virtual archives, archives that might have been, which are created by the suppression of material within the archive.⁴²

Enrico's drive to write letters bears evidence of a 'mal d'archive', as he manically rewrites his GDR past, suppressing previous versions in the process. Enrico's depression and writer's block in early 1990 stem from the loss of his ambitions and purpose, parodying the 'Furor melancholicus' attributed to GDR intellectuals after their hopes for a reformed GDR socialism collapsed: 'What was I, a writer, to do without the wall?' (*NL*, 447).⁴³ Enrico emerges from his depression with an epiphany, realizing 'I did not have to write or read anything anymore' (*NL*, 653), while converting his authorial energies into frantic letter writing. The tensions in Derrida's concept of 'mal d'archive' are encapsulated in the irony that this decision not to write resulted in the eighty-one letters compiled by the editor. Just like Derrida's archive drive, Enrico's drive to write furthers the suppression of his past, despite creating more layers of documentation.

Enrico's suppression of his past identity, by turning the stories over to produce a blank page on which to renegotiate his identity, is further ironized by a scene of exaggerated pathetic fallacy. In his first letter, in which he describes renouncing his literary ambitions, a snowfall covers the landscape with white, submerging and effacing the past and prompting a desire for renewal and reinvention.⁴⁴ As Enrico writes, 'we now had the white field in front and the grey-pink sky above us' (*NL*, 13). The snow symbolism exemplifies the dynamic of suppression and documentation that defines Derrida's 'mal d'archive', which this scene relates most clearly to Enrico's negotiations of identity. The scene is described to Vera in the novel's first letter and to Nicoletta in the final letter, completing a narrative circle. Whereas Enrico's exaggerated pain when hit by a snowball makes him seem weak and pathetic in the letter to Vera, his letter to Nicoletta reinvents his tears as tears of joy, in line with his attempts to present a more hegemonic masculinity. Enrico's compulsive renegotiation of his identity is thus framed through the twin metaphor of the snowfall and the blank page, and yet these letters preserve his past on the reverse of the paper.

Enrico's descriptions of military service in letters to Nicoletta most clearly demonstrate that suppressing same-sex desire is central to his ongoing

negotiations of masculinity. Enrico's descriptions of his abuse by Knut, the senior soldier in Enrico's dormitory, clearly present revised versions of scenes in his stories. These letters suggest that Enrico's stories were not just fictionalized experiments, but were also based on his experiences during military service. His desires are largely suppressed within the letters, leaving only occasional traces. Enrico describes a nocturnal scuffle with Knut that 'shattered my idyll', referring to the space he had created in bed at night for writing letters and studies for his stories (*NL*, 284). His letters bear occasional traces of desire for Knut, who is described with awe as 'a remarkably small, but powerful man, weightlifter in one of the lighter classes' (*ibid.*). Knut, who sleeps in the bed below him, returns drunk from leave and begins kicking Enrico's mattress, eventually hurling him out of bed. Enrico seems to delight in subordinating himself to Knut, describing their scuffle as a role play of rank difference: 'This time, too, Knut was playing the Major again' (*ibid.*). Enrico even provokes Knut by insulting him, resulting in a fight. Enrico's description shows him as defiant and fearless, qualities in line with the masculinity that his letters attempt to construct, but he also appears to take pleasure in fighting Knut. This episode recalls 'Jahrhundertsommer', except the clear sexual undertones of Salwitzky's violent rocking of the bed are gone in Enrico's letters, which suppress the potentially homoerotic nature of the events.

Enrico next describes Knut appearing on Christmas Eve with a group of conscripts, accusing Enrico of being an informant. Knut has seized Enrico's notes on a conversation between two soldiers, which Enrico describes to Nicoletta as research for his writing: 'dialogues, as I say, were my weakness' (*ibid.*). Enrico's comrades shout 'snitch' as Knut reads out Enrico's notes and makes gay jibes: 'What kind of friend was I writing to' (*NL*, 288). Enrico indicates that he is beaten, thrown to the floor and someone shouts: 'In his nuts!' (*ibid.*). Yet he stops short of depicting the violence. Despite having promised to Nicoletta 'to describe something for you that I have always kept secret until now', Enrico breaks off his narrative: 'I will spare you what happened next. You and me' (*NL*, 286 and 288). Enrico's beating is explicitly suppressed, but the episode clearly recalls 'Der Spitzel', which suggests once again that Enrico's stories may be fictionalized or fantasized interpretations of his experiences. The letter retains hints, such as the shout for Enrico to be kicked in the testicles, that Enrico's beating involved sexual abuse and humiliation like that described in 'Der Spitzel'. Enrico also gestures to an abject pleasure in the beating that mirrors the calmness of the 'snitch' in the story: 'with my sensitivity to pain, the anger came back too and a euphoric feeling of freedom' (*NL*, 288). The letter is elliptical, concealing the beating and any abject desire, yet enough evidence remains to suggest the suppression of both.

Enrico's letters thus closet his desire more completely than his stories, but still create space for revealing eroticism and desire. The relegation of clearer explorations of same-sex desire to the reverse of the paper visualizes Enrico's attempts to overwrite more transgressive desires. His letters represent an attempt to narrate such episodes in a way that renders them compatible with the hegemonic capitalist masculinity that he attempts to construct in 1990. The archive that the editor compiles and edits does not provide any coherent image of what happened to Enrico. However, the interplay between two parallel versions foregrounds the differences between the accounts and therefore also Enrico's repeated creation of different versions of himself in an attempt to negotiate his desires and various masculine ideals. Enrico presents same-sex desire, homoeroticism and even sadomasochism as central features of the military environment, even as his accounts suppress these desires through fictionalization and omission. His archive sources thus take on closet dynamics of concealment, potentially creating space for transgressive desires, but also attempting to protect them from scrutiny.

The open secret of Enrico's desire and his inability to control the metaphorical transparency of the closet walls is clear in the editor's scrutiny of Enrico's sources. The editor refuses Enrico's division of the stories and the letters by appending them after the letters and imposing linearity, although including them in an appendix also separates Enrico's two attempts to narrate his life more completely than in their original form. The fictional material suppressed by Enrico is recontextualized as a subsidiary part of the editor's archive of Enrico's life, foregrounding the differences and interaction between layers of the archival narrative. Appending the short stories also emphasizes military service, which is only the subject of a handful of letters, but the overriding theme of the stories. However, the editor's approach to same-sex desire goes beyond simply revealing the dialogue between archival layers. He exploits the metaphorical glass walls of the closet Enrico constructs around his desire, drawing attention to same-sex desire in the sources in order to attack Enrico in the way Muñoz describes.

The power dynamic between the editor and Enrico reveals a further 'mal d'archive' that structures the text and even points to desire between the editor and Enrico. The editor describes his frantic research in the foreword, apparently motivated by Enrico's disappearance. Schulze's conceit suggests a different sort of 'mal d'archive', in which the disappearance requires the archivist to take over continued reinterpretations of the author's life and work. The editor continually negotiates his own identity in relation to Enrico's, so that the finished novel ultimately represents a comment on the editor's identity more than a final word on Enrico's. Their personal relationship is one source of the editor's claim to authority: he introduces himself as a former schoolmate of 'the unremarkable Enrico, with whom I had once played football and sung

in a choir' (*NL*, 7). However, the text suggests more than a neutral acquaintance. The editor's references to his own minor place in the story make him seem fascinated by Enrico. For example, when Enrico describes receiving army stories to read from one of Vera's admirers, the editor comments: 'I would have liked to learn T.'s verdict on my texts, which he does not mention again in the following' (*NL*, 315). He thus reveals himself as an admirer not only of Vera, but also of Enrico. The relationship between Enrico and the editor might even be compared to Vischer and Salwitzky's relationship in 'Jahrhundersommer', with their antagonism and their mutual love for Vera externalizing their homosocial desire. The narrative is thus structured both by the drives that shape Derrida's conception of the archive and by attempts by the editor to suppress his own admiration of Enrico by attacking him and exposing his same-sex desire.

In *Neue Leben*, Schulze depicts Enrico and the editor negotiating identities after reunification, in which experiences of military service play an important role. As in Scholz's interviews with East German men, conscription appears to be a source of biographical instability to be reconciled with post-reunification masculinities.⁴⁵ Enrico's same-sex desire appears to be the aspect of his military service that fits most uneasily with the military's ideals of masculinity. Yet, as with his intellectualism and artistic ambitions, he appears to have found space to express these desires in his partnership with Nikolai, his masochistic fantasies about Knut, and his writing. Enrico's desires are suppressed through fictionalization during and shortly after military service, but this suppression is redoubled in 1990 as Enrico reassesses his identity in the capitalist present. Focusing on Enrico's erotic fantasies and intimate relationships also reveals that desire structures and motivates the editor's work assembling and interpreting Enrico's archive. The novel shows how prohibitions and closet dynamics that govern expressions of same-sex desire are transferred to archival sources through layers of suppression. At the same time, in line with Sedgwick's discussion of the closet, Schulze's novel explores ways in which this suppression can make space for more limited expressions of desire in the text and in negotiations of masculinity.

