

The *Krabat* Motif in the Songs and Musicals of *Liedermacher* Gerhard Gundermann

DAVID ROBB

Abstract

This article looks at Gerhard Gundermann's use of the *Krabat* motif from Jurij Brězan's novel *Krabat or the Transformation of the World* in his *Liedertheater* productions with Brigade Feuerstein in the GDR and, post-unification, in his solo songs. From Hoyerswerda in South-East Germany, Gundermann was simultaneously an open-cast miner and a singer/songwriter and dramatist who died prematurely in 1998 at the age of 43. Emerging out of the GDR singing club movement in the late 1970s, he relentlessly exposed the ruling SED Party's monopoly on power in his work with Brigade Feuerstein. After German unification, as a solo performer, he became the mouthpiece of culturally disenfranchised East Germans. Twenty-five years after his death—in the wake of renewed interest in this performer as evidenced by Andreas Dresen's film *Gundermann* (2018) and Grit Lemke's documentary *Gundermann Revier* (2019)—it is time for a proper academic assessment of his work. This study breaks new ground, firstly in its analysis of the unpublished works of Brigade Feuerstein and secondly by exploring the extent to which Gundermann's life work was underpinned by the philosophy of *Krabat*, in its exposing of humans' exploitation of one another and their environment. In this, one can see how Gundermann created an aesthetic approach that successfully spanned two political systems.

Introduction

In 1976, the Singeklub (Singing Club) Hoyerswerda, led by the musician and dramatist Gerhard Gundermann, premiered "Krabat und seine Geschichten" (Krabat and his Stories).¹ This performance directly referenced Jurij Brězan's *Krabat oder die Verwandlung der Welt* (Krabat or the Transformation of the World),² published in 1976 in both German and the minority Sorb language from the Lusatia region in which the novel is set. In 1978, the group, now calling themselves Brigade Feuerstein, adapted the *Krabat* material further in their *Liedertheater* (song-theater) production "Geschichten aus dem Koraktor" (Stories from the Koraktor)³ and again in 1980 in "Das Große Match" (The Big Match).⁴ While the explicit reference to *Krabat* is confined to these early shows, it becomes evident that the influence of this novel permeates throughout much of Gundermann's work in the GDR, and even into the post-unification period.⁵

¹ Singeklub Hoyerswerda, "Krabat und seine Geschichten," unpublished manuscript (Hoyerswerda: Gundermann Archive, Kulturfabrik, no serial number), audio recording undated (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, Sammlung-Liedertheater, 1977), AVM-31 5088.

² Jurij Brězan, *Krabat oder Die Verwandlung der Welt* (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1989).

³ Brigade Feuerstein, "Geschichten aus dem Koraktor," unpublished manuscript (Hoyerswerda: Gundermann Archive, Kulturfabrik, no serial number, 1978); audio recording from Leipzig, October 20, 1978 (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, Sammlung-Liedertheater, 1978), AVM-31 5054.

⁴ Brigade Feuerstein, "Das große Match," unpublished manuscript (Hoyerswerda: Gundermann Archive, Kulturfabrik, no serial number, 1978); Audio recording from the Werkstaat Lieder & Theater, Dresden, November 22, 1980 (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, Liedertheater collection, AVM-31 5057, 1980).

⁵ Group member Ingo "Hugo" Dietrich briefly summarizes this connection in "Viel Arbeit für ein Lächeln. Unsere Zeit bei der Brigade Feuerstein in Hoyerswerda," in *Gundermann. Von jedem Tag will ich was haben, was ich nicht vergesse*, ed. Andreas Leusink (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2018), 47–62.

This article will therefore examine the main themes of this novel as they were adapted by Gundermann in his scenes and songs and, in doing so, provide a key to understanding the complex artistic and political orientation of this singer, as he developed from a young, ardently communist *Singeklub* (singing club) member in the mid-1970s to a disillusioned *Liedermacher* (protest singer) in the 1980s, and ultimately to a green eco-warrior in the 1990s. This analysis will show how, in straddling both the GDR and united Germany, Gundermann understood the universal significance of the *Krabat* material as a means of critique of power structures, whether communist or capitalist. Virtually ignored academically—bar a few articles written in the years after his death in 1998⁶—this reassessment is significant in terms of the perception of Gundermann as a protest singer, which has been chiefly shaped by the controversy surrounding his collaboration with the Stasi between 1976 and 1984, the revelations of which damaged his career and reputation in the mid-1990s.⁷

Before looking at his treatment of the *Krabat* material, it is necessary to contextualize the career of Gundermann and his group Brigade Feuerstein within the wider development of political song and theater in the GDR. Their case is a further chapter in the story of East German artists who critically appropriated the inherited traditions of workers' song and theater. In the field of song, this revolutionary "Erbe" (heritage) had been established in the initial years of the GDR in the songbooks and recordings of the famous Brecht singer and actor Ernst Busch.⁸ The founding of the Workers' Song Archive in Berlin in 1954, led by the researcher Inge Lammel, was followed by the publication of Wolfgang Steinitz's *Deutsche Volkslieder demokratischen Charakters aus sechs Jahrhunderten* (German Folk Songs of a Democratic Character from Six Centuries) in 1954 and 1962.⁹ Reflecting the priorities of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) to distance GDR culture from the Nazi past, these seminal volumes established a line of tradition of anti-establishment German folk song that had hitherto been overlooked and, in cases such as the Third Reich, censored or banned. Efforts of a new generation of East German political singers in the 1960s to give this tradition a contemporary radical edge were, however, invariably stymied by the regime. While the Party promoted the battle songs of proletarian history, it was suspicious of any political songs directed against itself. The case of Wolf Biermann, who was banned from performing between 1965 and 1976 and finally expatriated to the West, was symptomatic of the regime's intolerance of directly critical texts.¹⁰

In GDR theater, a similar development could be observed. As Bradley writes, after Brecht's elevation to the status of socialist classic following his death in 1956, poets and dramatists were discouraged from

⁶ See, for example, Klaus Peter Schwarz. ". . . die die Welt nicht bessern können aber möchten . . . Gerhard Gundermanns Internationalthymnen eines 'anderen Deutschlands.'" *Berliner Debatte INITIAL* 10, no. 2 (1999): 41–50; Simone Hain, "Unsereins. Gerhard Gundermann und das wahre Leben, 1955–1998." In *Das Kollektiv bin ich. Utopie und Alltag in der DDR*, ed. Franziska Becker, Ina Merkel, and Simone Tippach-Schneider (Cologne: Böhlau-Verlag, 2000), 98–125; Simone Hain, "Gundermanns post mortem: Über das Ende der Arbeit, den Kampf gegen das Empire und die notwendige Erziehung der Gefühle," *Utopie kreativ*, 177/178 (July/August 2005): 688–92.

⁷ The revelations led to the halting of a deal with a major West German music manager. See Birk Meinhardt, "Conny Gundermann im Gespräch mit Birk Meinhardt," in *Gundermann. Von jedem Tag will ich was haben, was ich nicht vergesse*. . . ed. Andreas Leusink (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag), 11–22.

⁸ See, for example, Ernst Busch, ed., *Internationale Arbeiterlieder* (Berlin: Lied der Zeit, 1949).

⁹ Wolfgang Steinitz, *Deutsche Volkslieder demokratischen Charakters aus sechs Jahrhunderten* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954 and 1962). See also Eckhard John and David Robb, *Songs for a Revolution. The 1848 Protest Song Tradition in Germany* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787448629>.

¹⁰ See David Robb, "Narrative Role-Play as Communicative Strategy in German Protest Song," in *Protest Song in East and West Germany since the 1960s*, ed. David Robb (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007), 67–96, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781571136909-005>; see also David Robb "The Legacy of Brecht in GDR Political Song," in *Brecht and the GDR. Politics, Culture, Posterity*, Edinburgh German Yearbook, vol. 5, ed. Laura Bradley and Karen Leeder (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), 183–200, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781571137791.010>.

applying Brecht's own techniques to criticize the GDR. The perception of the "stagnation of Brecht's critical impetus" resulted in a backlash from songwriters such as Biermann¹¹ and dramatists such as Volker Braun and Heiner Müller who understood how "Brecht's oeuvre provided tools that could be used to recuperate the aspirations of socialism from the political reality of the GDR state."¹² Biermann's expatriation in 1976, however, resulted in many prominent writers, actors, and musicians departing for the West¹³ and crucially left a void in critical political song writing. The pressures to conform from within the state-run singing movement itself hindered the self-expression of young singers as critical artists.¹⁴ Yet it was from within this movement that splinter impulses emerged that were to shape new forms of artistic critique in political song. From the mid-to-late 1970s, new groups such as Folkländer from Leipzig and Wacholder from Cottbus began performing subversive folk songs of the past—particularly the satirical variety found in the Steinitz volumes—as if they were passing critical judgment on the GDR.¹⁵ Musically, too, these groups, influenced by the sounds of contemporary Irish and Scottish folk groups such as the Sands Family and the Whistlebinkies who appeared at the annual Festival of Political Song in East Berlin between 1970 and 1990, gave a new modern twist to old "democratic" German *Volkslieder*.

In a separate development, Bernd Rump from the Songgruppe der TU Dresden, Hans-Eckardt Wenzel from Karls Enkel and Gerhard Gundermann from the Singeklub Hoyerswerda began embracing a new form known as *Liedertheater*. This was a hybrid of agitprop play, poetry, popular music, and song. Musically, these groups were influenced by the freedom song, world music, and agitrock performers who appeared at the Festival of Political Song. These often hailed from oppositional movements around the world, prominent artists over the years, including Pete Seeger, Mikis Theodorakis, Miriam Makeba, Silvio Rodriguez, Floh de Cologne, and Billy Bragg, among many others. While Karls Enkel remained chiefly in the folk, *Liedermacher*, and chanson musical sphere, Schicht and Brigade Feuerstein updated the German political song by setting it within a full electric rock band format. Alongside new compositions written chiefly by Alfons Förster and Gundermann, Feuerstein frequently used *contrafacta*, setting Gundermann's lyrics to well-known pop and rock tunes. Examples include "Ohio" by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young for the song "He Leute" (Hey People) from "Geschichten aus dem Koraktor" (Stories from the Koraktor)¹⁶ in 1978 or "Sweet Dreams" by the Eurythmics for the song "Herkunft" (Origin) from "Eine Seefahrt, die ist lustig" (A Sea Voyage is Fun)¹⁷ in 1984. As is common with *contrafacta*, the new songs often had semantic

¹¹ Wolf Biermann responded to this in his early poem "Herr Brecht" (1965), in which he satirizes the monotonous ongoing work in the Brecht Archive. See Robb, "The Legacy of Brecht," 185.

