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Remembering at the Margins: Trauma, Memory Practices and the Recovery of Marginalised Voices at the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial

The Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial is located on the site of the main remand prison for people detained by the Stasi, the GDR secret police. In this exploration of memory practices at the site, the concept of marginalisation will be used both in a geographical and in a metaphorical sense. I will first consider the significance of the prison's relatively peripheral location in the north-eastern district of Lichtenberg. Anchoring the analysis within theories of museology, in particular the museum as experiential site and as site of trauma, I will explore how the voices of former prisoners now find expression as they conduct guided tours, thus continuing to recall their experiences of imprisonment and isolation at the very site where the trauma occurred. Visitors to the memorial can also view a permanent exhibition documenting the history of political persecution at the prison; eyewitness testimony is inscribed very powerfully into this narrative also. I will explore how past trauma is narrated and performed both during the guided tours and throughout the permanent exhibition. This analysis contends that the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial is an essential space of agency, allowing for the articulation of previously marginalised voices and for their inscription into the post-unification memorial landscape.

Introduction

Writing in 1997, Andreas Huyssen points to Berlin as an example of a city which has borne the marks of twentieth-century history 'intensely', even 'self-consciously' (1997, 59). Berlin, he observes, has found itself in the midst of intense debates about the negotiation of Nazi and of communist pasts: 'This city-text has been written, erased and re-written throughout this violent century, and its legibility relies as much on visible markers of built space as on images and memories repressed and ruptured by traumatic events' (59–60). The proliferation

of museums and memorial sites that were established in the tumultuous years immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall signified a rush to remember and a desire to represent the city's ruptured past; Andreas Ludwig notes that the 'sudden historicization of the GDR' was followed by an equally rapid 'process of musealization' (2011, 40). As the example of the former Stasi prison on the outskirts of Berlin makes clear, memorial sites quickly became—and continue to be—sites of bitterly contested memories. In the case of the Hohenschönhausen memorial, the site is not only a space of contestation, but also a space of agency where voices once marginalised in the GDR and then silenced through incarceration, now find expression.

The *Federal Memorial Concept* of 2008 identified authenticity of location as one of the criteria for the German government's financial support of memorials (2008, 3). The *Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen*[1] is located on the site of the main remand prison for people detained by the Stasi, the State Security Service of the German Democratic Republic. This authenticity of location and the fact that the prison cells and interrogation rooms are presented in their original state are emphasised on the opening pages of the most recent edition of the *Tätigkeitsbericht*, a biennial report produced by the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen foundation. All of the reports are available in electronic format on the memorial's website; the seventh report covers the period 2013–2014. Prisoners detained in Hohenschönhausen included leaders of the uprising of 17 June 1953, reform communists, writers and dissidents, political opponents, civil rights activists and critics of the SED (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*)—the Socialist Unity Party, which was the governing party in the GDR. The Human Rights lawyer Walter Linse, for example, was kidnapped by the Stasi in West Berlin and imprisoned in Hohenschönhausen; despite international protests, he was handed over to the Soviet secret police and executed in Moscow in December 1953. Linse is just one of the many high-profile detainees who feature in the section of the memorial website devoted to prisoners' biographies: these include the reform communist Wolfgang Harich, Walter Janka, head of the *Aufbau* publishing house, the communist dissident Rudolf Bahro, the civil rights campaigners Bärbel Bohley and Ulrike Poppe and the writer Jürgen Fuchs.[2]

Hohenschönhausen developed as an industrial suburb in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In May 1945 the Soviet occupation forces took over a vast pre-war canteen block and turned it into *Speziallager Nr. 3*, a notorious transit camp where some 20,000 prisoners were detained until its dissolution in October 1946. In the winter of 1946–47 it was converted into the main Soviet secret police prison for detention and interrogation in Germany. It contained an underground cell section, dubbed the *U-Boot* (submarine) by

inmates. In 1951 the Stasi took control of the building and it became the main holding prison for those awaiting trial in the GDR. Towards the end of the decade a new block, which included prison cells and 115 interrogation rooms, was built. A prison hospital was opened in 1960, while the infamous *U-Boot* was closed the following year. The final decades of the GDR saw the complex expand to include an Operative Technical Sector, which was responsible for bugging devices, hidden cameras and false passports, the computer headquarters of the Espionage Data Processing Centre and a residential development for Stasi employees. Following the collapse of the GDR, the Stasi was dissolved. In an ironic twist to the history of the prison, one of its final inmates was Erich Mielke, head of the Stasi from 1957 until 1989. The prison closed on 3 October 1990, the date which marked the formal reunification of East and West Germany.[3]