Stefan Wolter, *Hinterm Horizont allein – Der 'Prinz' von Prora: Erfahrungen eines NVA-Bausoldaten* (2005)

In *Neue Leben*, the editor's approach to same-sex desire is generally censorious, and perpetuates and augments the closet surrounding Enrico's desire by attacking him. This strategy recalls Muñoz's description of the dangers of archival evidence for queer subjects, and yet Muñoz also suggests ways in which archives or, by extension, archival narratives might make space for

queer experience. He sets out a concept of 'queer evidence: an evidence that has been queered in relation to the laws of what counts as proof'.⁴⁶ As a fictional text, *Neue Leben* is less bound by ideas of 'proof', but nonetheless plays with this relationship between evidence and proof, disrupting any association between written sources and proof of same-sex desire. Muñoz suggests that queer evidence might entail a combination of conventional archival documents and ephemeral forms of evidence. In *Cruising Utopia* (2009), he analyses gesture and dance, and his earlier emphasis on 'innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments, and performances that are meant to be interacted with' points to further forms that ephemera might take.⁴⁷ The memories that are so central to *Hinterm Horizont allein*, for example, might also be considered ephemeral evidence. Interaction is also central to Muñoz's concept of the archive, and the interaction between sources that revealed the suppression of same-sex desire in the fictional example of *Neue Leben* could draw critical attention to the influence of closet structures on evidence and archivization in an autobiographical archival narrative like *Hinterm Horizont allein*. Wolter's memoir combines conventional archive sources with reflections on his memories, and suggests queer approaches to evidence, the past and the military's masculine ideals.

One decidedly queer approach to military masculinity in Wolter's memoir is his reclaiming of his nickname. Comrades called him 'Prince' to mock his supposedly affected behaviour and the preferential treatment he received, because of a medical assessment that exempted him from drill and ensured he was allocated less manual labour. His comrades even feminized the nickname as 'Princess and the Pea' or 'Princess Stefanie', a reference to the recent single by Princess Stéphanie of Monaco (*HHA*, 114, 157 and 207–8). This use of feminine nicknames also recalls the character Rosi in Enrico's story 'Jahrhundertsommer'. Although the quotation marks in the subtitle, *Der 'Prinz' von Prora*, might recall Wolter's comrades' mocking, they also signal an ironic performance of the nickname's positive connotations and an assertive refusal of the feminized form 'Princess'. Wolter's reflections recast the name in a positive light, notably when, curled up with Thomas, he feels like 'a little prince' (*HHA*, 199). Wolter thus suggests mastery over his experiences through his confident self-fashioning as 'Prince of Prora'.

Wolter also depicts and reclaims certain affectations that elicited his comrades' mocking by including photographs in which his poses exude confidence and care for his appearance. In the cover image, he displays a confident individuality, with a sideways glance towards the camera and the collar popped up on his coat (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2). This creative touch to the NVA uniform was an attempt to personalize it, which comrades appear to have mocked as an affectation. For the cover of the book (Figure 6.2), the background is cropped out of the original image and the frame is tightened



Figure 6.1 With his raised collar, Wolter looks confidently into the camera on the beach on Rügen. From the author's collection. © Stefan Stadtherr Wolter. Used with permission.

to create a medium shot that focuses more directly on Wolter's face and upper body. By removing his image from its original context and superimposing it onto the blue background, the book's photographic editing techniques model the collage techniques of the book itself, which re-create and recontextualize Wolter's experiences of military service. A shadow effect draws attention to these editing techniques, framing Wolter's body and making it stand out from the background colours. A similar image of Wolter with three other soldiers on the beach further emphasizes his self-awareness: he is the only one who appears to be posing for the camera (see Figure 6.3). Rather than looking at the swan, he turns his profile looking out to sea, again with his signature raised collar. The shot's canted angle draws attention to Wolter's figure: the diagonal lines of the horizon, the shoreline and the men's caps intersect at Wolter's head, placing him at the centre of the composition. Photographs of him posing playfully like this display his maintenance of

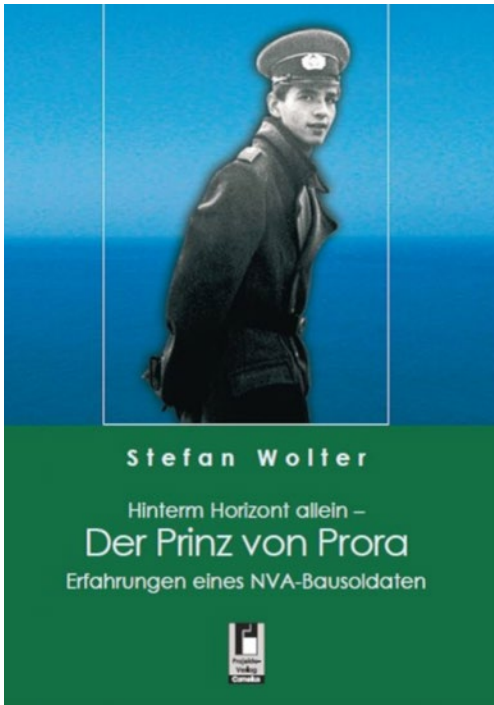


Figure 6.2 Reframed and refocused, Wolter's cover image draws attention to his collage techniques in *Hinterm Horizont allein* (2005). © Stefan Stadtherr Wolter. Used with permission.



Figure 6.3 The canted angle and the shoreline place Wolter's profile at the centre of this image from *Hinterm Horizont allein* (2005). © Stefan Stadtherr Wolter. Used with permission.

individuality and self-expression, turning previously ridiculed behaviour into performative and potentially subversive resistance to the NVA's attempts at imposing ideal masculinities on its conscripts.

In line with the confident reclaiming of the 'Prince' nickname, Wolter's memoir presents at first glance a coherent development that leads from

his initial naivety to his acceptance of his desires. This narrative appears to be initiated by military service and continues in the more open post-reunification environment. Wolter's prologue mentions Thomas four times without explaining their relationship, which suggests that the whole narrative emanates from these spontaneous recollections. Wolter's relationship with his best friend, Andreas, which in his sister's view made 'a gay impression' (*HHA*, 42), is then used to suggest a predisposition to intimate male-male friendship, as Wolter himself later comments.⁴⁸ On entering the NVA, he believes that same-sex desire has 'no justification for existence' (*HHA*, 120), but exposure to gay and bisexual *Bausoldaten* challenges his views. His kiss with Thomas is a turning point, demonstrating Wolter's acceptance of his same-sex desire. Wolter's development could be viewed as a coming-out narrative, culminating in the publication of *Hinterm Horizont allein*. However, this interpretation oversimplifies Wolter's engagement with same-sex desire in the memoir. *Hinterm Horizont allein* is not a simple revision of the archive to accommodate same-sex desire; rather, his reflections perform and show the continuing impact of closet dynamics.

For example, Wolter's depiction of other conscripts demonstrates how closet dynamics vary across narrative layers. His ambivalent depiction of an openly gay comrade, Jan, is one such case. Wolter's letters describe Jan in homophobic tones that reinforce prohibitions on same-sex desire: 'Our little gay is sleeping in a corner. Michael and I avoid him as much as possible' (*HHA*, 129). Wolter's reflections complicate this picture, explaining how Jan pursued him, but also confessing to having played with Jan's desire: 'He played with me and I with him' (*HHA*, 120). Wolter even envies Jan for one consequence of the NVA's prohibitions on same-sex desire: 'Because Jan was openly gay, he was ... one of the few who were excused from showers ... That seemed enviable' (*ibid.*). Jan's case demonstrates that closet dynamics in Wolter's unit both suppressed and provided space for queer desires, in line with Sedgwick's definition.