¹² Laura Bradley, "Introduction," in *Brecht and the GDR. Politics, Culture, Posterity*, 2.

¹³ Roland Berbig, *In Sachen Biermann. Protokolle, Berichte und Briefe zu der Folge einer Ausbürgerung* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1994), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781571137791.001>.

¹⁴ See Lutz Kirchenwitz, *Folk, Chanson und Liedermacher in der DDR. Chronisten, Kritiker, Kaisergeburtstagsänger* (Berlin: Dietz-Verlag, 1993); Böning, Holger. *Der Traum von einer Sache: Aufstieg und Fall der Utopien im politischen Lied der Bundesrepublik und der DDR* (Bremen: Lumière, 2004); David Robb, "Political Song in the GDR: The Cat- and-Mouse Game with Censorship and Institutions," in *Protest Song in East and West Germany since the 1960s*, ed. David Robb (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007), 227–54, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781571136909-010>.

¹⁵ See David Robb, "The Mobilizing of the German 1848 Protest Song Tradition in the Context of International Twentieth Century Folk Revivals," *Popular Music* 35, no. 3 (2016): 338–59, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143016000532>; Wolfgang Leyn, *Volkes Lied und Vater Staat: Die DDR Folkszene 1976–1990* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2016); Felix Morgenstern, "Voices of Ambiguity—The GDR Folk Music Revival Movement (1976–1990): Exploring Lived Musical Experience and Post-War German Folk Music Discourses," *Folk Life* 56, no. 2 (2018): 116–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/04308778.2018.1501956>.

¹⁶ Brigade Feuerstein, "Geschichten aus dem Koraktor," audio recording (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, Sammlung-Liedertheater, 1978), AVM-31 5054.

¹⁷ Brigade Feuerstein, "Eine Seefahrt, die ist lustig" (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, Sammlung Liedertheater, 1984), manuscript 391; audio recording (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, Sammlung Liedertheater, 1984), AVM-31 5066.

associations with the original: the call to seize the new day in the utopian “He Leute” corresponding to the spirit of freedom expressed in “Ohio;” and the longing of a suppressed young generation in “Herkunft” corresponding to the desire to “travel the world and the seven seas,” as conveyed in “Sweet Dreams.” Brigade Feuerstein also made use of tape recordings of industrial sounds to reflect the environment they were singing about, a practice normally associated with electronic groups of the time such as Kraftwerk¹⁸ or Einstürzende Neubauten.¹⁹

Crucially, the *Liedertheater* groups also embraced dramatical techniques. This was a means to escape the narrow confines of purely text-based political song performance that could so easily be censored in the GDR. From 1975 onwards, Schicht from Dresden, whose main songwriters were Bernd Rump and Jürgen Magister, advanced under the theatrical direction of Karin Wolf; Karls Enkel, based in Berlin, were assisted from 1978 onwards by the dramaturg Heiner Maaß who had previously worked with Heiner Müller and Christoph Schroth²⁰; Brigade Feuerstein, who evolved out of the Singeklub Hoyerswerda in 1978, operated under the theatrical leadership of Gundermann.

The step towards *Liedertheater* had significance in both organizational and artistic respects. For music groups, it was a means of escaping the clutches of the FDJ-controlled singing club scene and testing the limits of what was permissible within new untried structures.²¹ At the same time, these new groups had a significance for the theatrical scene. From Holger Teschke’s perspective, the “song theatres” were a response to a deficit of contemporary theater in general; an attempt to fall “under the radar screen of the state-controlled and state-subsidized city theatre system in order to escape political and aesthetic censorship.”²²

Artistically, their use of Brechtian-inspired techniques reflected the iconic status that Brecht held in the GDR. And like Biermann before them, they used these techniques to subvert: to uncover the assumptions, dogmas, and taboos of the state they lived in. While Biermann had embraced the profane, anti-authoritarian poetic tradition of the early Brecht,²³ Karls Enkel appropriated Brecht’s theatrical and musical montage technique²⁴ and use of masked character roleplay.²⁵ Brigade Feuerstein also employed the latter, but additionally made frequent use of the form of parable and learning plays. Often these would be fairy stories, of which a strong tradition already existed in the GDR as a means of codification of sensitive political issues.²⁶ Additionally, Brigade Feuerstein played on the Brechtian concept of the theater as a workshop, a place to test out ideas in front of a live audience and gauge responses. Here Gundermann had been

¹⁸ Uwe Schütte, “Kraftwerk—*Industrielle Volksmusik* between Retro-Futurism and Ambivalence,” in *German Pop Music*, ed. U. Schütte (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 85–110.

¹⁹ Alexander Carpenter, “Einstürzende Neubauten to Rammstein: Mapping the Industrial Continuum in German Pop Music,” in *German Pop Music*, ed. U. Schütte (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 151–70, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110425727-008>.

²⁰ See David Robb, *Zwei Clowns im Lande des verlorenen Lachens. Das Liedertheater Wenzel & Mensching* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1998); see also David Robb, “Music and the Rebirth of Faust in the GDR,” in *Faust and Music*, ed. L. Byrne Bodley (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 262–75.

²¹ See Robb, *Zwei Clowns*.

²² Holger Teschke, “From Faust III to Germania III. Drama in the GDR between 1949 and 1989,” in *Rereading East Germany. The Literature and Film of the GDR*, ed. Karen Leeder (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 83, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511902543.006>.

²³ See Robb, “The Legacy of Brecht.”

²⁴ See Roswitha Mueller, “Montage in Brecht,” *Theatre Journal*, 39, no. 4 (1987): 473–86, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3208249>.

²⁵ Here Wenzel and Mensching were influenced by the lectures of Rudolf Münz on *commedia dell’arte* at the Humboldt University as well as Wolfgang Heise’s lectures on Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of carnival. See Robb, *Zwei Clowns*.

²⁶ See, for example, Holger Teschke’s remarks on the use of the fairy tale motif in Benno Besson’s production of Yevgeni Schwarz’s *The Dragon* in 1965 in “From Faust III to Germania III,” 77. See also Qinna Shen, “DEFA Märchenfilme as Brechtian Parables: Gerhard Klein’s *Die Geschichte vom armen Hassan* and Konrad Petzold’s *Das Kleid*,” *The Brecht Yearbook*, 35 (2010): 112–31.

influenced by the agitprop groups he had witnessed at communist party press festivals in Italy and France where he had performed with the Singeklub Hoyerswerda.²⁷ He had been struck by the combination of music, clowning, socializing, and politics, which removed “the division between instruction and enjoyment.”²⁸ In this way, as inheritors of the legacies of Brecht or Erwin Piscator’s Red Revues²⁹ of the Weimar Republic, Brigade Feuerstein was viewed by supporters within the GDR Academy of Arts, according to Klaus Peter Schwarz, as “one of the most important projects of modern, socialist art, one which dissolved the line between serious art and entertainment as well as the division of labor between work, art and politics.”³⁰

Corresponding to Gundermann’s daily experience as a worker—he operated an excavator in a Lusatian coal mine—many of their “workshop” scenarios focused on typical conflicts of the industrial workplace. These invariably addressed the power imbalance between workers and bosses, a perennial bone of contention for Gundermann, who throughout his career held the ruling SED Party to account for its claim—as stated in the GDR constitution³¹—that the worker was an equal stakeholder in the sharing of power. This was the incendiary theme of the Brigade Feuerstein production “Eine Sehfahrt, die ist lustig” in 1984, in which Gundermann artistically processed his expulsion from the SED for dissent and insubordination.³² One can immediately see here the potential for conflict with the censoring bodies. However, for the most part, the *Liedertheater* groups managed to create a semi-autonomous space that fell largely under the radar of the institutions that supervised the entertainment industry. When difficulties arose, it helped that these groups, due to their previous elite status in the singing movement, had excellent contacts among the higher cultural bodies. For example, Karls Enkel had friends, such as the influential philosopher and academic Wolfgang Heise in the Cultural Association of the GDR, who were prepared to vouch for them to enable critical productions to go ahead.³³ Likewise Brigade Feuerstein had strong support from the Academy of Arts of the GDR, whose members included the legendary Ernst Busch. Busch invited the group to compile the program of entertainment for his eightieth birthday celebrations in 1980.³⁴ Brigade Feuerstein had further support in their hometown of Hoyerswerda, where group member Bernd Nitzsche was Town Councillor for Culture.³⁵ Such artists, in the role of functionaries, had the know-how to exploit gray areas in cultural policy to enable more controversial performances to go ahead. Reinhard Ständer, who ran the Feuersteins Musik Palast venue in which the group was resident, confirms: “We had a lot to thank Bernd [Nitzsche] for. He risked a lot for us. Not least because he continually protected Gundermann from the SED and FDJ

²⁷ As one of the elite GDR “Kader-Gruppen” (cadre groups), the Singeklub Hoyerswerda had had the privilege to perform occasionally in the West. See Dietrich “Viel Arbeit für ein Lächeln.”

²⁸ Gerhard Gundermann, quoted in Hans Dieter Schütt, *Tankstelle für Verlierer. Gespräche mit Gerhard Gundermann. Eine Erinnerung* (Berlin: Dietz-Verlag, 2011), 37. See also Dietrich, “Viel Arbeit für ein Lächeln.”

²⁹ See, for example, Graham Holderness, “Shaustück and Lehrstück: Erwin Piscator and the Politics of Theatre,” in *The Politics of Theatre and Drama*, ed. G. Holderness (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 99–119.

³⁰ Klaus Peter Schwarz. “. . . die die Welt nicht bessern können aber möchten. . .” 44.

³¹ Article 2.1 of the GDR constitution states that “[a]ll political power in the German Democratic Republic is exercised by the workers in the country,” *Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 9. April 1968 in der Fassung vom 7. Oktober 1974*, <http://www.verfassungen.de/ddr/verf74.htm> (accessed January 10, 2024).

³² See documentation of this in Hans Dieter Schütt, “Protokol einer Genossen-Schaft,” in *Gundermann: Rockpoet und Baggerfahrer. Gespräche mit Hans-Dieter Schütt* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 1996), 133–58; See also Andreas Leusink, “Gundermann und seine Partei. Ein Zwischenruf,” in Leusink, 91–103.

³³ See Robb, *Zwei Clowns*.

³⁴ Brigade Feuerstein and others, “Brandgesänge” (Songs of Fire). See manuscript in the Gundermann Archive in Hoyerswerda, no serial number.