Responding to calls from former prisoners to set up a place of commemoration for victims of the SED-regime, the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial site was established in 1994. It is important to note that once-marginalised voices played a prominent role in the establishment of this commemorative space from the outset: 'the memorials at Normannenstraße and Hohenschönhausen grew out of grass roots activism led by former victims', as Carol Anne Costabile-Heming notes, 'a circumstance that certainly colors their presentation of the Stasi legacy.' (2011, 8) Since 2000 the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial has been a *Stiftung*, an independent foundation under public law. The foundation is funded by an annual contribution from the federal government and the Berlin state government. Visitor numbers have grown exponentially in recent years, from 3000 visitors in 1994 to 455,000 in 2016.[4] However, the vast majority of visitors to the memorial continue to come from the former West Germany—for example, they accounted for 86% of the total number of visitors in 2014 (*Tätigkeitsbericht* 2013/2014, 22). This can be explained, certainly in part, by the fact that all 'places of pain and shame reveal dissonances', as William Logan and Keir Reeves observe, 'since there are always perpetrators and sufferers and their perceptions invariably differ radically.' (2009, 3)

Returning briefly to the *Federal Memorial Concept*, the former Stasi headquarters, located in Berlin's Normannenstraße, and the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial feature under the sub-heading *Überwachung und Verfolgung* [Surveillance and Persecution][5], which is part of the section concerned with addressing the injustices of communist dictatorship in Germany (2008, 9). In the very opening paragraph of the 2013/2014 progress report, the historian Dr. Hubertus Knabe, director of the memorial since 2000, takes up this theme by describing the Hohenschönhausen memorial as one of the most important sites of

'Aufklärung', of enlightenment vis-à-vis communist injustices (5). The Law of 21 June 2000 which established the foundation (*Gesetz über die Errichtung der Stiftung „Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen"*) tasked the memorial with a number of functions, including historical research, information provision and raising awareness of the reality of political persecution in the GDR:

> Zweck der Stiftung ist es, die Geschichte der Haftanstalt Hohenschönhausen in den Jahren 1945 bis 1989 zu erforschen, über Ausstellungen, Veranstaltungen und Publikationen zu informieren, und zur Auseinandersetzung mit den Formen und Folgen politischer Verfolgung und Unterdrückung in der kommunistischen Diktatur anzuregen.[6]

> [The aim of the foundation is to research the history of the Hohenschönhausen prison from 1945 to 1989, to provide information in the form of exhibitions, events and publications, and to encourage reflection upon the forms and consequences of political persecution and oppression during the communist dictatorship.]

Since October 2013 visitors to the memorial can view the permanent exhibition 'Inhaftiert in Hohenschönhausen: Zeugnisse politischer Verfolgung 1945 bis 1989' [Imprisoned in Hohenschönhausen: Testimonies of Political Persecution 1945 to 1989]. However, the prison complex itself can only be viewed as part of a guided tour; of the 107 guides currently working at the site, fifty-three were detained at Hohenschönhausen during various stages of the prison's history.

My article will explore the ways in which these formerly marginalised voices of prisoners now find expression at the memorial site, both during the guided tours and throughout the permanent exhibition. In so doing, this analysis goes beyond the existing scholarship on the Hohenschönhausen memorial which focuses to a large extent on the use of eyewitness testimony in the context of the guided tours.[7] By exploring the prison's peripheral location as the site for the recovery of once-marginalised voices, I will consider the concept of marginalisation both in a metaphorical *and* in a geographical sense; examining the memorial against the backdrop of these interwoven concepts of marginalisation further advances existing research on memory practices at the site. Anchoring my analysis within theories of museology, in particular the museum as experiential site and as site of trauma, I will explore the manner in which the once-marginalised voices of former prisoners now find expression. I draw extensively on fieldwork conducted at the memorial in July 2014 to demonstrate how past trauma is narrated and performed by the eyewitnesses both during the guided tours and in the permanent exhibition. The memorial thus becomes an important site

of agency, allowing for the articulation of previously silenced voices and for their inscription into the post-unification memorial landscape and, to quote Huyssen, into the 'city-text' (1997, 59).