Jan's openness provokes both censure and playful homoeroticism from Wolter and, surprisingly even in the late 1980s, the NVA does not dismiss Jan, but tacitly tolerates his desires in all contexts other than the communal showers. Wolter does not discuss whether toleration of Jan simply reflects the fact that dismissal or demotion was impossible because *Bausoldaten* were already the lowest rung of NVA hierarchies, although Bernd Eisenfeld and Peter Schicketanz have described the NVA's tendency to punish *Bausoldaten* by moving them large distances to different bases.⁴⁹ Construction units also differed from regular NVA units because they were comprised of political or religious dissidents, and the limited toleration of Jan may suggest that they also included more gay or bisexual men in the late 1980s. Yet Wolter's intolerance of Jan in his letters demonstrates that the atmosphere in these

units was still not tolerant of same-sex desire. By supplementing his earlier insults with more empathetic reflections, Wolter perhaps atones for imposing a closet on Jan in his letters. He presents Jan, a conscript who explicitly identifies as gay, while maintaining greater ambiguity around his own identity and resisting categorizing himself or Thomas. This contrast demonstrates the relational quality of closet dynamics, whereby space for indeterminacy is created for Wolter's sexual identity and relationship by comparison with Jan's more clearly defined identity.

The interplay between closet and archival dynamics in the narrative results in layers of suppression that structure the narrative. The letters that Wolter includes hardly acknowledge his relationship with Thomas, and yet he occasionally quotes from other letters, particularly to Andreas. The quotations demonstrate that the narrative deliberately excludes other letters that Wolter has preserved. His letters to Andreas discuss the sexualities of other *Bausoldaten* with greater candour. As Wolter remarks in his reflections, this was 'a subject, I gradually realized, which I would not be able to cheat my way past for long' (*HHA*, 95). Wolter also includes facsimiles of a single page from his letters after each month's chapter. The facsimiles show only minor differences from the transcribed versions collated in each chapter, demonstrating a process of editing and alteration that nonetheless preserves the meaning of the letters, at least in the examples Wolter includes. The inclusion of facsimiles shows that the transcription of letters produced a rewritten version, which nonetheless appears faithful to the original. This process of revision is intensified in Wolter's reflections, which stand alongside the letters but also elucidate them and influence their interpretation. The potential readings and meanings suggested in the letters themselves are thus superseded by a more authoritative interpretation of events, similar to Enrico's rewriting of his past in letters to Nicoletta. The archival dynamics of the narrative are thus not limited to collection and preservation. Rather, the text demonstrates a careful process of selection and rejection of material that resembles the work of an archivist, as well as repeated attempts to rewrite and influence the meanings of sources, which marks Wolter's text out as an archival narrative.

The memoir's complex structure, with its layers of selection and rewriting, is intensified in a second volume documenting its reception, entitled *Der 'Prinz von Prora' im Spiegel der Kritik* (*The 'Prince of Prora' Reflected in Criticism*, 2007). This later text is structured similarly to *Hinterm Horizont allein*, but makes more explicit the impact of closet dynamics and Wolter's anxiety regarding same-sex desire on his repeated suppression and rewriting of experiences. As with Enrico's and the editor's writing in *Neue Leben*, Wolter's anxiety might be conceptualized with Derrida as a 'mal d'archive'. In a later volume, Wolter writes that losing influence over interpretations of his text after publication gave him panic attacks: 'The book ... had contributed

to finding peace with Prora. But finding peace with the book itself was a more difficult matter.⁵⁰ The loss of control over his text appears to have prompted a drive to write about his story further to engage with and shape its reception. Same-sex desire is the primary object of Wolter's anxiety: 'My greatest worry was that the story with Thomas could distract from the political force of the book and it could become too personal.'⁵¹ Wolter even describes giving an interview after the publication of *Hinterm Horizont allein* in which he denied any relationship beyond 'intellectual and spiritual intimacy'.⁵² However, in remembering this interview, Wolter reasserts the importance of his physical intimacy with Thomas: 'In fact, it was precisely the physical intimacy that helped with so much.'⁵³ His later engagement with his memoir thus reveals multiple, recurring acts of coming out, repeatedly explaining and contextualizing the place of same-sex desire within his military service and his masculine identity. His desire for and intimacy with Thomas is by turns affirmed and downplayed, and Wolter continues to explore ways of representing this desire and negotiating a place for it in his present identity.

The autobiographical nature of *Hinterm Horizont allein* allows historical conclusions that were not possible from Schulze's fictional archival narrative. Wolter reveals that in some cases, conscripts and commanding officers were aware of desire and intimacy between soldiers. In Wolter's case, a same-sex relationship was even integral to making military service more bearable. This single portrayal cannot be representative, particularly since *Bausoldaten* were already outsiders in GDR society and may have included more queer conscripts than were present in ordinary units. Nevertheless, in this specific case, Wolter's letters allow for limited openness and agency in asserting and exploring same-sex desire within the NVA's broadly homophobic environment. By constructing his narrative out of layers of letters and later reflections, Wolter performs on a narrative level the dynamics of concealment and revelation over time that are so central to Sedgwick's concept of the closet. The text therefore highlights the closet dynamics that governed same-sex desire within the NVA.

Schulze's fictional play with evidence and with the representation and suppression of same-sex desire has drawn attention to the interplay between the archive and closet as structural forces, and Wolter's text allows their relationship to be described in more detail. The dynamic of suppression and revelation, shared by the archive and the closet, was central to Schulze's narrative. In Wolter's text too, different versions of his identity emerge from the narrative's layers, with letters, photographs and reflections suppressing and revealing same-sex desire in different ways. It is unsurprising that prohibitions on same-sex desire should have affected Wolter's documentation of his relationship with Thomas, not to mention the impact of the material conditions of military service, in which writing had to be furtive and photography

was not permitted. However, the extent to which gaps in his archive map onto the closeting of same-sex desire is significant. The text reveals a complex dialectical relationship between archive and closet. In a society such as the GDR where same-sex desire is governed by the closet, the production of evidence of this desire is affected. This influence of closet dynamics can take several forms: official documents from the GDR are often silent about same-sex desire or else are concerned with proof and punishment. In Wolter's case, the closet imposed by GDR politics and society results in more personal difficulties articulating queer desires. Even after reunification, his memories of military service show the impossibility of escaping the effects of the closet. Just like the frenzied writing and collecting that Schulze depicts in *Neue Leben*, the 'mal d'archive' that structures *Hinterm Horizont allein* seems driven by negotiations of closet dynamics. Even highly personal archival narratives such as this can therefore function not to preserve or exhibit desire, but to perpetuate its concealment and suppression. In short, the archive begins to function as a closet.

The relationship between archival and closet dynamics in Wolter's text suggests possibilities for a queer archive that more adequately represents same-sex desire. By foregrounding not just his relationship with Thomas but also his difficulties writing about it, Wolter's memoir highlights how same-sex desire is suppressed as well as represented in different sources. The text uses similar methods to those described by Muñoz, combining ephemeral sources – Wolter's memories – with more conventional documentary traces of his military service. As in *Neue Leben*, the dialogue between these layers of evidence hints at Wolter's desire. However, Wolter's approach to archival evidence is diametrically opposed to the role played by evidence in *Neue Leben*. Where Schulze's editor draws attention to same-sex desire in order to attack Enrico, the autobiographical mode of Wolter's text leads to a nuanced and empathetic explanation and contextualization of his intimacy with Thomas and a candid attempt to reconcile it with his post-reunification identity.

By adding his memories to documentary sources, Wolter suggests how a queer personal archive might take shape out of layers of ephemeral and conventional material, with memories captured in order to contrast them with documents, letters, photographs and other sources. The authenticity or superiority of documentary evidence is refuted by Wolter's text, as in Schulze's, but Wolter goes further in blurring boundaries between memory and other forms of evidence. His memories are triggered by rereading his letters, but these memories also exceed the letters and reveal suppressed aspects. Wolter's approach does not seek to overcome the effects of closeting on his desires. Instead, he critically demonstrates the different ways in which closet dynamics motivate the suppression of same-sex desire, denying that

any of his epistolary or narrative negotiations of identity is more coherent or correct than any other.

Conclusion

Compared with the literature and films I have analysed in previous chapters, Schulze and Wolter deal most explicitly with the importance of narrative and evidence for the ongoing negotiations of identity in post-reunification writing about GDR institutions. The repeated, evolving textual constructions of identity that contribute to self and gender identity are portrayed with considerable scepticism in *Neue Leben*, in an ironic comment on the proliferation of autobiographies creating 'new lives' for their authors after the GDR. *Hinterm Horizont allein* appears equally conscious of the conventions for negotiating identity in post-GDR life-writing, which invariably draws on earlier writing and on evidence that is usually effaced in conventional memoirs. GDR institutions retain an important place in these narratives, particularly military service, which seems to be unusually difficult to interpret and to reconcile with later masculinities.