³⁵ Ingo Dietrich, “Viel Arbeit für ein Lächeln.”

functionaries.”³⁶ Outside of their insider circle of supporters *Liedertheater* was viewed suspiciously, however. The popular annual *Lieder & Theater* workshops in Dresden organized by Schicht from 1980 to 1983 were discontinued after FDJ funding was withdrawn.³⁷ The workshops had gained a reputation for their critical level of discussion and had become a magnet for academics, journalists, and artists in general.³⁸ The FDJ’s misgivings reflected a general censorious climate—none of the productions of Schicht, Karls Enkel, or Brigade Feuerstein were ever published in the GDR.³⁹

Such political ambiguity in the status of these groups was, however, not distinct to the *Liedertheater* scene. It reflected the fluid relationship between the artists and the administrators of power, one that contradicts prevailing perceptions since unification of a purely dictatorial top-down approach to the practical running of the arts in the GDR. In the literary scene, too, Sara Jones observed “the network of personal relationships that ran through official structures of power.” This marked the “limit of the dictatorship,” an idea of Bessel and Jessen, “caused by the removal of the line drawn between representatives of power and society.”⁴⁰

At the same time, however, it also marked a limit in terms of how far the criticism would go. The lip service paid to the ideological, utopian goals of the GDR, which working within the system entailed, resulted in what Wolfgang Emmerich refers to as a “loyalty trap”⁴¹ whereby writers shied away from addressing “fundamental problems” directly.⁴² In some instances, it even led to writers agreeing to work for the Stasi,⁴³ Gundermann himself falling into this category in his early career. However, Gundermann was a slightly exceptional case. As he explained, after the controversial revelations of his Stasi activity broke in 1995, his two years spent as a trainee officer in the GDR army from 1973–75, although unsuccessful, had left him with a deeply ingrained sense of duty regarding the defense of his state.⁴⁴ In the period from 1977 up until being expelled from the Party and ceasing to cooperate with the Stasi in 1984, however, one notices an increasing questioning and criticism of the practice of unaccountable power. In his portrayal of “heroic” characters in songs such as “Ilja Murometz”⁴⁵ (1977), one sees the beginnings of an identification with more contradictory literary and mythological figures. This continues with his treatment of Krabat, a figure who cannot easily be cast into the mold of an unambiguous socialist realist hero like “John Henry,” as popularized

³⁶ Reinhard Ständer, email to this author, June 26, 2023.

³⁷ Kirchenwitz, *Folk, Chanson und Liedermacher in der DDR*.

³⁸ See Liedzentrum der Akademie der Künste, ed., *Werkstaat Lieder & Theater. 1981–82. Dresden. 1982. Diskussionsprotokolle* (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1982).

³⁹ Manuscripts and tape recordings of the *Liedertheater* performances of these groups were, however, collected by Karin Wolf in the Akademie der Künste where they are still available for consultation.

⁴⁰ Sara Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism. Negotiating Space in the GDR Literary Sphere*. Interdisciplinary German Cultural Studies 10 (Berlin, de Gruyter, 2011), 6, fn20, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110237962>. See Richard Bessel and Ralph Jessen, “Einleitung: Die Grenzen der Diktatur,” in *Die Grenzen der Diktatur*, ed. R. Bessel and R. Jessen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1996), 16.

⁴¹ Wolfgang Emmerich, “Between Hypertrophy and Melancholy—The GDR Literary Intelligentsia in a Historical Context,” *Universitas*, 8 (1993): 278–79; quoted in Jones, 9–10.

⁴² Jones, 12. See also Gregor Ohlerich use of the term “utopia trap” in “Eine Typologie des sozialistischen Intellektuellen,” in *Das war die DDR, DDR-Forschung im Fadenkreuz von Herrschaft, Außenbeziehungen, Kultur und Souveränität*, ed. H. Timmermann (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 534.

⁴³ Jones, 13.

⁴⁴ Gundermann in interview with Hans-Dieter Schütt, *Tankstelle für Verlierer. Gespräche mit Gerhard Gundermann. Eine Erinnerung* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 2011), 90.

⁴⁵ Gerhard Gundermann, “Ilja Murometz,” in *Das Liederbuch Teil 2* (Berlin: Buschfunk Verlag, 1999), 45.

by Pete Seeger⁴⁶, or the heroine of the song “Mutter Mathilde” by the West German communist Franz Josef Degenhardt.⁴⁷

In the rock scene,⁴⁸ too, the political ambiguity of the artists was on display. Peter Wicke and John Shepherd observed the phenomenon of musicians sitting on the same committees that controlled them. An example was Toni Krahl, singer of the band City, a former dissident who had been imprisoned for protesting at the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, who later became president of the Rock Music Branch of the Committee for Entertainment Art. On one hand, as Wicke and Shepherd identify, the rock artists represented the voices of “the people,” yet on the other hand they were also party to the implementation of policy which the people no longer trusted or could live with. The inertia resulting from this stalemate spelled the death knell of the state.⁴⁹

This irresolvable contradiction notwithstanding, the inconsistencies of the political infrastructure allowed artists to exploit loopholes that offered critical possibilities of expression. This presents an image of the GDR, as Mary Fulbrook describes with regard to the literary scene, “that is not often represented in traditional political histories of the GDR,” one “in which there was far more openness and genuine debate about how to improve the basic conditions of everyday life than might be thought.”⁵⁰ With this in mind, I will explore the significance of Gundermann’s treatment of the *Krabat* motif in the *Liedertheater* productions of Brigade Feuerstein and later in his solo career. Immediately one notices the phenomenon of the use of literary intertextuality, less common in Anglo-American popular protest song,⁵¹ but which was an established feature of GDR *Liedermacher*. Such a practice reflected how GDR political song—like its counterpart in West Germany—often straddled the boundaries between popular and high culture. In a climate of censorship, the adaptation of motifs from a literary past was a way of constructing a paradigm of one’s own existence in the GDR. It functioned as a tool for establishing a narrative code of communication between artist and public. Wolf Biermann, for example, had conjured up the spirit of subversive poets of the past such as François Villon, Heinrich Heine and Brecht in his songs.⁵² Wenzel and Mensching from Karls Enkel passed critical comment on the GDR by creating montages of texts by icons of the GDR’s claimed philosophical and literary heritage such as Karl Marx, Erich Mühsam, Johannes R. Becher, and Goethe.⁵³ Gundermann, too, had his points of literary reference, but these were contemporary ones from the GDR, the main one being Brězan’s *Krabat oder die Verwandlung der Welt*.

Before looking at this, I will summarize the motifs from this novel that gave Gundermann an aesthetic framework in which to express his ideas. These motifs include *Krabat*’s identification with the underdog; the historical conflict between above and below; power’s control of knowledge; the limitations of heroism;

⁴⁶ See, for example, David Ingram, “‘My Dirty Stream’: Pete Seeger, American Folk Music, and Environmental Protest,” *Popular Music and Society*, 31, 1 (2008): 21–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007760601061456>.

⁴⁷ Franz Josef Degenhardt, “Mutter Mathilde,” on LP *Mutter Mathilde* (Polydor 1972).

⁴⁸ See David Robb, “Censorship, Dissent and the Metaphorical Language of GDR Rock,” in *Popular Music under State Socialism: Breaking the Cold War Paradigm*, ed. Ewa Mazierska (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 109–28, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59273-6_6.

⁴⁹ Peter Wicke and John Shepherd, “‘The Cabaret is Dead’: Rock Culture as State Enterprise—The Political Organization of Rock in East Germany,” in *Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions*, ed. Tony Bennett, Simon Frith, Larry Grossberg, John Shepherd and Graeme Turner (London: Routledge, 1993), 25–36.

⁵⁰ Mary Fulbrook, *The People’s State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 9, quoted in Jones, 5.

⁵¹ While this is a trait of Bob Dylan, for example, with his references to Beat Poetry and French Symbolism in his songs, in Anglo-American protest song literary intertextuality was not such a common feature as it was in East German political song.

⁵² See David Robb, “Narrative Role-Play as Communicative Strategy.”

⁵³ Robb, *Zwei Clowns*.

the lack of time to realize utopian ambitions; and the relationship between people, machines, and the natural environment.

Jurij Brězan's *Krabat* oder die *Verwandlung der Welt*

Jurij Brězan's *Krabat* oder *Die Verwandlung der Welt* is a novel that draws on the legendary figure of Krabat from Sorbian mythology. Published simultaneously in German and Sorb in 1976, it is set in the Lusatian south-eastern area of Germany bordering Poland where the minority Sorb language is still spoken. Significantly this region includes Hoyerswerda, the hometown of Gundermann's group Brigade Feuerstein. The novel follows the story of the timeless hero Krabat on his quest for "Glücksland" (Land of Happiness). While focused on the Sorb region and its history, it takes a postmodern narrative approach in jumping back and forward between time levels, the timeless Krabat weaving in and out of the story of the modern-day bio-geneticist Jan Serbin.

The novel combines elements of fantasy, science fiction and mythology, yet is underpinned by a strong historical consciousness in Krabat's never-ending struggle: he represents the spirit of resistance of the historically downtrodden, whether the Sorb peasantry or Spartacus's army of slaves defying the Romans⁵⁴, while his eternal adversary, the Count Wolf Reissenberg, represents the ruling class. Thus, Krabat and Reissenberg symbolize the opposing sides of the historical class conflict and, at the same time, the duality of the human condition.⁵⁵ This contradiction will only be resolved when "one hangs the other up from a tree, his blue tongue between his teeth."⁵⁶

Krabat's quest is related to that of the scientist Jan Serbin as the latter deliberates on the future of humanity, taking the standpoint that morals and reason must counteract the randomness of scientific discovery. In the book's exploration of the relationship between knowledge and power, Serbin intends to use his research to release humanity from its animal nature.⁵⁷ He is convinced that genetic biology can save humankind by creating a new person who will act morally based on powers of reason. Jan's quest is constantly impeded, however, by colleagues allured by the power of scientific discovery uninhibited by moral considerations. He feels there is only limited time for humanity to set itself on the right course. In response to finding his grandfather's diary entry "I don't have much time left," Jan writes underneath: "We don't have much time left to consider whether we take the earth into our own hands or let the black sun rise."⁵⁸

Power is frequently equated with the image of stones, for example, "the 'versteinerte' (hardened) face of power."⁵⁹ This authority is embodied by the figure of the local politician Anton Donat, in the context of whom the relationship between power and knowledge is discussed. Donat proudly sees himself as a worker, one who recognizes the need for knowledge and the importance of collaboration with science. But Jan is mistrustful of Anton's division between leadership and "the people" in his assertion: "We'll make the people

⁵⁴ Brězan, *Krabat* oder *die Verwandlung der Welt*, 175–77.

⁵⁵ See Annemarie Auer, des Guten: Jurij Brezans *Krabat* oder *die Verwandlung der Welt*," *Neue Deutsche Literatur*, 26, no. 11 (1978): 23–32.

⁵⁶ Brězan, *Krabat*, 49–50; 200. All translations from German into English by David Robb.