Remembering at the Margins in Berlin-Hohenschönhausen

The prison's location in Berlin's north-eastern district of Lichtenberg is significant—victims of state surveillance and control, moved to the outskirts of the city, were marginalised in a physical sense; in a metaphorical sense, too, they were forcefully removed from the official GDR narrative. The Hohenschönhausen complex was located within a *Sperrbezirk*, a restricted area that was accessible only to authorised military personnel. Heavy metal gates, watchtowers and cameras pointed to the omnipresence of the surveillance state; however, as Peter Erler and Hubertus Knabe remind readers, parts of Bahnhofstraße, Genslerstraße, Freienwalderstraße and Lichtenauerstraße were not marked on any maps of the GDR right up until 1990 (2008, 4). The prohibited district was, in effect, a 'terra incognita' (4). In an article that locates the prison complex within the wider physical landscape of Hohenschönhausen, the archaeologists John Schofield and Wayne Cocroft describe the district as 'a secret city of the Stasi and of the Cold War.' (2011, 245)

The feeling of isolation is emphasised by eyewitnesses as they lead tours around the prison complex. Having experienced the claustrophobic conditions of the *U-Boot*, visitors are shown an exhibit of the Barkas B1000, the vehicle model that was often disguised as a delivery van and used to transport prisoners to Hohenschönhausen. As part of a tour conducted by Wolfgang Arndt on 10 July 2014, the former detainee emphasised the sense of disorientation experienced by prisoners during this trip, which was frequently undertaken at night, and upon arrival at the prison. The feeling of being sealed off from the rest of the world extended to life within the prison walls. Confined for the most part in single cells and forbidden any contact with other inmates, time quickly lost its meaning for the detainees: 'Keine Orientierung, kein Zeitgefühl' ['no sense of orientation, no sense of time'], as Arndt recalls. One of the audio-visual stations that forms part of the permanent exhibition features an interview with Hans-Jochen Scheidler, who stresses the sense of being completely isolated from the outside world during his imprisonment in Hohenschönhausen in the late 1960s: 'Abschottung von der Welt' ['cut off from the world'].

Today information boards in the streets around the prison complex mark out the former restricted area and provide visual reminders of the omnipresence of the Stasi in the city's recent past. These include the information panel in front of the archives of the Ministry

for State Security, now a dilapidated building on Freienwalderstraße, and the panel in front of the building that once housed the Development Centre for Espionage and Surveillance Technology, located on Genslerstraße. In the introduction to the foundation's 2013/2014 report, Hubertus Knabe notes the continued growth in visitor numbers despite what he terms the site's unfavourable geographical location: 'trotz der ungünstigen geografischen Lage' (20). It takes approximately thirty-five minutes to travel from the city centre to the memorial––a twenty-five minute tram journey from Alexanderplatz to Genslerstraße, followed by a five-/ten-minute walk. The site can also be reached by bus.

In my analysis of the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial, I am using the term 'marginalisation' to refer both to this relatively peripheral location and to once-marginalised victims of the communist state; the eyewitnesses continue to remember far from the city centre, giving voice to their experience at the very site where the trauma occurred. Detainees at Hohenschönhausen were predominantly political prisoners whose oppositional views quickly brought them to the attention of the Stasi; they also included people arrested for *Republikflucht*, attempting to escape to the West or assisting such an attempt. Oppositional voices had no place in the SED-state and were swiftly silenced. As this article seeks to demonstrate, the important memory work of the eyewitnesses is conducted at the interface of personal testimonial and political memory, providing a powerful counter-discourse to increasingly nostalgic recollection of the GDR. The different kinds of remembering elucidated by Aleida Assmann —individual, social, cultural and political—form the point of departure for Sara Jones and Debbie Pinfold in their introduction to a special issue of the journal *Central Europe* entitled 'Remembering Dictatorship'; physical sites and monuments support what Assmann terms political memory, particularly in terms of its emplotment in an emotionally charged narrative and its transmission of a clear message (2014, 10). The passionate personal accounts of internment and isolation at the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial make for a powerful visitor experience and deliver a clear, if one-sided, narrative of the GDR; it is to consideration of the memorial as experiential site that my attention now turns.