Same-sex desire is not simply a thematic or representational concern in these texts; rather, the suppression and revelation of desire structures these archival narratives. In Schulze's novel, the threat that same-sex desire will resurface seems to motivate compulsive rewriting by Enrico and his editor. By contrast, in Wolter's autobiographical case, the threat that closeting will have erased all documentary traces of same-sex desire results in a 'mal d'archive'; collecting and attempting to interpret sources remains an ongoing concern even after the publication of *Hinterm Horizont allein*. Same-sex desire was not condoned by the military, and expressions of queerness of any sort were closeted in the NVA. However, as Sedgwick suggests, this closeting need not have prohibited limited expressions of desire or intimacy between men and nor did it prohibit the malicious exploitation of evidence of such desire. Despite the military's rejection of homosexuality in official publications and in secret communications within the military, its inclusion in Schulze's and in Wolter's texts is not simply an attempt to subvert or disrupt the military's ideals of masculinity. Both authors show desire as part of the relationships between men during military service, even when these are not sexual, intimate or even friendly, as in the homosocial dynamics depicted by Schulze. Indeed, Wolter's text suggests an historical conclusion: that certain NVA officers, at least in the construction units, may even have explicitly tolerated homosexuality. Nonetheless, same-sex desire poses a challenge to the ideal in both works, given the punishments meted out on Enrico and his characters and given the prohibitions on Jan showering with his comrades. Particularly

in Wolter's text, his relationship seems to have created spaces within the military institution for intimacy and emotional openness that he directly contrasts with the military's attempts at control.

The relationship between Schulze's fictional and Wolter's autobiographical narratives provides productive insights into the role of evidence in establishing authenticity. There are clear differences in the genres being negotiated by Schulze and Wolter, with the latter drawing on real documents and the former creating fictionalized documents and playing with ideas of fiction and authenticity. Yet the similarities and points of contact between the two texts suggest that *Neue Leben* and *Hinterm Horizont allein* can shed light on each other, and more broadly on the relationship between archive sources and same-sex desire. The fictional archive constructed by Schulze's editor performs the dynamics of the archive and the forces of closeting that theorists have discussed extensively. Schulze's novel capitalizes on its fictional mode to stage the potential for evidence to be used against the queer subject, which helps shed light on the difficulties surrounding evidence and archivization in Wolter's narrative. The fragmentation and multiplication of perspectives in Schulze's narrative draw attention to the negotiation of identity through layers of textual sources, which in turn directs the reader to similar dynamics in Wolter's text when the two are read together. *Hinterm Horizont allein* may even suggest a queer approach to evidence that is circumspect and allows for dissonances between different articulations of identity.

These two works also demonstrate the difficulties in applying theories of archivization to archival narratives, particularly when it comes to autobiographical works such as Wolter's. Derrida's account of suppression and drives proves useful to a point in explaining the structural influence of same-sex desire on both archives, particularly in Schulze's playfully complex fictional example. However, in Wolter's archive, the context and individual situation must be taken into account in greater detail than Derrida's essay achieves. In the case of the NVA, the closet dynamics governing the expression of same-sex desire in the GDR must be considered, particularly given the impact of the closeting of desire on autobiographical writing in Wolter's memoir and in the fictional negotiations of identity in Schulze's novel. The suppression of desire must therefore be understood in terms of wider sexual and gender politics and tensions, as well as a result of the structural dynamics internal to a given narrative.

Schulze and, more directly, Wolter shed light on the place of queer experience in the GDR, revealing that the role of same-sex desire within institutions was complex and was not simply opposed to the demands and values of the state. Historians have begun to investigate the nuances of queer experiences of GDR institutions, but the role of same-sex desire within its most repressive institutions remains largely neglected. The representation of the

NVA in these works shows same-sex desire to be a crucial part of men's negotiations of the GDR's masculine values, even when this desire was simply repudiated. Moreover, the focus in both texts on the suppression of same-sex desire in archival sources suggests a way of investigating queer experience in the GDR's official institutional archives, namely with close attention to the forces that suppress and regulate expression of same-sex desire.

Ultimately, these texts present gender in the post-reunification context as relying, even decades later, on negotiations and reinterpretations of experiences within GDR institutions. Once former citizens were no longer required to negotiate GDR institutions in person, these negotiations did not cease, but continued in textualized and even fictionalized forms. Memories and archival sources trigger and influence these negotiations and, in Schulze's and Wolter's texts at least, acknowledging and accounting for the problems with such evidence becomes a central part of the post-reunification reconstruction of identity. The power of the GDR's ideals and the memory of its institutions to disrupt identity in the present can perhaps be counteracted over time through the repeated engagement and reinterpretation shown by Schulze and Wolter. Yet the texts I have analysed show former citizens' negotiations of institutions as a central experience that cannot be dismissed as obsolete or irrelevant.

Notes

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1. Fuchs, *Fassonschnitt*, 332–33; Fürneisen, *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*, 59:17–1:02:50. See also H. Bastian, *Gewalt und Zärtlichkeit*, 5 vols (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1974–87), vol. 2 (1978).
2. See e.g. S. Das, "'Kiss Me, Hardy': Intimacy, Gender and Gesture in First World War Trench Literature', *Modernism/Modernity* 9 (2002), 51–74; D. Herzog (ed.), *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); B.J. Martin, *Napoleonic Friendship: Military Fraternity, Intimacy and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2011).
3. Crouthamel, *An Intimate History*, 121–45.
4. I avoid 'homosexual', except when describing historical debates within the GDR, because of the term's loaded and pseudomedical associations at the time. For sexual identities based on same-sex desire, I use 'queer' where appropriate, a term that also implies a challenge to accepted identity categories or ways of thinking (see e.g. Butler, 'Critically Queer').
5. See also J. Bisky, *Geboren am 13. August: Der Sozialismus und ich* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2004); M. Sollorz, *Die Eignung* (Hamburg: Männerschwarm, 2008).

6. I. Schulze, *Neue Leben: Die Jugend Enrico Türmers in Briefen und Prosa herausgegeben, kommentiert und mit einem Vorwort versehen von Ingo Schulze* (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2005): hereinafter referenced in the text as *NL*. S. Wolter, *Hinterm Horizont allein – Der 'Prinz' von Prora: Erfahrungen eines NVA-Bausoldaten* (Halle: Projekte, 2005): hereinafter referenced in the text as *HHA*.
7. On post-GDR autobiography, see K. Leeder, "Vom Unbehagen in der Einheit": Autobiographical Writing by Women since 1989", in M.P. Davies, B. Linklater and G. Shaw (eds), *Autobiography by Women in German* (Bern: Lang, 2000), 249–71; D. Tate, *Shifting Perspectives: East German Autobiographical Narratives before and after the End of the GDR* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007); R. Woods, 'Retold Lives: East German Autobiography after East Germany', in A. Goodbody, P. Ó Dochartaigh and D. Tate (eds), 'Dislocation and Reorientation: Exile, Division and the End of Communism in German Culture and Politics', special issue, *German Monitor* 71 (2009), 245–55.
8. To avoid confusion, I use 'Schulze' for the author and 'the editor' for the character.
9. I. Schulze, 'Tausend Geschichten sind nicht genug: Leipziger Poetikvorlesung 2007', in *Was wollen wir: Essays, Reden, Skizzen* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2011), 22–65 (at 47–48). E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Lebens-Ansichten des Katers Murr: Nebst fragmentarischer Biographie des Kapellmeisters Johannes Kreisler in zufälligen Makulaturblättern* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000); I. Morgner, *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura: Roman in dreizehn Büchern und sieben Intermezzos* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1974), 215–34.
10. For engagements with archives from the GDR, see Lewis, 'Reading and Writing'; and contributions by Owen Evans and Regina Crise in D. Osborne (ed.), 'Archive and Memory in German-Language Literature and Culture', special issue, *Edinburgh German Yearbook* 9 (2015).
11. M. Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 170.
12. See Jacques Derrida's description of the interpretative monopoly of 'archons' in ancient Greece: *Mal d'archive: Une impression freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), 13.
13. See e.g. C. Cosentino, 'Ingo Schulzes Roman *Neue Leben*: Autobiografie, "wahrheitsgetreue Erfindung", Fiktion?', *Germanic Notes and Reviews* 38 (2007), 11–18; H. Böttiger, 'Der Ich-Jongleur: Ingo Schulzes Versteckspiele', in H.L. Arnold (ed.), 'Ingo Schulze', special issue, *Text+Kritik* 193 (2012), 19–26.
14. See e.g. I. Schulze, 'Überall war Öffentlichkeit', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 7 November 2014.
15. Much has been written on Schulze's *Faust* references and the novel's dense, playful intertextuality. See C. Cosentino, 'Ingo Schulzes Monumentalroman "Neue Leben": Eine simple Geschichte im neuen Gewand', *Glossen* 24 (2006), unpaginated; D. Midgley, 'Schulze, *Neue Leben*', in P. Hutchinson and M. Minden (eds), *Landmarks in the German Novel*, 2 vols (Bern: Lang, 2007–10), vol. 2 (2010), 147–62.
16. The same phrase also appears in Schulze, 'Tausend Geschichten', 25.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, 48.
19. Plowman, 'Experience', 258 and 262.
20. Schulze, 'Tausend Geschichten', 50.
21. See Judy Gammelgaard's distinction between drive and desire in the work of Jacques Lacan: 'Love, Drive and Desire in the Works of Freud, Lacan and Proust', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 92 (2011), 963–83 (at 970–71).
22. On the editor's footnotes, see A. Lukic, 'Performing Editorial Authority in Ingo Schulze's Epistolary Novel *Neue Leben*', *Studies in Twentieth- and Twentieth-First-Century Literature* 42(2) (2018), unpaginated.