⁵⁷ Brězan, 333.

⁵⁸ Brězan, 26–27.

⁵⁹ Brězan, 148. For references to "stones," see 80, 86, 146–47, 176, 232, 319, 331–33.

so clever that they won't do anything stupid anymore."⁶⁰ In this way the administration of knowledge purely on power's terms is subtly rejected in the novel.

Krabat, on the other hand, acquires knowledge for the sake of the freedom of the Sorb people.⁶¹ He is the hero that Jan Serbin identifies with—a magician with his magic staff on a quest for happiness. He is more real to Jan than traditionally war-like heroes of mythology like Siegfried or Hagen of Troy. Unlike those, "Krabat knew the depths of the centuries, the deserts of powerlessness, the oceans of injustice, the infinite land of resurrection, the horizons of happiness."⁶²

He is indeed an alternative hero, as depicted in his and his trumpeter companion Jakub Kusch's roles as musicians and clowns, singing and pranking their way through history against the forces of darkness and chaos. Here their songs⁶³ are the antidote to the shadows and the black sun that are equated with the morals of Reissenberg, the machines that destroy nature, and the logic of war. For the scientist Jan, war represents the "victory of the animal over humans." He rejects the mythologizing function of the monuments to war, also made of stone: "We sat waiting on the stone steps in front of the monument, the huge stone glorification of war behind us, overwhelmed by the excessive hero pathos and hero mythology."⁶⁴

In the novel, war and the machinations of power are set against nature, in the form of Krabat and the sacred land of the Sorbs that includes the recurring images of the lime tree and the Satkula stream flowing through the Upper Lusatia region. In an analogy with social forces, the seeds that struggle to grow through the stony ground finally succeed and ripen into full corn.⁶⁵ In this natural context the birth of the Serbin grandchild is significant. Although the mother has fears about bringing a child into a world of violence and war,⁶⁶ it will ensure the continuity of the Serbin family. This prevents the socialist collective from appropriating their house and its adjacent land which it wants to cultivate with its machines.⁶⁷ The act of birth is thus contrasted with war, on one hand, and the further exploitation of nature, on the other.

Towards the end, the novel contains a summative statement on the relativity of truth, which again questions the communist notion of the GDR as an historically pre-ordained inevitability. The grandfather Peter Serbin concludes:

But who can claim to possess the sole truth that condemns everything else as a lie when things actually have many faces and the events, even after a hundred years, can be interpreted no differently than a stream from which one scoops water with a jug. The jug is full of water from the stream, but the stream flows.⁶⁸

Such ambiguity is fascinating in terms of how the novel was interpreted in the GDR. For a state that saw itself as the "Sieger der Geschichte" (victor of history), the novel appears to cast doubt on this concept, not least in view of the philosophical and ethical problems that Jan contends with. The open-endedness was picked up at the time in literary reviews in the GDR⁶⁹ to the extent that critic Annemarie Auer felt it

⁶⁰ Brézan, 148.

⁶¹ See Heine, "Krabat," 659.

⁶² Brézan, 23

⁶³ For significance of "songs" see Brézan, 68–69; 74 and 339.

⁶⁴ Brézan, 85–86.

⁶⁵ Brézan, 319.

⁶⁶ Brézan, 323

⁶⁷ Brézan, 404.

⁶⁸ Brézan, 407.

⁶⁹ See Eberhard Röhner. "Krabat oder die Verwandlung der Welt," *Weimarer Beiträge: Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft, Ästhetik und Kulturwissenschaft*, 22, no. 7 (1976): 148–54; see also Lucia Heine, "Krabat oder die Verwandlung der Welt," *Sinn und Form* XXIX, (May/June 1977): 659–67.

necessary to assert that Brézan's book was indeed an active defense of the social revolution that the GDR embodied, that its critique of power was clearly directed against Western imperialism's global assertiveness.⁷⁰ Yet this is only partly the case. While Wolf Reissenberg is manifestly equated with the self-destructive insatiability: "the ever more and never enough"⁷¹ of capitalism, the moral issues raised in the book are evidently applicable to the administration of power anywhere, including the GDR. This is implicit in the tension between Sorb and dominant culture, and even explicit, for example, in the sacrificing of individual dreams in the creation of socialist collective farms⁷² and in the destruction of nature by the latter's machines.⁷³

Such ambiguity must have been fascinating for the young Gundermann, equipped with the communist ideology he had absorbed in school and officer training college. He was a young socialist hero with a utopian vision of a better world and a determination to make a difference. This was expressed in his application for SED Party membership in 1977 and in his misguided decision the previous year to begin collaborating with the Stasi as an informer.⁷⁴ Yet his idealism would constantly be countered by the harsh realities of the mining world he worked in and its rigid Party structure that did not accommodate his dissenting views, as exemplified by his first Party proceedings in 1979.⁷⁵ As will be explored, his channeling of the ideas of *Krabat* to artistically express the contradictions of his working world was to become a regular feature of Brigade Feuerstein's *Liedertheater* productions and later of his own solo songs. This can be seen across Gundermann's career in his treatment of problems that arise in *Krabat*: his teasing out of the concept of heroism; his questioning of power systems that control knowledge; his dilemma between pursuing a utopian ideal faced with the limited time to fulfill oneself. Significantly for the miner Gundermann, it will also be seen in nature's constant struggle with the (self-) destructive actions of humans.

"Krabat und seine Geschichten" and "Geschichten aus dem Koraktor"

Gundermann's initial treatments of the *Krabat* material, the Singeklub Hoyerswerda's "Krabat und seine Geschichten" (1976) and Brigade Feuerstein's "Geschichten aus dem Koraktor" (1978) and "Das Große Match" (1980) offer a fascinating insight into the transition of a loyal GDR singing club to a more critically disposed *Liedertheater* group. While the first two productions display inconsistencies that correspond to an artist who has not quite found his artistic form or a clear critical voice, the third, "Das große Match," successfully achieves both and thereby lays down a marker for Brigade Feuerstein's subsequent critical treatments of the theme of unaccountable power in their productions throughout the 1980s.

⁷⁰ Auer, "Vom allmählichen Durchsetzen," 24.

⁷¹ Brézan, 10, 12, 332.

⁷² Brézan, 353–56.

⁷³ Brézan, 258–59; 313–16; 349–51.

⁷⁴ See Gundermann's reassessment of his activities in the Stasi where he acknowledges his feelings of guilt: "I'm not happy that I put myself in the hands of people who deliberately produced perpetrators. [. . .] Those that it affected were specifically criminalised. That was a scandal. If I'd known that, I would have left, that's certain. But I feel no hatred. At most I have a duty to be disappointed with myself." Hans-Dieter Schütt, *Tankstelle für Verlierer. Gespräche mit Gerhard Gundermann. Eine Erinnerung* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 2011), 100–101. See also Christiane Baumann, "Die sieben Jahre als Genosse 'Grigori': Akten, Einsichten und Fragen," in *Gundermann. Von jedem Tag will ich was haben, was ich nicht vergesse*, ed. Andreas Leusink (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2018), 83–90.

⁷⁵ See note 30.

The issue, particularly with the first production, undoubtedly lies in the aforementioned “loyalty trap,” exacerbated by Gundermann’s membership of a state-supervised singing club, as a result of which he is unable to consistently apply the full critical potential of the *Krabat* novel. An example of this is immediately apparent in an early scene, comprising a series of short narratives, devised by Gundermann, about past encounters between the two adversaries *Krabat* and *Reissenberg* throughout the history of Hoyerswerda, the group’s hometown. These feature *Reissenberg* in different guises as the oppressor (e.g. Elector of Saxony, King of Bohemia, Napoleon) and *Krabat* in various roles as a rebellious underdog. These stories are framed by the image of *Krabat*’s lime tree which has not yet blossomed. As history moves forward and *Krabat* achieves the upper hand in his struggle with *Reissenberg*, the lime tree begins to bloom, finally doing so at the end of WWII when the Red Army reaches Hoyerswerda on April 20, 1945, finding a town in ruins:

*It looked as if there could never be a town here again. BUT THE LIME TREE BLOSSOMED HERE AND EVERYWHERE EAST OF THE ELBE? And Wolf Reissenberg hanged on the tree of history, blue tongue between his teeth, here and everywhere east of the Elbe.*⁷⁶

At first sight, this portrayal appears to conform with an official SED interpretation of Brěžan’s *Krabat*, one which confirms the GDR as the “victor of history.” This deviates from the novel, in which the conflict with *Reissenberg* is never resolved, rather is portrayed as an open-ended dialectic. However, on closer scrutiny, the question mark at the end of Gundermann’s sentence about the blooming of the lime tree gives a clue as to his intentions: namely to explore the extent to which the GDR was in fact the embodiment of “the land of happiness.”

In the typical style of the singing movement, however, many of the songs, which examine the achievements of the GDR in its *Aufbau* (construction) period, sound celebratory and patriotic. In the “Regenbogenlied” (Rainbow Song), for example, written by Bernd Rump and Jürgen Magister from Schicht, the rainbow symbolizes a bridge connecting revolutionary movements of the past—the Peasants’ War, the March 1848 Revolution, and the Spartacus rebellion of 1918—with the present day. While viewing the GDR as the next stage in this line, the last two verses caution that there is still work to complete: “Look, the rainbow / reaches right up to us / And where we stand today / It doesn’t just stop there.” Ultimately the rainbow offers something to hold onto: the historical certainty that the GDR is on the right track despite doubts and setbacks: “And when the sun comes out again / The bridge becomes blurred / We probably always need it / When we have doubts.” The song “Tage” (Days), written by Rump and Gundermann, confirms the group’s steadfast commitment to the state: “Here I have the rain, here I have my stream, / Here is the place I don’t want to leave anymore.” Gundermann’s song “Sie hatten eine Grenze gezogen” (They had drawn a border) expresses similar pride. It remarks on how the GDR, compared to West Germany, was left with limited resources when the border was drawn, for example, the poorer quality brown coal of the Lusatia region, in which Hoyerswerda is situated. However, people from as diverse social statuses as “released prisoners and activists and bakers” all participated in the arduous construction of a new industry. The town builders are depicted as heroically improvising to achieve their goals, ditching the planning regulations when necessary, and putting up with sunburn and soot for the sake of “a piece of heaven.”