Experiencing Trauma in the Memorial Museum

The physical location of the memorial in the Berlin cityscape situates the recovery of once-marginalised voices within a geographical as well an historical context. In an article that explores the production and consumption of what they term 'carceral atmospheres' (2015, 309), Jennifer Turner and Kimberley Peters take up this theme of location, more specifically

of *dis*location: 'the prison museum', they write, 'represents a past that is dislocated for visitors, both spatially and temporally.' (311) They observe that the penal museum moves the visitor through various moments of carceral history (311). In the case of the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial, it is precisely this process of moving visitors through the prison complex, following a very definite chronology—from the claustrophobic underground prison to the newer prison building, including registration room, single cells, interrogation rooms and padded cells; from the prison infirmary to the enclosed courtyard spaces, dubbed *Tigerkäfige*, where prisoners exercised—that facilitates both the creation of and encounters with carceral atmospheres. The prison museum is undoubtedly an experiential site, even if the production of such atmospheres is ultimately a carefully choreographed process.

Through its combination of prison complex and permanent exhibition the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen site is an interesting example of what Paul Williams terms the 'memorial museum', which combines the memorialising function of a monument on the one hand and the museum functions of conservation, exhibition and educational interpretation on the other (2007, 8).[8] He identifies salient aspects of this hybrid form, all of which are applicable to Berlin-Hohenschönhausen.[9] The site of the memorial museum plays an integral part in its institutional identity. It functions as a research centre and it has a particularly strong educational mission (21). The Educational Services Office at the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial organises on-site visits by school groups from all over Germany, seminars and project days. Outreach activities include a mobile learning centre in the form of a Barkas B1000 van, which is equipped with interactive multimedia activities and travels to schools in the Berlin-Brandenburg region. Most importantly for the concerns of this article, the memorial museum also maintains a clientele which has a special relationship to it, for example, former members of the resistance; this is of particular significance in light of the central role afforded to eyewitness testimony at the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen site.

In a powerful study that explores topographies of suffering, Jessica Rapson explains that she explores sites not only as they can be seen to 'represent political and institutional agendas but also as experiential frameworks.' (2015, 9) Although she focuses on the Holocaust sites of Buchenwald, Babi Yar and Lidice, her reading of sites of trauma can help us understand how the eyewitnesses work through traumatic memories at the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial. By emphasising the experiential nature of such sites, Rapson also turns attention to the visitor experience. As visitors navigate the prison complex, they experience the memorial in a profoundly physical way: the tour of the *U-Boot* captures the claustrophobic living conditions of the detainees, for example, while, in the new prison block,

the stench of rubber in the padded cells, where inmates spent up to eighteen days in solitary confinement, remains overpowering. Williams's reading of the immersive visitor experience seems particularly fitting in this context. Visitors to memorial museums become immersed in the sensory and bodily experience of pain and trauma to the extent that 'the experience of how it feels and what it means to "be-in-place" is the museum's outcome rather than its by-product' (2007, 99). In her reading of experiential sites, Rapson favours Dominick La Capra's concept of 'empathetic unsettlement' (2015, 20) over both Marianne Hirsch's theory of postmemory and Alison Landsberg's theory of prosthetic memory.[10] Empathetic unsettlement, Rapson argues, enables onlookers with a 'genuine concern for the others of the past' […] 'to attempt to imagine others' past suffering whilst simultaneously acknowledging their bounded selves.' (2015, 20) Through their encounter with eyewitness testimony at the site, visitors to the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial are witness to a working through, even an enactment of past trauma and are encouraged to imagine this past in the present of the guided tour.

In this article, I will go on to demonstrate that the experience of trauma also lies at the heart of the on-site permanent exhibition. Charting developments in museology from an object-based to an experience-based museum, Valerie Casey foregrounds the performativity of the modern museum which, she contends, has become a 'narrativized place' (2003, 13). Silke Arnold-de Simine also foregrounds this shift in focus, noting that instead of primarily storing and displaying collections, museums have become 'places of recollection, not so much driven by objects as by narratives and performances' (2013, 2). In what follows, I explore strategies of narrativisation and performance at the experiential site of Berlin-Hohenschönhausen and consider how these strategies succeed in giving voice to those marginalised during the existence of the GDR and who now inscribe their traumatic pasts into the complex post-GDR memorial landscape.

Remembering, Narrating, Performing Trauma: Eyewitness Guided Tours at the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial

Eyewitness testimony is privileged at the site. An Eyewitness Office maintains contact with former inmates and documents the history of their imprisonment, including the transcription and storage of interviews. Since 2010, and as part of an extensive educational outreach programme, eyewitnesses travel to schools all over Germany. For Sara Jones, the concept of eyewitness testimony is based on the coalescing of what she terms 'passive (experiencing) and active (narrating) witnessing (2014, 25). In the case of the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial, active witnessing takes the form of guided tours conducted by former prisoners.