23. Y.H. Yerushalmi, 'Series Z: An Archival Fantasy', *Journal of European Psychoanalysis* 3–4 (1997), unpaginated.
24. See 'Bausoldatenanordnung 1964'.
25. Eisenfeld and Schicketanz, *Bausoldaten*, 177–78.
26. For an introduction to Prora's history, see M. Kaule, *Prora: Geschichte und Gegenwart des 'KdF-Seebads Rügen'* (Berlin: Links, 2014).
27. Derrida, *Mal d'archive*, 38.
28. See the Stasi's discussions and evaluations of a post monitoring campaign in a border regiment: BStU, MfS HA I/16870, 'Abschlußeinschätzung des Führungsbeispiels in der Unterabteilung Abwehr GR-23 Kalbe/M. – GK Nord', 25 November 1987, fols 38–43.
29. G. Grau, 'Return of the Past: The Policy of the SED and the Laws against Homosexuality in Eastern Germany between 1946 and 1968', *Journal of Homosexuality* 37(4) (1999), 1–21 (16–17); Wenzke, *Ulbrichts Soldaten*, 377.
30. Wenzke, *Ulbrichts Soldaten*, 378.
31. Full discussion of same-sex desire in the NVA's institutional archives is beyond the scope of this chapter, but see e.g. BStU, MfS AOP 1761/80, files on an officer's desertion, 1978–79; BStU, MfS HA I/15134, reports on Operation 'Kapsel', 1977–82, fols 77–131.
32. BStU, MfS HA I/16634, memo from Generalmajor Teichmann with attachment 'Grundsätze für die Arbeit mit Bewerbern, Berufskadern und Angehörigen der NVA in Dienstverhältnissen auf Zeit bei Homosexualität', 21 October 1988, fols 88–91.
33. Michael Sollorz depicts experiences of the Western queer scene in *Die Eignung (Fit)*. Ingrid Sharp has analysed the broader 'explosion of discourse surrounding sex': 'The Sexual Unification of Germany', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 13 (2004), 348–65 (355).
34. E.K. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
35. *Ibid.*, 68.
36. *Ibid.*, 80.
37. J.E. Muñoz, 'Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts', *Women and Performance* 8(2) (1996), 5–16 (6).
38. Schulze, 'Tausend Geschichten', 46–48.
39. E.K. Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
40. *Ibid.*, 1–27.
41. Plowman, 'Experience', 263–64.
42. Derrida, *Mal d'archive*, 103.
43. Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte*, 460.
44. Enrico's 'snowbound field' ('verschneite[s] Feld', *NL*, 655) recalls the central scene in Kaiser's *Von morgens bis mitternachts*, suggesting that Enrico's attempts to recast his identity may be as unsuccessful as those of Kaiser's Kassierer.
45. Scholz, *Männlichkeit*.
46. J.E. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 65.
47. *Ibid.*; Muñoz, 'Ephemera', 6.
48. S. Wolter, *Der 'Prinz von Prora' im Spiegel der Kritik: Die NVA und WIR* (Halle: Projekte, 2007), 26.
49. Eisenfeld and Schicketanz, *Bausoldaten*, 151–52.
50. Wolter, *Der 'Prinz von Prora' im Spiegel der Kritik*, 12.
51. *Ibid.*, 11.
52. *Ibid.*, 74: 'geistig-seelische Nähe'.
53. *Ibid.*, 75.

CONCLUSION



Returning to representations of military service in East Germany forces us to reassess our understanding of masculinity in the GDR, and of the place of disruptive, troublesome and queer masculinities in military organizations and society more broadly. Despite the GDR's reputation for rigidly defined gender norms, masculinities in the NVA appear in these works as individual, plural and dynamic negotiations among competing ideals. Masculine ideals are unstable and impractical, even in representations produced by high-ranking members of the NVA or in collaboration with its leadership. Any understanding of masculinity in East Germany must account for the flexibility of norms and for the negotiation in GDR culture of a diverse range of embodied masculinities. The preoccupation with masculinities that disrupt, challenge or refuse military norms is widespread, from novels of the Militärverlag and DEFA films to post-reunification engagements with the effects of military service on ex-conscripts. By moving away from a model in which GDR culture expounds a given masculine ideal and marginalizes men who cannot live up to it, I have shown that vulnerable, emotional or queer masculinities were, and remain, at the centre of even the most conformist representations. When we centre our investigations of the GDR on these masculinities, we see how institutions are shaped by individuals' gendered interactions with institutional structures and expectations. On the one hand, embodied negotiations of gender create and sustain these institutions in small but significant ways, so that participation in the GDR's dictatorship is always gendered participation. On the other hand, and perhaps more

importantly, the GDR context suggests that military organizations more broadly, and many other institutions of contemporary life, are shaped by preoccupation with, responses to and even accommodation of queer and otherwise disruptive masculinities. By bringing conventionally marginalized masculinities into the centre of analysis, masculine vulnerability, emotions and queer desires emerge as important forces within institutions, with lasting effects on individuals and societies.

Representations of East German military service since the 1960s enable us to reconceptualize *Deutschland 83* and *Deutschland 86* and other contemporary representations of East German soldiers within a longer history. *Deutschland 83* focuses on Martin's masculinity in the context of his negotiations of numerous institutions, including primarily the Stasi, the NVA and the Bundeswehr, but also including medical services. Lenora promises to expedite his mother's kidney transplant if he becomes a Stasi mole and, before the surgery in Episode 5, she repeatedly reminds him of the implicit threat: that Ingrid will not receive the transplant if Martin changes his mind. GDR institutions are linked inextricably in the series, even beyond the close relationships between the NVA and the Stasi described in Jürgen Fuchs's *Fassonschnitt* and hinted at in Leander Haußmann's film *NVA*. Although I have focused on representations of the NVA for heuristic purposes, Martin's example suggests that negotiations of masculinity during military service can inform our understanding of GDR society and institutions more broadly. *Deutschland 86* even shows how closely connected these institutions are with intelligence, pharmaceutical and defence industries in the West and the Global South.

Literature and film show individual East German masculinities being constructed in constant dialogue with the state's ideals. Military service shaped men's identities both as men and as citizens of the GDR, as represented in *Deutschland 83* by Annett's appeal to Martin's responsibility to protect the GDR for their unborn child. Conscription was for many young men their first prolonged experience in a closed, masculine-dominated institution.¹ In its harsh, disciplined environment, negotiations of repressive and bureaucratic institutions, which *Deutschland 83* represents as an everyday reality for its Eastern characters, became more frequent and urgent. Sylka Scholz has identified ex-soldiers' emphasis on creating small freedoms in their retrospective narratives of military service, and this trend may reflect the difficulties with escaping the institutional power of the military in comparison with less closed institutions such as school, the Young Pioneers or the FDJ. However, *Deutschland 83* and *Deutschland 86* show Martin's moments of freedom as integral parts of his missions, suggesting the reach of institutions into citizens' private lives: for example, his relationships with Linda in the first series and with Brigitte Winkelmann in the second, where the lines

between personal pleasure and professional commitments are blurred. The range of literature and film that I have analysed suggests that in the NVA's cloistered environment, the instincts to both conform and resist became heightened, resulting in individuals developing complex relationships to the institution's ideals, values and expectations. Applied to the interplay between masculinities in these works, Raewyn Connell's analysis suggests that gestures of both limited conformity and limited challenge to the NVA's ideals, which dominate literary and filmic representations of East German military masculinities, can serve to reinforce the ideals. Because so many GDR citizens rejected militarization, the role of individual men in bolstering military ideals and contributing to the functioning of the NVA appears to be an important source of the narrative difficulties and self-doubt that dominate so many works depicting military service.²

However, Connell herself has suggested that she did not intend the concept of hegemonic masculinity to leave so little room for resistance.³ *Deutschland 83* shows the potential for play and subversion, experimenting with expectations about GDR soldiers as embodiments of the state's values by using the spy genre to imply that not everything about soldiers' identities is what it seems. Films, literary fiction and autobiographies build a broader image of GDR masculinities than existing studies have identified. Even in the extreme circumstances of military service, these works show gender ideals to be more unstable, more participatory and more dependent on conventionally marginalized aspects of masculinities than the NVA's or the SED's official pronouncements or policies on gender suggest. *Deutschland 83* appears less interested in marginalized GDR masculinities than in those in the West, with the focus on the AIDS crisis in particular. However, other writers and filmmakers have focused on marginalized aspects of masculinity within the GDR, even in the most officially sanctioned works, and the conflicts that result during military service drive the narratives in each case.