At the same time, Bernd Rump’s song “Das Volk” (The People) pre-emptively warns future Brigade Feuerstein productions that the people, who “pay every bill / and take the blame for everything,”

⁷⁶ Singeklub Hoyerswerda, “*Krabat und seine Geschichten*.” The songs and scenes quoted in this section are all from this production.

should not be taken for granted. Their portrayed independence, intelligence, and lack of respect for authority clashes with the government's attempt at ideological control. The final verse alludes to an unpredictable power that is hard to harness: "The people are their own kings / who write the decrees themselves / the people are never shy of themselves / and this power remains the power of the people." With Rump's text, Gundermann is here setting out his stall, throwing down the gauntlet to the GDR government, previewing what he will do in subsequent Brigade Feuerstein productions, namely holding theory and ideology to account in every respect.

In 1978, the group with its new name Brigade Feuerstein,⁷⁷ performed the production "Geschichten aus dem Koraktor."⁷⁸ The title referred to Krabat's book magic tales from Slavonic mythology. With its scenes and songs, it focused more concisely on motifs from the Krabat novel: the historical power struggle between above and below; power's monopoly of information; and the imagery of the lime tree and the stone. Via the figure of Krabat it also introduced Gundermann's narrative identification with ambiguous heroes—formally distancing himself from one-sided socialist realist heroes of workers' song tradition—that would become his hallmark throughout his career.⁷⁹

In the "Krabat-Lied" (Krabat Song), Gundermann establishes his narrative role as historical rebel. Here he relates to the innocent logic of children: "Good day you people / Don't look up at me so amazed / You want to know who I am. / I'm like you a human child."⁸⁰ He teases out different possibilities of "heroic" behavior in the character of Franziska.⁸¹ To help her find a function for herself in society Krabat the magician gives Franziska a choice between three different courses of action. As in Brězan's *Krabat*, heroism that involves violence is rejected. Unable to handle a role as a rebel fighter against Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile, Franziska settles for a role as an apprentice in a brigade. This option is, however, also not straightforward: she is over-zealous, and succeeds in alienating her fellow workers, chastising them for their lack of direction and revolutionary verve:

*I don't like how when you pull your cart your backs are always in the direction of travel [. . .]
Neither do you ever actually look where you're going on this cart. It's enough for you that it's
going in the direction of better times ahead. You're always looking behind you.*

In this speech Gundermann is playing with a line from Brězan's novel about the impossibility of moving forward "facing backwards." The only way to succeed was to look ahead fearlessly, and never to shy away from the hard questions. Krabat states: "If you go with your back first, you won't find anything other than the past, and being satisfied amounts to giving up your dreams, reconciling yourself amounts to retracting your questions."⁸²

In Franziska's irrepressible desire to ask the difficult questions of authority there is a utopian, subversive moment. But, as her colleague Ben advises her, she will not be able to change these workers. Their refusal to engage with her idealism leaves her with a dilemma. The "Schlußlied" (Final Song) reminds

⁷⁷ This name combines the references to "Brigade" (an industrial work team) and "Feuerstein" which was the nickname for the brown coal mined in the Lusatia region where the group lived.

⁷⁸ Brigade Feuerstein. "Geschichten aus dem Koraktor."

The "Koraktor" is the name of Krabat's magic book of tales in Sorb mythology.

⁷⁹ This can be seen with his adoption of the roles of "Lancelot" and the "Samurai" in later songs. See "Lancelots Zwischenbilanz," in *Gundermann. Das Liederbuch. Teil 2*, 21 and "Der siebente Samurai," in *Gundermann. Das Liederbuch*, 21.

⁸⁰ "Geschichten aus dem Koraktor." All quoted songs and scenes in this section are from this production.

⁸¹ Franziska is here an adaptation, a proletarian version, of the literary character from Brigitte Reimann's GDR novel *Franziska Linkerhand* (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1974).

⁸² Brězan, *Krabat*, 336.

Franziska to wise up and take everyone with her on her journey: “Franziska don’t ditch anyone; / We have far too many gaps. / We abandoned some already / Who then stabbed us in our backs.”

This reference to potential traitors shows that Gundermann’s patriotism is still intact. The pathos of the penultimate verse confirms the strength of the utopian vision he retains: “We’ve stretched the ropes / High in the rainbow sheen. / We’ll pull the sky down to the ground. / We want the sky for all in its entirety!” At the same time, the final verse is more critical, admonishing the self-congratulatory propaganda that presents the GDR as the “victor of history.” For Gundermann, the story is far from over: “We don’t have a monopoly on victory / Shut your cheering mouth. / As long as Reissenberg slaughters, / We won’t have any peace.” This refers to the undefeated capitalist forces that prevent the GDR and humankind from arriving in “Glücksland.”

The mixed messages, the side-by-side messages of system critique and patriotism in “Koraktor” are symptomatic of an artist wrestling with his adherence to the concept of utopia. Sara Jones has written about this dilemma for many GDR writers who found themselves in a “utopia trap.”⁸³ In the aftermath of the Third Reich, many GDR writers having identified with the founding utopian, anti-fascist and progressive aims of the state found themselves unable to voice “substantial criticisms” of the state due to its monopoly on the concept of utopia. The young Gundermann, too, falls into this category. On one hand he wants to expose the state’s hypocrisy, but he was trapped in this conflation of his commitment to utopia and his loyalty to the state because in his socialist upbringing the two were indistinguishable from one another.

From this point on, however, Gundermann becomes increasingly aware of the difference between socialist ideals and state dogma. A re-written version of “Koraktor” performed in Leipzig on October 20, 1978, deals more directly with power’s stranglehold on knowledge. This version highlights shortages in the workplace and the withholding of information about this according to the principle “the people don’t need to know everything!” It also satirizes the falsification of figures to pretend that targets have been achieved, a practice mocked in the song “Vom Gut gehen” (Of well-being): “When the bright lights are burning / And the big wheel is turning, / It’s very clear to see, / That things are going forward with us.”

Encapsulating this theme, this version aptly concludes with the song “Rote Fahne” (Red Flag) where the flag is symbolic for a distant leadership that does not communicate with its people: “Brothers see the red flag, firm and motionless / Rammed into the ground so no storm can tear it down./ It should be visible to all as our sign / It stands above everyone and stands so alone.”

In “Geschichten aus dem Koraktor” Gundermann also plays on recurring ambiguous symbols from the *Krabat* novel. The lyrics of “Linden-Lied” (Lime Tree Song) express transience and change as opposed to solidification. The growth of the tree will always be countered by the stony ground: “In a valley in the middle of the world / a lime tree stands on a stony field, / big and black and without a leaf, because at its roots there are only stones.” In Gundermann’s work generally the stone becomes a metaphor for forces that impede growth or enlightenment. Yet, as will be examined later with regard to the song “Steinland” (Land of Stone), the stone is also ambiguous: it is part of the whole that supports life. Other dualities in the “Linden-Lied” symbolize this antagonism:

*On its broad trunk each ring
shows when a war went through the land.*

⁸³ Here Jones is channeling an idea of Gregor Ohlerich in, “Eine Typologie des sozialistischen Intellektuellen,” in *Das war die DDR. DDR-Forschung im Fadenkreuz von Herrschaft, Außenbeziehungen, Kultur und Souveränität*, ed. Heiner Timmermann (Münster: LIT-Verlag, 2004), 534. Quoted in Sara Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism. Negotiating Space in the GDR Literary Sphere* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 10.

*For every twig that grows in the morning,
a partisan dies at night.*

*The tree saw centuries coming and going,
but none ever saw the lime tree bloom.*

[. . .]
*And then the lime tree will bloom too,
and will be a gallows pole.
A man will turn around in the wind
and already be dead.*

The message of ambiguity and conflict in “Geschichten aus dem Koraktor” is underpinned by the music. This constitutes a combination of styles from several genres. These included international freedom and partisan songs, agitprop, German *Liedermacher*, English folk rock, North American pop and rock, and Broadway musical theater. The music was composed primarily by Alfons Förster with significant contributions by Gundermann and Wenni Schickor. Providing an aesthetic of breaks and contrasts, it reflects the dialectical musical tradition of Hanns Eisler as well as the montage approach of Kurt Weill and music theater in general.⁸⁴ For example, in the “Krabat-Lied” the pulse of the song, provided by the rhythm of a factory machine, creates a tension with Gundermann’s folk style composition, reminiscent of the folk-rock group Jethro Tull, evoking a rural, old worldly setting fitting for Krabat.

Another example of musical contrast is displayed in the “Linden-Lied”: while the softly played folk introduction reflects the idyllic rural setting, the staccato counterpoint of electric guitars supports the theme of wars, whose destruction prevents the lime tree from blossoming. The verses are bridged in turn by a *dolce* piano interlude, a faster folk-rock instrumental passage, and an unaccompanied spoken section. In this way, the mosaic of differing tempos and styles create an epic feel reflecting the ebb and flow of history.

The “Pact of Reason” in “Das große Match” and “Liebestraum im Weltenraum”

With “Das große Match” from 1980 Brigade Feuerstein continued the treatment of themes from *Krabat oder die Verwandlung der Welt*. The first can be seen in the use of the concept of “Baustein” (building block). In the novel Jan Serbin declares that his scientific project will produce the blocks which constitute the basic principles of the new human, who is programmed to control his or her own future. With “Das große Match” Gundermann borrowed the term to denote Feuerstein’s new scientific laboratory approach to *Liedertheater*: shows consisting of shorter half-hour “blocks” in which ideas could be tested out rationally and demonstrated to the public in a digestible fashion. The blocks would form part of the larger “Spectaculum” shows consisting of different types of performance over several hours: *Liedertheater*, children’s theater, clown shows, solo singer/songwriters, and rock concerts of well-known covers. The idea of the “Spectaculum” came from the fairground-type festivals that the group had encountered in Italy and France where the audience was free to move around from one show to another.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ See, for example, Albrecht Betz: *Hanns Eisler Political Musician* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Stephen Hinton, *Weill’s Musical Theater. Stages of Reform* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520951839>.

⁸⁵ Personal interview with Ingo Dietrich, February 4, 2020.