Not surprisingly, the site has been criticised for using eyewitness testimony in this way. Florian Kappeler and Christoph Schaub, for example, conclude that the constructed nature of the eyewitness memories, coupled with an insistence upon authenticity, leaves no room for reflection (2008, 319–329). Susanne Buckley-Zistel argues that visitors to the site are 'bound to a specific version of the past' (2014, 120). It is certainly the case that former detainees tell a specific story of life in the communist state, a story of intimidation, psychological violence and repression; the choreography of the guided tours, which follow a very specific sequence, has been alluded to earlier in this article. I contend, however, that the manner in which former prisoners recall and articulate past trauma, even if the narrative and performative strategies are adopted consciously (or unconsciously), is an essential form of bearing witness in the present. In fact, an 'odd temporal enfolding' occurs, as Turner and Peters remind us; past and present 'collide' in the prison museum (2015, 319–320). As noted earlier, many former inmates recall the sense of being out of time, and this feeling is reiterated both during the guided tours and in the permanent exhibition. There is another temporal dimension to the process of remembering on site too, in that past and present overlap in the guided tours conducted by former inmates, as Jones, referencing the work of Mónika Risnicoff de Gorgas, points out: 'the visitor […] is confronted with the actual physical "presence" of the individual and the "absence" of the same individual at the time of their incarceration. The result is a blurring of the levels of time, of suffering and the after-effects of suffering.' (2011, 218) For the visitor, the past is doubly present—both in the physical location and as embodied by the guides who recall past trauma in the present of the tour.

Jones points out that the 'mediated remembering communities' which find expression at the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen site 'intersect through the repetition of the same authenticating narratives' (2014, 150). The extent to which the stories overlap with and reinforce one another became obvious when I conducted fieldwork at the memorial in July 2014. During this time, I participated in three tours, one in English and two in German.[11] The German tours on 10 July and 16 July were led by former inmates Wolfgang Arndt and Wolfgang Warnke respectively.[12] Both began the tours by introducing themselves as 'Zeitzeugen' ['contemporary witnesses'], thereby underscoring from the outset the authenticity of their stories. Reinforcing this authenticating narrative, the term 'Zeitzeuge' features extensively in the biennial reports and also on the memorial website. Arndt's narrative, in particular, was a highly emotive one. In both cases, vivid descriptions of spatial and temporal disorientation, of interrogation and of periods spent in solitary confinement powerfully coalesce to recreate a topography of suffering; listening to such testimony at the

site of trauma and confronted with the actual physical spaces where the trauma occurred evokes empathy and deeply unsettles the visitor.

The performative dimension to these narratives was particularly striking. As a prelude to viewing the Barkas B1000 van, Arndt enacted an arrest, recalling the ominous opening sentence 'Kommen Sie bitte mit zur Klärung eines Sachverhalts' ['Please come with me so that we can clarify a situation'], before going on to describe the terrifying journey in the prison transporter to Hohenschönhausen. He explained how sneezing or any other involuntary movement could be interpreted as an escape attempt, thus acting as a catalyst for the front seat passenger, who was armed with a Kalashnikov rifle, to open fire. At the beginning of the tour of the new prison block, both Arndt and Warnke spoke about the erosion of identity experienced by the prisoners: dispossessed of their belongings upon entering the building, they were assigned a number and no longer identified by name. The re-enactment of an interrogation scene was a particularly memorable part of both tours. Arndt recalled the false sense of security generated by an initial invitation to coffee and a cigarette, before repeating the questions of the interrogator in an increasingly threatening tone, with the visitors cast in the role of helpless detainees. Taking a seat at the head of the table in one of the interrogation rooms, it was then Warnke who assumed the role of interrogator. Demonstrating how spatial and commemorative practices coalesce at the memorial site, Mirjam Dorgelo argues that the tour guides use their bodies to perform and work through past trauma. The two instances of role reversal I describe above are significant and constitute, as Dorgelo posits, 'a regaining of power over their oppressed pasts' (2012, 49).