Kaja Silverman proposes that representations of conflicts and marginalized masculinities can challenge dominant ideals.⁴ Many depictions of East German soldiers experiment with ways of disrupting the NVA's values, often in retrospect, by representing vulnerable bodies, exaggerating the theatricality of military masculinity or exploring ways of depicting emotional intensity and same-sex desire. Representations of marginalized masculinities need not, and often cannot, go so far as to be entirely subversive in the way that Silverman describes. Yet these representations can and do show gender ideals as contingent and dependent on the participation of individuals through everyday performative negotiations of gender. The image of masculinities in the NVA, and by extension in the GDR more widely, is complex and highly contested in these texts, far from the monolithic and normalizing military ideals on which scholarship has predominantly focused. In fact,

masculinities that contravene or disrupt military norms are at the centre of portrayals and of the construction and articulation of the GDR's gender ideals more broadly.

Narrative depictions of East German soldiers are further driven by the difficulties of representing the diverse range of embodied masculinities within the military context. The open ending of *Deutschland 83* in part dramatizes this tension by implying that Alex Edel's subordinate masculinity and General Edel's hegemonic position cannot both survive the end of the series. By *Deutschland 86*, we learn that the former has left the military altogether. In the GDR too, films and literature grappled with the difficulties in promoting the socialist soldier personality while representing individual masculinities, as in *Härtetest* and *Es gibt kein Niemandland*. The literature of the Militärverlag and DEFA films contributed to disseminating the NVA's masculine ideals, but the interest in these works is so often in troublesome masculinities or difficulties fitting in.⁵ The influence of the NVA's normalizing environment on representations of gender may partially explain the fraught place of more divergent masculinities even in post-reunification portrayals. Ingo Schulze, for example, writes about an ineffable quality of military service, 'the actual feeling' or 'das Eigentliche', which no writing can adequately capture.⁶ Many other authors support this view, while explicitly describing the creative impulse that these narrative difficulties provided. Jens Sparschuh and Sten Nadolny, for example, describe a feeling of abject subordination during military service, and Sparschuh writes, 'I have to thank this feeling of "hitting rock bottom" [*auf der Fresse liegen*] for tons of book pages that in retrospect I'd be reluctant to give up'.⁷ Across my analysis, narrative and expressive difficulties are particularly prevalent in the depiction of masculinity, in moments when the subordination that Sparschuh describes reveals individuals' inability, failure or refusal to conform to masculine ideals. Yet these writers' comments suggest that the difficulties in articulating individual identities within the military environment are also a source of immense creativity, resulting in the urge to explore and reinterpret military masculinities.

Writing and film, by both representing and modelling fraught negotiations of GDR institutions, enhance our understanding of the GDR as a participatory dictatorship, by placing gender at the heart of citizens' entanglement in institutions. Since Mary Fulbrook's *The People's State* in 2005, numerous investigations have clarified and tested her concept of the 'participatory dictatorship' in specific contexts.⁸ Depictions of military service support Fulbrook's view that the GDR dictatorship was constituted and sustained by everyday actions and interactions between people and the state's institutions. In fact, the link between state power and soldiers' gender practice suggests that Fulbrook's analysis might be expanded. Not only was the participation in the GDR dictatorship gendered, in that forms of participation differed for

men and women, as Fulbrook suggests, but compliance with gender ideals was a form of participation in itself. The NVA was an extreme case, in its harsh discipline, the urgency of men's confrontations with the system and its domination by men. Yet this conclusion may hold true for other institutions, at least for men, whose conformity to hegemonic masculinities could be seen as bolstering not only the ideal but also the institutions and the state that promulgated these gender ideals. Writers and filmmakers show gender practice and institutional membership relating to each other in multiple, changing ways. Military service in these texts emphasizes aspects of masculinity that do not fit easily with the NVA's gender ideals. Although young men's varying degrees of accommodation to masculine ideals during military service may have contributed to the institution's control in similar ways to Fulbrook's concept of 'participation', vulnerable, theatrical, emotional or queer masculinities frequently unsettle or challenge ideals and institutions, or at least expose their limits.

These texts show the process of marginalization within GDR institutions having profound effects on citizens' identities. In the model of embodied performativity that I have explored, drawing on Judith Butler especially, we can expect individuals' identities to be affected by their interactions with the gender ideals of GDR institutions. In *Deutschland 83*, Martin's self-understanding develops through his mission in the West, and is shaped by his Stasi mission and by his new life in the Bundeswehr. His feelings for Linda, for example, appear genuine, as does his friendship with Alex. When he eventually reveals his status as a mole in Episode 7, to warn General Edel that the GDR regime had mistaken a NATO training exercise for preparations for war, he does so not only out of fear, but also with a degree of admiration for his Bundeswehr colleagues. There is even a note of respect for the NATO exercise in his voice when he tells Lenora about Able Archer: 'They're playing a war game. A very realistic one with real control codes and real security regulations, but still a game' (Episode 7, 9:59–10:06). Martin's grudging respect for the Bundeswehr forms a stark contrast with the effects of the NVA on conscripts' identities in representations of East German military service, and his own experiences in the NVA are not discussed in depth. Most literature and film present the physical hardships of military service as having a more profound psychological and emotional impact than *Deutschland 83* shows. Especially the autobiographical works *Fassonschnitt*, *Einstrich-Keinstrich* and *Hinterm Horizont allein* show that the intensity of military service resulted in lasting psychological and emotional disruption that continued to affect conscripts years after their service. These factors may explain the continued interest in East German military service in life-writing, both autobiographical and fictional, even after the institution was dissolved. Representations of the NVA become a way of understanding, reinterpreting and rewriting the

continuing importance of military ideals for men's understanding of self and masculinity.

Deutschland 83 also helps conceptualize the impact of this analysis more broadly, including by showing women's negotiations of institutions in relation to gender ideals. Annett, Martin's girlfriend, is an instructive example. Finding out about Martin's mission in the West and about her pregnancy lead to her becoming more engaged with the Stasi and with the state's ideals. When Thomas, a friend with whom she has cheated on Martin, accuses Martin of abandoning her and Ingrid, her reply draws on images of masculine sacrifice: 'He sacrificed himself for us, for our country!' (Episode 5, 35:00–35:04). This conversation prompts her to begin working with the Stasi, culminating in Thomas being arrested, but also involving trying to convince Martin to go back to the West: 'You're setting the best example for our child by serving our country so selflessly' (Episode 6, 3:56–4:02). She compares Martin explicitly to the ideal man selflessly serving his country, appealing to their unborn child. However, her joy at the apartment and car that she is to receive complicate the picture, as this newfound zeal could be partly explained by the security and privilege that Martin's mission affords. Moreover, her tears when she reports to Schweppenstette that Martin 'isn't co-operating' (Episode 6, 5:13–5:14) make clear the emotional toll of her entanglement with GDR institutions. In *Deutschland 86*, now in the Stasi's inner circle, Annett's negotiations of single motherhood alongside her commitment to her job further show how women were – and still are – required to negotiate a masculine-coded institution. Annett's case is an extension of the trend in recent writing and film to explore GDR citizens' complex involvements with the state and its institutions, and the effects of these negotiations on their sense of self. Like the conscripts in the narratives I have analysed, who assimilate themselves in small ways to the NVA's expectations for a variety of personal reasons, Annett tries to act in the best interests of her child, but this involves imagining Martin as an impossibly perfect socialist soldier personality and suppressing her own sadness at his absence.