“Das grosse Match” from 1980 forms the culmination of Gundermann’s treatment of *Krabat*. It adapts several whole passages from the Brézan novel including the crucial scene of Krabat and Reissenberg’s encounter on the moor. These scenes are linked by the theme of the importance of humans’ ability to exercise reason in face of the dangers of violence spiraling into all-out conflict. This was relevant to a burning issue of the time: the intensification of the Cold War arms race between East and West in the early 1980s. The central thread of “Das große Match,” provided by the slapstick boxing match between the archangels Michael and Lucifer, is the clash of perspectives of Krabat and Reissenberg: Krabat believes the world can defeat the never-ending cycle of violence and exploitation while Reissenberg denies that this is possible. As an abstraction of this, Gundermann adapted Brezan’s parable of Spartacus, in which the slaves await their final battle with their Roman masters. Here Gundermann presents the conviction of a slave that there is no alternative to the struggle for freedom. At the same time this slave understands that victory is an ambiguous concept that does not necessarily lead to a new reality:

*What is that, winning? In the arena I’ve won, hundreds of times. I’ve survived by killing the one I shared a blanket, bread and a whore with the night before. What is it, winning? Tomorrow is our final battle, but I’ll take a few of them with me over to the other side. Is that a victory?*⁸⁶

In reply, Spartacus knows that while victory may not end the cycle of killing, at least their uprising has given hope to the world: “[W]e have given hope to the world. Hope does not die on its crosses [. . .] We are the beginning.”⁸⁷

Gundermann’s identification here with the historical plight of all slaves forms an example of how, throughout his career, he creates a distinctive narrative perspective by linking into a wider universe⁸⁸—often via literary or mythological characters such as Krabat, Lancelot or the Samurai. Following this passage, the cast sing Gundermann’s song “Danach” (Afterwards). It plays on the motif of “weaving a shroud” from “Die Schlesischen Weber” (The Silesian Weavers), Heinrich Heine’s famous poetic response to the desperate plight of the starving weavers of 1844. Whereas for Heine, the shroud is symbolic of Germany’s fatal neglect of the Silesian weavers, in Gundermann’s song, the shroud of Spartacus’s slaves is symbolic of their historical sacrifice which will be eternally preserved in the memory of the oppressed: “Slaves, come we’re weaving / a shroud for us, / onward for the rest of time, / so that we may be preserved / for eternity.” The pathos of the lyrics is mirrored by the music which, in its progressive development, reflects the epic nature of the slaves’ story. It is highly dramatic in the style of a funeral march, sung partly as a round. The epic quality is increased by an extended folk-rock instrumental passage featuring distorted electric guitar, bass, and keyboards, reminiscent of Jethro Tull.

In “Das große Match” the spiraling cycle of violence is expressed by Michael and Lucifer’s boxing match enacted in the miming style of Charlie Chaplin. A fight with fists quickly escalates to one with knives and shields before moving on to tanks, then finally a Pershing II missile. This *Leitfaden* is interrupted by another parable from *Krabat*, the story of the tiger and the soldiers. Brézan’s parable warns of the danger of irrational faith: it tells of three soldiers who, “furious with religious zeal,” try to convert each other to their own system of belief, but thereby lose sight of the danger of the tiger who kills them.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ “Das große Match,” adapted from Brézan, 176.

⁸⁷ “Das große Match,” adapted from Brézan, 177.

⁸⁸ Simone Hain describes how Gundermann also does this by linking with objects from the material world around him in his lyrics, which enables him structurally “to express in wonderfully dialectical figures what most people only perceive, and to enjoy with all his senses the things that sounded so plain in theory.” Hain, “Unsereins. Gerhard Gundermann und das wahre Leben, 1955–1998,” 100.

⁸⁹ Brézan, 322.

The final scene is an adaptation of Krabat's encounter with Reissenberg on the moor. As a parable of the irresolvable master-servant relationship, neither adversary can knock the other off the narrow path that constitutes the only safe way through the moor. They end up crawling on top of each other.⁹⁰ Here Gundermann seizes on the idea of the "pact of reason"⁹¹ which the adversaries appear to strike, which ultimately prevents either of them from slipping to their deaths in the swamp. The scene—and thus the production overall—crucially ends in a stalemate, both pulling back from the brink, indicative of a possible pact of reason between the two ideological enemies.

"Das große Match" closes with the pacifistic, ecological song "Nach dieser Erde wäre da keine" (After this earth there would be none). It is a fitting close to the production, reflecting the desire for a balance of nature, as reflected in the idyllic settings of the Sorb countryside in the *Krabat* novel. It is a three-part round written by Oktober-Klub member Gerd Kern protesting at NATO's Double-Tracked-Decision in 1979 to modernize its atomic arsenal. The somberness of the round encapsulated the reflective mood of the evening. It anticipates Gundermann's henceforth preoccupation with environmental destruction:

*After this earth there would be none
that you could call a person's home
Therefore, pay attention people and strive
So that it survives.
To whom would it be a memorial then,
if it silently orbited the sun?*⁹²

This theme continues in the next production "Liebestraum im Weltenraum" (Love Dream in Space)⁹³ from 1981. Performed in the same year as the release of Kraftwerk's ironic "Computer Love," it was a farcical, yet controversial, portrayal of a Soviet-US confrontation in space, in which the computers of the respective two enemy spaceships fall in love and refuse to obey orders to attack. The show concludes with Gundermann and Förster's "Lied der Raumschiffe und Kosmonauten" (Song of the Spaceships and Cosmonauts), a song reflecting further influence from Krabat with its image of humans, nature, and machines in harmony. In inviting the idea of reconciliation between East and West in their Cold War, it deviates from the official "Abgrenzungs-Politik" (isolation policy) of the GDR:

*So may human, tree and river shake hands,
wash oil, salt and soot from the farmland,
let's set the ground free that nourishes us well,
so our home is nice when it belongs to us entirely.*

*So may human and machine shake hands,
the ship that he built should not drag him to hell,
and may the spirits he called make him big and strong,
so he no longer flees from them, crying, naked and bare.*

*So may human and brother human shake hands.
May it remain unsaid what divides our countries,*

⁹⁰ "Das große Match," adapted from Brëzan, 317.

⁹¹ This is first expressed as such in Jurij Brëzan's sequel novel, *Krabat oder die Bewahrung der Welt* (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, 2020), 239. Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent references to Brëzan refer to *Krabat oder die Verwandlung der Welt*.

⁹² "Das große Match."

⁹³ Brigade Feuerstein, "Liebestraum im Weltenraum," unpublished manuscript (Hoyerswerda: Gundermann Archive, Kulturfabrik, no serial number, 1981).

*may we fix the world, no one can do it alone,
so that we don't burn one day in the beautiful sunshine!*⁹⁴

Krabat's Motifs of Heroism, Time, and the Difficult Questions in "Nachrichten aus dem Glücksland"

Gundermann's exploration of the ideas of *Krabat* continued in 1983 with "Nachrichten aus dem Glücksland (News from the land of happiness),"⁹⁵ a duo production with his wife Conny performed during a brief separation from Brigade Feuerstein.⁹⁶ In the form of a children's parable, it again critically examines the theme of heroism. Hans is a dragon slayer by profession who ironically has been badly defeated in a fight with a dragon. A good fairy gives him one wish to reset his course. Hans, who is clearly more of a loser than a traditional hero, provides an early example of Gundermann's interest in the under-achiever which culminated in his much-quoted statement in the 1990s: "I'd like to be something like a filling station for losers."⁹⁷

In the third scene, Hans attempts to make himself useful by going in search of "the lost time," another influence that can be traced back to *Krabat*. In the novel Jan Serbin believed that all time must be made to count in order to progress to a meaningful future. One must grasp "unattached time"⁹⁸ that covers past, present and future: "As long as one holds onto the idea of a possible reasonable future, there can be no senseless past. If one dropped this idea, however, it would necessarily result in a senseless present."⁹⁹

For Gundermann's "a senseless present" is one spent watching pointless TV. Hans comes across a magician who steals Hans's time in exchange for "a colorful wonderful world" of TV. But Hans saves himself by switching on the notorious GDR propaganda news program "Der Schwarze Kanal" (The Black Channel). On viewing this, the magician falls asleep and loses his power, allowing Hans to steal back his time, making off with a sack full of it. In this way Gundermann satirizes the hugely unpopular state news coverage.

Hans's final trial deals with another theme of *Krabat*: that of submissiveness before officialdom—a typical characteristic of authoritarian GDR society—resulting in the inability to ask questions. Hans falls in love with a sick girl called Angelina who is suffering from the inability to say the words "I want." In a slapstick, Hans uses his telescope to search for Angelina's words, finding them in the back of her head, each held captive by guardians representing "the easy answers." This idea also stems from *Krabat*, who was also suspicious of the easy answers provided by an authority that demands obedience. His stance was: "one should not teach the answers that come from obedience, but rather [. . .] the questions of today that will make the future what it is."¹⁰⁰ After Hans dislodges Angelina's words in an operation, the final comment underlines the benefits of asking the difficult questions rather than succumbing to untruths:

⁹⁴ "Liebestraum im Weltenraum."

⁹⁵ Gerhard und Conny Gundermann, "Nachrichten aus dem Glücksland," unpublished manuscript (Hoyerswerda: Gundermann Archive, Kulturfabrik, no serial number, 1983).

⁹⁶ See Dietrich, "Viel Arbeit," 56.

⁹⁷ Schütt, *Tankstelle*, 39. On Gundermann's views on heroes see Schütt, 121–22; 158–59.

⁹⁸ Brézan, 25–26.

⁹⁹ Brézan, 26.

¹⁰⁰ Brézan, 337.

*The difficult questions, they fly like light doves,
to know nothing is better than believing something false,
keep on the trail of your questions,
and only find the difficult answers.¹⁰¹*

The Disintegration of Consensus in “Eine Sehfahrt, die ist lustig” and “Lebenslauf”

The Feuerstein production “Eine Sehfahrt, die ist lustig” (A See¹⁰² Voyage is fun)¹⁰³ from 1984 was written against the backdrop of Gundermann’s conflict in his mine which led to his expulsion from the Party in 1984.¹⁰⁴ Simone Hain writes how it was a turning point in the group’s history, “a poetic reckoning with the mine’s central control office.”¹⁰⁵ The main thrust of the criticism is the difference in power levels between top and bottom in society, as discussed in the dialogues between Big and Little Klaus. The influence of *Krabat* is apparent in the striving of the underdog to navigate a course towards “the land of happiness.” In this way Big and Little Klaus are a continuation of the *Krabat* and Wolf Reissenberg model in a new guise. Above all, in the depiction of the relationship between power and knowledge—where Big Klaus actively discourages Little Klaus from taking initiative and gaining experience—there is a direct line back to Brezan’s portrayal in *Krabat* of power’s stranglehold on knowledge which dictates that the ordinary people do not need to know.¹⁰⁶

Little Klaus: I want to decide something too.

Big Klaus: Whaaat?

Little Klaus: I mean, the socialist democracy should be developed further. . . .

Big Klaus: Why didn’t you say that?

That’s something quite different

Look, it goes in this order:

Work together, plan together, rule together,

So first of all you have to work.

Little Klaus: But I already work.

Big Klaus: Yes, of course, but not enough.

Little Klaus: Being part of deciding is also working.

Big Klaus: Yes, that’s right. That’s why I’m also a worker to a certain extent. But look, we have a division of labour which means that one worker works.

Little Klaus: And the other worker decides.

Big Klaus: That’s right. And that’s the way it was, but that will change.

Little Klaus: When?

Big Klaus: One day, don’t ask me, when communism comes. OK.

