

Gundermann: From Socialist Realist Hero to Eco-Warrior

Gerhard Gundermann was an East German protest singer and miner who died prematurely in 1998 at the age of 43. Active in the GDR *Liedertheater* (song theatre) and political song movement of the 1970s and 1980s, he emerged after the fall of the GDR as a musical and poetic mouthpiece for the culturally and economically marginalised ‘losers’ of German unification. This paper will examine the development of Gundermann’s utopian ‘heroic’ vision in his narrative role-play: how he creatively transformed a socialist realist ideal of the heroic worker, typical of the state’s singing movement, into a new type of heroism, more suitable to deal with, firstly, the democratic deficits of socialist reality in the GDR and, secondly, the environmental threat that looms in the post-unification 1990s. This paper will also link Gundermann’s utopianism to his problematic relationship with the GDR state, for whom he worked as a Stasi informer in his early career.