I have been unable to address women's negotiations of gender in the NVA due to the paucity of sources on women soldiers. However, a documentary feature in a *Süddeutsche Zeitung* TV programme in 2009, entitled 'Die NVA-Frauen', does suggest potential avenues for investigating the gender practice of women soldiers.⁹ 'Die NVA-Frauen' quotes footage from a 1987 documentary and interviews three women from the documentary about their military experiences and their present lives. The 2009 feature is interested less in military gender than in the ex-soldiers' difficulties adapting to the post-reunification environment, but it suggests that such a combination of interviews and official NVA footage might productively balance official representations of women soldiers with individual memories and narratives.

Diaries by women in the NVA, where these exist, also provide a useful source.¹⁰ The lack of literary and filmic representations of women in the NVA probably reflects in part the fact that only limited numbers of women served in the GDR armed forces. However, it also demonstrates how powerful the link is between masculinity and military service, to the extent that experiences in the NVA are represented as quintessentially male, even in literature and film by women themselves.¹¹ It would seem that military masculinities are viewed as unimportant for women's gender in or after the GDR, or at least that the NVA is not one of the institutions through which femininity was constructed. Yet the case of Annett, like Doris in *Härtetest* or Friederike in *Es gibt kein Niemandsland*, positions women as instrumental in defining masculinity in the NVA and wider East German society. These examples suggest that the dependence of GDR institutions on certain masculine ideals could have profound effects on women's lives too.

Deutschland 83 depicts East German citizens involved with its institutions in a diverse range of ways, which frustrate the binaries that have often crept into scholarship on the GDR: conformity versus resistance, public versus private spheres. Its playful experimentation with genre points to the diversity of influences and styles in GDR culture, which requires us to move beyond linear narratives of development and change as a way of conceptualizing the GDR cultural sphere.¹² My investigation has taken in narratives and films that approach East Germany from many different perspectives. Even amongst the GDR-era texts representing an institution as normative as the NVA, works range from modernist film to slapstick comedy, from critical autofiction to normalizing socialist realist epic, often with contrasting works appearing within a few years of one another. The multiple means of using humour to represent the NVA are particularly instructive, from the light-heartedness of *Der Reserveheld* to the sinister elements of humorous sequences in *Ein Katzensprung* or *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla*. Even after reunification, films such as *Drei Stern rot* and *NVA* and texts such as *Neue Leben* use darker, ambivalent forms of humour. The more relaxed approach to humour in *Deutschland 83* and *Deutschland 86* suggests that engagements with East German military figures, as time passes, may lose their fraught relationship to the hardships of military service. Moreover, it allows the show to exist as thriller, drama and comedy all at once, performatively modelling a productive mix of styles that better accounts for the diversity of the GDR's cultural scene in the 1980s.

Deutschland 83 particularly engages in a play with genre by drawing on diverse references, from the barracks film and the spy film to the GDR retro comedy and the TV crime drama. In the texts I have analysed, the greatest differences fall among generic lines and all are acutely aware of the conventions of the genres to which they contribute. This observation is perhaps surprising, given the radical changes in the circumstances of production

and publication after 1990, but pre- and post-reunification narratives in fact share significant formal and thematic similarities. The most striking differences are between autobiographical and fictional works. Memoirs such as *Einstrich-Keinstrich* and *Hinterm Horizont allein* present themselves consciously as part of an engagement with memory, personal experience and the changing masculine identities of the author-protagonists. However, in many apparently fictional works, the line between fiction and autobiography is consciously blurred. Walter Flegel, Fuchs, Haußmann and Schulze position their novels and screenplays ambiguously and even playfully as autofictions, drawing on autobiographical material with various degrees of explicit and implicit fictionalization. Even more straightforwardly fictional works, such as *Härtetest*, *Drei Stern rot*, *An die Grenze* and *Der Turm*, draw on the military experiences of their writers and filmmakers, albeit usually without comment. Many of these texts exceed the conventions of their genres by drawing attention to the contingency of representations, not least in the archival narratives I discussed in Chapter 6. This concern with how memory and the past are mediated, and how such mediations are always imperfect and fraught, is a major theme of *Deutschland 83* and *Deutschland 86*, in which shots filmed as if from security cameras or through glass windows or doors foreground the film's mediating work.

Along with many other recent representations of East Germany, such as *Atomic Blonde* and especially *Bridge of Spies*, *Deutschland 83* revolves around the fortified inner-German border, with Martin's job as a border guard and his repeated border crossings. While the centrality of the inner-German border to representations of the GDR is a recent development, this interest dates back even before the border's fortification in 1961. Numerous films and literary texts depicted the border in the early 1960s, including most prominently *Julia lebt*, but from the mid 1960s, such works became very uncommon.¹³ However, *Zum Teufel mit Harbolla* shows that a fascination with the border remained and that some filmmakers found ways of responding to this interest – here, by setting the film before the border was fortified in 1961. The collapse of the GDR focused attention on its former border once again, with the widely televised fall of the Wall, the media frenzy around the border guard trials and controversies around the *Schießbefehl*. *Drei Stern rot* and *An die Grenze* are just two examples of post-reunification films that focus on the border, although their approach, as I discussed in Chapter 2, tends to elide the suffering of civilian victims at the border in favour of a focus on soldier victims. In other films and novels depicting the border since reunification, border guards become symbols of repression once again, suggesting that incorporating multiple perspectives and multiple forms of suffering at the border remains a difficult task.¹⁴ *Deutschland 83* sidesteps this problem, but only by removing all images of violence at the border

entirely. Only in *Deutschland 86*, with Marianne's death while trying to help the Fischers escape to West Berlin, does the series deal directly with violence against civilians at the border.

One effect of the growing focus on the GDR's border with the West is to signal an increasingly transnational approach to memories and representations of East Germany, which *Deutschland 83* foregrounds through Martin's mostly seamless transition from NVA to Bundeswehr. *Deutschland 86*, with its James Bond aesthetic and its moves between South Africa, Angola, Libya, France, the FRG and the GDR, explores the GDR in an even broader global context.¹⁵ Representations of the NVA, which tend to highlight both the specificity of GDR experience and the army's similarities with other armed forces, contribute to a more transnational understanding of the GDR. This study also has important resonances for the interdisciplinary study of military socialization, where representations are commonly overlooked, despite their centrality to how military ideals are created, received and challenged. Contemporary theories of military masculinities have often been neglected in the German context, with the notable exception of Andrew Bickford's anthropological work on the NVA.¹⁶ Analysis by Bickford, Paul Higate and others, particularly in Anglo-American contexts, has pluralized discussion of military masculinities, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of military ideals.¹⁷ Yet even in Higate's work the multiplicity of military gender hierarchies is described only with regard to either rank or occupation. The importance of marginalized masculinities in military training remains largely overlooked. The films and literature I have analysed insist on the importance of experiences of marginalization and vulnerability for soldiers' development. My discussion of bodily vulnerability even suggests the possibility for the vulnerability of individual bodies to unsettle, as well as be unsettled by, the physical demands of military service. Raz Yosef's work on the Israeli military has made a valuable contribution to these questions, but, like most explorations of marginalized masculinities in military environments, he too focuses on combat experience first and foremost.¹⁸ Focusing on training avoids the conclusion that marginalized aspects of masculinity only gain prominence in the extreme conditions of warfare. Instead, representations of GDR military service suggest that masculinities conventionally seen as marginalized are in fact central to military training environments. The diverse range of embodied masculinities in military organizations must be analysed in detail if we are to understand military training regimes and their long-lasting physical, psychological and emotional effects.

Just as *Deutschland 83* and other representations of East German soldiers draw on a wide range of techniques and ideas from scholarship on GDR history, film and literature, studies of the GDR also advance theoretical and conceptual debates in numerous ways. Theorists such as Slavoj Žižek have

called for a reassessment of popular understandings of violence, and the films I analysed in Chapter 2 show how visual representations of subjective violence play a crucial role in revealing more insidious, often invisible cultural and structural forces. Chapter 4 suggested new directions for research into post-reunification representations of the GDR, as scholars move away from restrictive debates over *Ostalgie*. Retro may offer insights into a wider subset of representations of the GDR and, more importantly, my analysis highlights continuities between GDR and post-reunification comedies that have been largely neglected. The texts I discussed in Chapter 5 suggest three approaches to the representation of shame at a time when the cultural significance of emotions is being debated across a range of disciplines, and Tellkamp's spatial metaphors in particular offer an innovative approach. Finally, Schulze's and Wolter's texts, when read together, suggest an interplay between the closeting of same-sex desire and the processes of archivization that influence our access to the past. The problems associated with queer archives continue to inspire debate, and these texts suggest that literary narratives can offer productive ways of representing queerness without neglecting or effacing the experience of suppression and closetedness. By placing vulnerable, theatrical, emotional and queer masculinities at their heart, these texts contribute to contemporary debates in literary studies and further afield by insisting on the centrality of marginalized masculinities across fields and disciplines.