Little Klaus: OK.

¹⁰¹ Gundermann, “Nachrichten aus dem Glücksland.”

¹⁰² The title “Sehfahrt” is an ironic pun on the word “Seefahrt” (voyage). With didactic associations typical of a *Lehrstück* it literally means a “journey of seeing.”

¹⁰³ Brigade Feuerstein, “Eine Sehfahrt, die ist lustig,” unpublished manuscript (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, Sammlung Liedertheater, 391, 1984); audio recording (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, Liedertheater collection, AVM-31 5066, 1984). This production was the culmination of a series of drafts: “Mann der Arbeit aufgewacht,” “Arbeiter macht Arbeitermacht” and “Macht-Schicht” (Hoyerwerda: Gundermann Archive, no serial numbers, 1983–84).

¹⁰⁴ See note 30.

¹⁰⁵ Hain, “Unsereins. Gerhard Gundermann und das wahre Leben 1955–1998,” 118.

¹⁰⁶ See Brezan, 145–48 and 254–56.

The breakdown in communication between Gundermann's generation and the GDR leadership, which this scene reflects, continues to be the subject of Brigade Feuerstein's "Lebenslauf" (Path of Life)¹⁰⁷ from 1985. The cast sing "Die Macht der Gewohnheit" (The Force of Habit), a song by the Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis. With allusions to the failure of the GDR, habits are portrayed as resulting in an inability to recognize when a relationship has run its course: "What makes it so bad to split up, / even when one knows it's long over, — / so strong is the power of habit, / one doesn't run away so easily."¹⁰⁸ Gundermann's additional verse alludes to humiliation at the hands of the power hierarchy: "Why is it easy to bear / the daily punch in the face, — / so strong is the power of habit, / we're dying and don't even notice it." In a rousing finale, the aggressive agitrock song "Linke Polonaise" (Left-Wing Polonaise) expresses the casts' dissatisfactions with life in the GDR. Like the departed gods in Brecht's *Good Person of Szechwan* the chorus presents an image of a god-forsaken place: "Dear God pissed off ages ago, / because there's nothing left for him to do here, / so we better start marching, / or tomorrow we'll be fucked."¹⁰⁹ The line "Is this country fit for living?—No!" is an indictment of the paradise workers' state the GDR was supposed to have become. In a momentary escape into the poetic world of *Krabat*, however, Gundermann plays once again with the natural fertile imagery of Brezan's novel. This serves as the antithesis to the stagnation perceived in everyday and political life: "Do you know the lime tree at the spring in front of the gate? Yes! / Do you dream sweet dreams in its shadow? Yes! / Do you carve words of love into its bark? Yes! / Then hold onto tree and water before dreams and love dry you up! Yes!"¹¹⁰ Nature emerges here as a sanctuary of hope set against the stifling aridness of everyday life. In this way Gundermann offers a more universal perspective. As the GDR entered the final few years of its existence, one sees in *Krabat* a model of thought that had a life beyond the socialist state. As such it preempts Gundermann's continued use of the *Krabat* imagery in his songs of the 1990s.

The expression of *Krabat* in Gundermann's Solo Songs

After splitting with Brigade Feuerstein in 1988, Gundermann gradually established himself as a popular rock *Liedermacher* in the eastern part of Germany, producing acclaimed CDs up until his death in 1998 and performing in front of loyal audiences with his backing band Seilschaft. He released his first solo album *Männer, Frauen und Maschinen* (Men, Women and Machines) with the GDR state label Amiga in 1988. The balance of nature that forms the philosophical basis of *Krabat* is the theme of the song "Halte Durch." Here one sees his hitherto most direct expression of the ecological crisis that would henceforth be a major subject of his songs.

*Persevere however you can
Cause you're a clever girl
You're such an experienced world
And all we give you is hell*

*The Amazon trees we sawed to the ground
You turned off Africa's water*

¹⁰⁷ Brigade Feuerstein, "Lebenslauf."

¹⁰⁸ "Lebenslauf." Adapted in German by Herman van Veen.

¹⁰⁹ "Lebenslauf."

¹¹⁰ "Lebenslauf."

*Mama, that was the wrong thing to do
Punish the West instead*

*You must hit us so long
Till we learn to say please
Till we're proud and happy
With an apple and an egg and a warm wind*¹¹¹

In this song Gundermann displays awareness of his own dilemma, as the driver of a coal excavator that destroys nature: “I’m also an enemy soldier / who has eaten from your skin.” But he hints he will at some point have to choose sides: “I haven’t been able to run over [to you] yet / But I’m your true son / One day I’ll come.”¹¹²

Gundermann songs of the *Wende* (turning point) period, in which he actively campaigned for change within the civil rights group Neues Forum, reflect the turmoil in his mind, torn between his loyalty to the utopia that the GDR had once represented for him and his knowledge that, as a state, it simply had not worked. In the song “Steinland” (Stone Land), a contrafactum of Bruce Springsteen’s “Badlands,” Gundermann plays on the ambiguous significance of stones in the *Krabat* novel: “But this is my land, and this is your land / and in this stone land, we’re both at home.” In the sleeve notes on the CD *Die Wilderer* (2004) he explains the ambiguity: “[I]t’s the stone [bone] of contention, it’s the stone everyone stumbles over, it’s the stone from the wall, it’s the stone used to throw at a window, and perhaps it’s also the stone with which to start building a house.”¹¹³

In this new period Gundermann saw the preservation of the environment as a key issue of the times. In songs of the early 1990s Gundermann’s aesthetic response was to blend his narrative persona with nature itself. In the song “Soll Sein” (Shall Be), an energy-laden, slide-guitar-based rock number, he sings:

*Once again, the trees shall be my brothers
And we shall let our old wounds heal
In the twigs the birds shall be nesting
And sharing cherries with me for a meal
Once more I shall be talking to the animals
And I shall be listening to the grass
What it whispers in the summer evenings
As the people walk on past.*¹¹⁴

In an interview before he died Gundermann rejected the capitalist world’s definition of success and posits an alternative form of heroism that nurtures the well-being of the planet. He suggests a new, more modest definition of *Siegen* where civilization no longer sees itself “in the center ground.”¹¹⁵ He reflects that the result of humans’ blindness in viewing themselves as victors, is that they have lost sight of who they are. This finds expression in the exploitation of the natural world: the illogicality of globalized market forces results in unsustainable carbon footprints¹¹⁶ and the increasing gap between rich and poor.

In the mid-1990s Gundermann was inspired by Brězan’s sequel novel *Krabat oder die Bewahrung der Welt* (Krabat or the Preservation of the World). This novel, from 1995, sets the age-old antagonism between

¹¹¹ Gundermann “Halte durch,” on *Männer, Frauen und Maschinen*, LP (Amiga, 1988).

¹¹² “Halte durch.” See Gundermann’s views on the environment in Schütt, *Tankstelle*, 27–33.

¹¹³ Gundermann, *Werkstücke II. Die Wilderer*, CD (Buschfunk, 2004).

¹¹⁴ Gundermann, “Soll sein,” on *Einsame Spitze*, CD (Buschfunk, 1992).

¹¹⁵ Gundermann, in interview with Schütt, 133.

¹¹⁶ Gundermann, in interview with Schütt, 30.

Krabat and Wolf Reissenberg in a more contemporary light. With the collapse of socialism worldwide and the apparent victory of capitalism, Brězan's emphasis shifts away from the attainment of "the land of happiness" towards a rational compromise between Krabat and Reissenberg that would preserve the balance of nature and ultimately save the world.¹¹⁷ The latter's drive to exploit its resources, however, is unabated, as is the former's determination to be a counterforce. In Gundermann's song "Krieg" (War) from 1995, a folk ballad in waltz time, this historical power conflict is depicted as being as present as ever. In the song the narrator's dialogue with a "Bruder" (brother) is reminiscent of the renewed discussions between the two protagonists in Brězan's sequel novel, in which Reissenberg persists in calling Krabat "brother." Krabat recognizes their inextricable connection but cannot bring himself to call his adversary "brother."¹¹⁸ In Gundermann's "Krieg," however, the narrator, in dialogue with an erstwhile class enemy from the West, takes this step in an apparently reconciliatory gesture. He recognizes he had been an active ideologically convinced participant, without necessarily ever understanding why: "We fought and saw each other die / I was full of hate / If you'd asked me, I couldn't say why." But as he now searches for a way forward, he realizes that an unchanged power relationship continues to keep him in his place:

*It's come so far, the two of us now
Have cleared the decks once again
At long last I have work of my own
But for you someone else takes the strain
When the ship rolls, you snap your fingers
I snap my back in reply
You take the helm, I tackle the sails
If you ask me now I know why.*¹¹⁹

The narrator concludes that due to this unresolved power imbalance there will still be conflict, even though he is no longer prepared to kill: "That's why, brother, there'll be a war / We dumped it at our front door / Still I sing and won't kill any guy / But if you asked me now, I'd know why." In this way, three years before his death in 1998, this song forms the culmination of Gundermann's treatment of the *Krabat* theme. It is an open-ended, yet visionary statement, anticipating the global social and political turmoil of the decades ahead.

This article has depicted the career of a songwriter and dramatist whose work was largely underpinned by the influence of the literary figure of Krabat. From his tentative initial explorations of this in the GDR singing movement through to the *Liedertheater* productions of Brigade Feuerstein, Gundermann applied the Krabat motifs in an increasingly focused and critical way, identifying with the ideological ambiguity that Krabat represented and pitting this against the socialist dogma of the SED Party. In the post-communist 1990s the image of Krabat, the eternal underdog in tune with nature, retained its significance for him in a world in which power structures continue to exploit people and the environment.

Discography /Audio Recordings

Brigade Feuerstein, "Geschichten aus dem Koraktor." Recorded 1978. Unpublished tape. Akademie der Künste Berlin, Liedertheater collection. AVM-31 5054.

¹¹⁷ See Dietrich Scholze, "Nachwort," in Brězan, *Krabat oder die Bewahrung der Welt*, 269.

¹¹⁸ Brězan, *Krabat oder die Bewahrung der Welt*, 227.

¹¹⁹ Gundermann, "Krieg," on *Frühstück für immer* (Buschfunk, CD, 1995).