Above all, the East German context is essential for understanding contemporary masculinity more broadly. The playful retro in *Deutschland 83* and its deliberate construction of an impression of 1980s 'pastness', to use Fredric Jameson's term once again, makes clear its interest in how these masculinities inform our contemporary world. Post-reunification films and literature continually reassess masculine identities in the GDR long after the NVA's dissolution and the discrediting of its ideals, showing the ongoing resonance of the East German context. Works such as *Drei Stern rot*, *Fassonschnitt* and *Einstrich-Keinstrich* explicitly dramatize the need to reinterpret past military experiences in order to articulate masculine identity in the present. The effect is sometimes to stabilize present-day masculinities through the act of narration, as in *Einstrich-Keinstrich*, but the reverse is equally true, with the twist at the end of *Drei Stern rot* destabilizing Christian's identity, his memories and the film's entire diegesis. Schulze's novel and Wolter's memoir are particularly explicit about the role of representations of military service in narrative constructions of identity in the present, but also about related questions regarding the validity of evidence and the mediation of experience through memory.

Numerous works point to the continued relevance of the GDR's repressive institutions for contemporary society, not least the epilogue to *Einstrich-Keinstrich*. Waehner describes being sought out in 1993 by his former Stasi

caseworkers, who in a remarkable and seemingly fantastical episode offer him a job with their new insurance company. They are still following Waehner's movements and describe their continued links with former Stasi colleagues.¹⁹ Antje Rávic Strubel's more recent novel, *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* (*When Days Plunge into Night*, 2011), also presents the persistence of GDR power relations in post-reunification society using ex-Stasi figures, while Michael Sollorz's novel *Die Eignung* (*Fit*, 2008) describes a post-reunification criminal movement that perpetuates the masculinities and values of the NVA.²⁰ These works externalize the continued effect of GDR institutions on characters' identities by depicting interactions with representatives of extinct institutions. Writers and filmmakers thus continue to position themselves and their work in relation to GDR institutions as a way of understanding masculinity in the present.

Deutschland 83 and *Deutschland 86* suggest that conflicts between societal norms, institutional practice, and personal values and ideals exist in different forms in Western societies too, and they show how the GDR as a short-lived state now thirty years distant points to underacknowledged tensions in our own contemporary societies. The resignation and half-heartedness, even cynicism and scepticism, with which many characters approach military service in these novels and films repeatedly fail to protect new conscripts from the damaging effects of the NVA's constant threat of violence and its psychological and emotional impact. These representations show cynical interactions with institutions sustaining and upholding their ideals and structures, and profoundly influencing the identities and self-understanding of individuals. In the current political climate, thirty years after the GDR's collapse, but in another period of global political upheaval, East German masculinities are an instructive case study. However much distance we maintain from the state institutions that create and administrate damaging policies, and whether that distance be rhetorical, spatial or psychological, our everyday involvement with institutions at the lowest level can still bolster policies and ideals without concerted efforts to reveal the damage they cause.

I began by pointing to the centrality of idealized, muscular, 'spornosexual' masculinity in the second decade of the twenty-first century. The open objectification of the masculine body has recently served less to subvert the power of hegemonic masculinity than to bolster it at the expense of young people's mental health. It is therefore essential to improve our awareness of how ideals of masculinity work, how they circulate and how they affect the lives even of individuals who openly reject or cynically distance themselves from them. Returning to East Germany to understand its military masculinities and their ongoing effects on contemporary subjects can help us in this first step. Above all, we must centre our investigations on those masculinities that complicate and trouble images of masculine strength, autonomy or coherence. Changing

the focus of work in masculinity studies in this way allows us to understand masculinities in twentieth- and twenty-first-century culture in a manner that is sensitive to and respectful of individuals' complex embodied relationships to their own identities and the world.

Notes

1. The very few from boarding schools would be the only exceptions; see e.g. U. Mietzner, *Enteignung der Subjekte – Lehrer und Schule in der DDR: Eine Schule in Mecklenburg von 1945 bis zum Mauerbau* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1998).
2. Scholz, *Männlichkeit*, 189; Bald, 'Militärpolitische Restauration', 80.
3. Connell and Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity', 833.
4. Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 48.
5. See Decker, *Gewalt und Zärtlichkeit*; Eifler, "'Ewig unreif'"; M. Rogg, "'Filme von der Fahne'": Das Armeefilmstudio der Nationalen Volksarmee der DDR', in B. Chiari, Rogg and W. Schmidt (eds), *Krieg und Militär im Film des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003), 611–34; G. Wiechmann, "'Top Gun' in der DDR? Der Kalte Krieg und die NVA am Beispiel von 'Anflug Alpha 1'", in Chiari, Rogg and Schmidt, *Krieg und Militär*, 543–67.
6. Schulze, 'Tausend Geschichten', 25.
7. Nadolny and Sparschuh, *Putz- und Flickstunde*, 81.
8. See e.g. Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism*.
9. 'Die NVA-Frauen: Die Lebenswege dreier Soldatinnen der DDR', *Süddeutsche Zeitung TV*, VOX, 14 November 2009, 23.00.
10. See e.g. Emmendingen, Deutsches Tagebucharchiv, DTA 1350/056, diary of a trainee officer, 16 July–5 December 1990.
11. See e.g. K. Lange-Müller, 'Lebenslauf', in *Wehleid – wie im Leben: Erzählungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1986), 100–8; J. Schoch, 'Himmelfahrt', 'Schießübung' and 'Der Exot', in *Der Körper des Salamanders: Erzählungen* (Munich: Piper, 2001).
12. See Smith, 'Music, the GDR Military and the GDR Today'.
13. Wolfgram, 'Gendered Border Crossings', 164.
14. See e.g. Spielberg, *Bridge of Spies*; Leitch, *Atomic Blonde*.
15. This trend is mirrored in recent scholarship, e.g. S. Allan and S. Heiduschke (eds), *Re-imagining DEFA: East German Cinema in Its National and Transnational Contexts* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016).
16. See e.g. Bickford, 'The Militarization of Masculinity'.
17. See Morgan, 'Theater of War'; Higate, *Military Masculinities*; Woodward and Winter, *Sexing the Soldier*.
18. See e.g. R. Yosef, 'Spectacles of Pain: Masculinity and the Masochistic Fantasy in Amos Gitai's *Kippur*', *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 24 (2005), 49–66.
19. Waehner, *Einstrich-Keinstrich*, 321–25.
20. A.R. Strubel, *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011); Sollorz, *Die Eignung*.

GLOSSARY

Selected Ranks in the Nationale Volksarmee with British and US Equivalents

Nationale Volksarmee	British Army	US Army
<i>Generals:</i>		
Marschall der DDR	Field Marshal	General of the Army
Armeegeneral	General	General
Generaloberst	Lieutenant-General	Lieutenant General
Generalleutnant	Major-General	Major General
Generalmajor	Brigadier	Brigadier General
<i>Officers:</i>		
Oberst	Colonel	Colonel
Oberstleutnant	Lieutenant-Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel
Major	Major	Major
Hauptmann	Captain	Captain
Oberleutnant	Lieutenant	First Lieutenant
Leutnant	Second Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant
<i>Fähnriche:</i>		
Stabsoberfähnrich	<i>Warrant Officers:</i>	
Stabsfähnrich	Warrant Officer Class 2	Chief Warrant Officer
Oberfähnrich	Warrant Officer Class 1	Warrant Officer
Fähnrich		
<i>Noncommissioned Officers:</i>		
Oberfeldwebel	Staff Sergeant	Staff Sergeant
Feldwebel	Sergeant	Sergeant
Unterfeldwebel		
Unteroffizier		
<i>Note: 'Unteroffizier' is also the umbrella term for NCOs. 'Hauptfeldwebel', unlike in the Bundeswehr, is not a rank, but a command position as an aide to the company commander.</i>		
<i>Enlisted ranks:</i>		
Stabsgefreiter	Corporal	Corporal
Gefreiter	Lance Corporal	Private First Class
Soldat	Private	Private
Bausoldat	<i>No equivalent: conscientious objector conscripted as enforced labour on construction projects.</i>	

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