- Brigade Feuerstein, "Das große Match." Recorded 1980. Unpublished tape. Akademie der Künste Berlin. Liedertheater collection. AVM-31 5057.
- Brigade Feuerstein, "Eine Seefahrt, die ist lustig." Recorded 1984. Unpublished tape. Akademie der Künste Berlin. Liedertheater collection. AVM-31 5066.
- Brigade Feuerstein, "Lebenslauf." Recorded 1986. Unpublished tape. Akademie der Künste Berlin. Liedertheater collection. AVM-31 5100.
- Degenhardt, Franz Josef. *Mutter Mathilde*. Recorded 1972. Polydor. LP record.
- Gundermann, Gerhard. *Männer, Frauen und Maschinen*. Recorded 1988. Amiga. LP record.
- Gundermann, Gerhard. *Einsame Spitze*. Recorded 1992. Buschfunk. CD.
- Gundermann, Gerhard. *Frühstück für immer*. Recorded 1995. Buschfunk. CD.
- Gundermann, Gerhard. *Werkstücke II. Die Wilderer*. Recorded 1989–90. Buschfunk.
- Singeklub Hoyerswerda, Krabat und seine Geschichten. Recorded 1977. Unpublished tape. Akademie der Künste Berlin. Liedertheater collection. AVM-31 5061.

Filmography

- Dresen, Andreas. *Gundermann*. Pandora Film. 2018.
- Lemke, Grit. *Gundermann Revier*. Buschfunk. 2019.

Websites

- Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 9. April 1968 in der Fassung vom 7. Oktober 1974. <http://www.verfassungen.de/ddr/verf74.htm> (accessed January 10, 2024).

Bibliography

- Auer, Annemarie. "Vom allmählichen Durchsetzen des Guten: Jurij Brezans Krabat oder die Verwandlung der Welt." *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 26, no. 11 (1978): 23–32.
- Baumann, Christiane. "Die sieben Jahre als Genosse 'Grigori': Akten, Einsichten und Fragen." In *Gundermann. Von jedem Tag will ich was haben, was ich nicht vergesse*, edited by Andreas Leusink, 83–90. Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2018.
- Berbig, Roland. *In Sachen Biermann. Protokolle, Berichte und Briefe zu der Folge einer Ausbürgerung*. Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1994.
- Bessel, Richard, and Ralph Jessen. "Einleitung: Die Grenzen der Diktatur." In *Die Grenzen der Diktatur*, edited by Richard Bessel and Ralph Jessen, 7–23. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1996.
- Betz, Albrecht. *Hanns Eisler Political Musician*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Bradley, Laura. "Introduction." In *Brecht and the GDR. Politics, Culture, Posterity*, Edinburgh German Yearbook, vol. 5, edited by Laura Bradley and Karen Leeder, 1–21. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781571137791.001>.
- Böning, Holger. *Der Traum von einer Sache: Aufstieg und Fall der Utopien im politischen Lied der Bundesrepublik und der DDR*. Bremen: Lumière, 2004.

- Brëzan, Jurij. *Krabat und die Verwandlung der Welt*. Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1989.
- Brëzan, Jurij. *Krabat und die Bewahrung der Welt*. Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 2020.
- Brigade Feuerstein. "Geschichten aus dem Koraktor." Version 1 and 2. Unpublished manuscript. Hoyerswerda: Gundermann-Archiv, Kulturfabrik. No catalogue number, 1980.
- Brigade Feuerstein. "Das große Match." Unpublished manuscript. Unpublished manuscript. Berlin: Akademie der Künste, Sammlung Liedertheater, 376, 1980.
- Brigade Feuerstein. "Liebestraum im Weltenraum." Unpublished manuscript. Hoyerswerda: Gundermann-Archiv, Kulturfabrik. No catalogue number, 1981.
- Brigade Feuerstein. "Eine Sehfahrt, die ist lustig." Unpublished manuscript. Berlin: Akademie der Künste, Sammlung Liedertheater, 391, 1984.
- Brigade Feuerstein. "Lebenslauf." Unpublished manuscript. Berlin: Akademie der Künste, Sammlung Liedertheater, 384, 1985.
- Busch, Ernst. *Internationale Arbeiterlieder*. Berlin: Lied der Zeit, 1949.
- Carpenter, Alexander. "Einstürzende Neubauten to Rammstein: Mapping the Industrial Continuum in German Pop Music." In *German Pop Music*, edited by Uwe Schütte, 151–70. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110425727-008>.
- Dietrich, Ingo. Interview with David Robb. February 5, 2022.
- Dietrich, Ingo. Interview with David Robb. June 2, 2022.
- Dietrich, Ingo. "Viel Arbeit für ein Lächeln. Unsere Zeit bei der Brigade Feuerstein in Hoyerswerda." In *Gundermann. Von jedem Tag will ich was haben, was ich nicht vergesse. . . .*, edited by Andreas Leusink, 47–62. Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2018.
- Emmerich, Wolfgang. "Between Hypertrophy and Melancholy—The GDR Literary Intelligentsia in a Historical Context." *Universitas* 8 (1993): 273–85.
- Fulbrook, Mary. *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005.
- Gundermann, Gerhard. *Das Liederbuch*, parts 1 and 2, notated by Mario Ferraro. Berlin: Buschfunk Verlag, 1999.
- Gundermann, Gerhard, and Conny Gundermann. "Nachrichten aus dem Glücksland." Unpublished manuscript. Hoyerswerda: Gundermann-Archiv, Kulturfabrik. No catalogue number, 1977.
- Hain, Simone. "Unsereins. Gerhard Gundermann und das wahre Leben, 1955–1998." In *Das Kollektiv bin ich. Utopie und Alltag in der DDR*, edited by Franziska Becker, Ina Merkel, and Simone Tippach-Schneider, 98–125. Cologne: Böhlau-Verlag, 2000.
- Hain, Simone. "Gundermanns post mortem: Über das Ende der Arbeit, den Kampf gegen das Empire und die notwendige Erziehung der Gefühle." *Utopie kreativ*, 177/178 (July/August 2005): 688–92.
- Heine, Lucia. "Krabat oder die Verwandlung der Welt." *Sinn und Form* 29 (May/June 1977): 659–67.
- Hinton, Stephen. *Weill's Musical Theater. Stages of Reform*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520951839>.
- Ingram, David. "'My Dirty Stream': Pete Seeger, American Folk Music, and Environmental Protest," *Popular Music and Society* 31, no. 1 (2008): 21–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007760601061456>.
- John, Eckhard, and David Robb. *Songs for a Revolution. The 1848 Protest Song Tradition in Germany*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787448629>.

- Jones, Sara. *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism. Negotiating Space in the GDR Literary Sphere*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110237962>.
- Kirchenwitz, Lutz. *Folk, Chanson und Liedermacher in der DDR. Chronisten, Kritiker, Kaisergeburtstagssänger*. Berlin: Dietz-Verlag, 1993.
- Leyn, Wolfgang. *Volkes Lied und Vater Staat: Die DDR Folkszene 1976–1990*. Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2016.
- Leusink, Andreas. “Gundermann und seine Partei.” In *Gundermann. Von jedem Tag will ich was haben, was ich nicht vergesse*, edited by Andreas Leusink, 91–103. Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2018.
- Meinhardt, Birk. “Conny Gundermann im Gespräch mit Birk Meinhardt.” In *Gundermann. Von jedem Tag will ich was haben, was ich nicht vergesse. . .* ed. Andreas. Leusink, 11–22. Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag.
- Morgenstern, Felix. “Voices of Ambiguity—The GDR Folk Music Revival Movement (1976–1990): Exploring Lived Musical Experience and Post-War German Folk Music Discourses,” *Folk Life* 56, no. 2 (2018):116–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/04308778.2018.1501956>.
- Mueller, Roswitha. “Montage in Brecht,” *Theatre Journal* 39, no. 4 (1987): 473–86. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3208249>.
- Ohlerich, Gregor. “Eine Typologie des sozialistischen Intellektuellen,” in *Das war die DDR. DDR-Forschung im Fadenkreuz von Herrschaft, Außenbeziehungen, Kultur und Souveränität*, edited by Heiner Timmermann, 527–40. Münster: LIT-Verlag, 2004.
- Reimann, Brigitte. *Franziska Linkerhand*. Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1974.
- Robb, David. *Zwei Clowns im Lande des verlorenen Lachens. Das Liedertheater Wenzel & Mensching*. Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1998.
- Robb, David. “Narrative Role-Play as Communicative Strategy in German Protest Song.” In *Protest Song in East and West Germany since the 1960s*, edited by David Robb, 67–96. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781571136909-005>.
- Robb, David. “Political Song in the GDR: The Cat- and-Mouse Game with Censorship and Institutions.” In *Protest Song in East and West Germany since the 1960s*, edited by David Robb, 227–54. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781571136909-010>.
- Robb, David, “The Legacy of Brecht in GDR Political Song.” In *Brecht and the GDR. Politics, Culture, Posterity*. Edinburgh German Yearbook, vol. 5, edited by Laura Bradley and Karen Leeder, 183–200. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781571137791.010>.
- Robb, David. “Censorship, Dissent and the Metaphorical Language of GDR Rock.” In *Popular Music under State Socialism: Breaking the Cold War Paradigm*, edited by Ewa Mazierska, 109–28. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59273-6_6.
- Robb, David. “The Mobilizing of the German 1848 Protest Song Tradition in the Context of International Twentieth Century Folk Revivals,” *Popular Music* 35, no. 3 (2016): 338–59. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143016000532>.
- Röhner, Eberhard. “Krabat oder die Verwandlung der Welt.” *Weimarer Beiträge: Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft, Ästhetik und Kulturwissenschaft* 22, no. 7 (1976): 148–54.
- Schütt, Hans-Dieter. *Gundermann: Rockpoet und Baggerfahrer*. Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 1996.
- Schütt, Hans-Dieter. *Tankstelle für Verlierer. Gespräche mit Gerhard Gundermann. Eine Erinnerung*. Berlin: Dietz-Verlag, 2011.

- Schwarz, Klaus Peter. “. . . die die Welt nicht bessern können aber möchten . . . Gerhard Gundermanns Internationallhymnen eines ‘anderen Deutschlands.’” *Berliner Debatte INITIAL* 10, no. 2 (1999): 41–50.
- Shen, Qinna. “DEFA Märchenfilme as Brechtian Parables: Gerhard Klein’s *Die Geschichte vom armen Hassan* and Konrad Petzold’s *Das Kleid*,” *The Brecht Yearbook* 35 (2010): 112–31.
- Steinitz, Wolfgang. *Deutsche Volkslieder demokratischen Charakters aus sechs Jahrhunderten*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954 and 1962.
- Teschke, Holger. “From Faust III to Germania III. Drama in the GDR between 1949 and 1989.” In *Rereading East Germany. The Literature and Film of the GDR*, edited by Karen Leeder, 70–87. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511902543.006>.
- Wicke, Peter, and John Shepherd. “‘The Cabaret is Dead’: Rock Culture as State Enterprise—The Political Organization of Rock in East Germany.” In *Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions*, edited by Tony Bennett, Simon Frith, Larry Grossberg, John Shepherd, and Graeme Turner, 25–36. London: Routledge, 1993.