The importance for contemporary German society of working through this chapter of its recent past is underscored by Wolfgang Arndt. During questions from visitors at the end of his guided tour, he described himself as 'derjenige, der offenbart' ['the one who reveals'], communicating a sense of urgency about his desire to disclose what happened at the site and a moral imperative to relate his experiences to others. S. Elizabeth Bird and Fraser M. Ottanelli observe that, when violent events are concealed and witnesses silenced or ignored, 'the impulse to tell the story seems universal, and is essential if true reconciliation is to be achieved' (2015, 1). In his determination to tell his story, Arndt gives voice to those silenced by the Stasi for holding differing political views. At the beginning of his tour on 10 July and in an interview with me on 18 July 2014, he emphasised the importance of ensuring that what had happened during the SED-regime never be forgotten. Exploring the role of memorials in transitional justice, Sara Jones writes: 'through offering the chance for victim narratives to be heard and valued, memorials can provide a mode of symbolic reparation that allows a form of

vengeance—that is, a symbolic retribution—that does not preclude forgiveness, but also assures against forgetting.' (2015, 154) Arndt's work is clearly intended to serve as a warning for present and future generations: 'um zu mahnen, um zu zeigen, wozu ein Mensch fähig ist, um anderen seine politische Meinung aufzudrängen' ['in order to warn, to show what people are capable of when they want to force their political opinions on others']. In an article that considers the obstacles encountered by the eyewitnesses as they seek to tell their 'difficult' stories (2006, 343) to an occasionally sceptical and resistant Eastern German public, Anselma Gallinat argues that victims of the former socialist state 'continue to be marginalised in the democratic present' (350). This continued marginalisation is taken up by Arndt who contends in his interview that the eyewitnesses are still viewed as 'Unruhestifter' ['trouble-makers']. The term 'marginalisation' acquires further significance here and raises questions about the position of the eyewitness narrative within the memoryscape of a united Germany. Making the case for what they term 'responsible geographies of memory', Karen E. Till and Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto-Arponen observe that landscapes often function as 'places of critical testimony for survivors' (2015, 291). Testifying to past trauma at the very site where the trauma occurred allows for the recovery of once-marginalised voices and for their integration into the post-GDR memorial landscape.

Exhibiting, Narrating, Performing Trauma: The Permanent Exhibition at the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial

Since October 2013 visitors to the site can explore a permanent exhibition independently of the guided tours through the prison complex. As the subtitle of the exhibition—'Zeugnisse politischer Verfolgung 1945 bis 1989' [Testimonies of Political Persecution 1945 to 1989] — makes clear, eyewitness experience lies at the heart of this narrative. Through examination of display practices as well as strategies of narrativisation and performance, I will show that the recovery of once-marginalised voices is a central concern in this space also. The exhibition includes 500 objects, over 300 photographs and 100 multimedia stations. It encompasses several interlinking spaces: the *Vorraum* or anteroom, the main hall which houses five exhibit blocks based on the theme of imprisonment, the *Leiterflur* or leadership corridor, offices of the prison director, an exhibition space about Stasi-employees and a final room devoted to interviews with former prisoners.

Isolation and the deprivation of rights are the themes of the first room, with the prologue 'Gefangen und entrechtet' [Imprisoned and deprived of rights] setting the tone for the entire exhibition. A single grey block displays a model of the prison complex, different

sections of which light up to correspond to the sequence of fifteen images on the block's ever-changing surface. The room's muted colour palette of light grey walls, white frames and black and white photographs of former prisoners is disrupted only by a single yellow light which moves to highlight different photographs in synchronisation with prisoner voice-overs. These eyewitnesses fulfil a representative role: 'Sie stehen exemplarisch für die Tausenden Gefangenen von Hohenschönhausen' [They represent the thousands imprisoned in Hohenschönhausen] (*Tätigkeitsbericht*, 33). The photographs are arranged in groups of three—one front and two side profile shots of the same prisoner, and there are sixty-seven groups of plaques in total. The name of the prisoner and dates of imprisonment are displayed on the wall space under each triptych. The focusing of light on different groups of photographs is neither chronological nor sequential, and the confusion experienced by visitors reflects perhaps the disorientation felt by the prisoners themselves. The illumination of a particular triptych is accompanied by prisoner voice-overs as they recall in the present of the exhibition space the traumatic past of their incarceration. Vera Lengsfeld, the civil rights activist detained in Hohenschönhausen in 1988, remembers her first, bitter experience of powerlessness: prisoners could not even determine whether or not the light was left on or off in their cells, she notes in disbelief. Isolation, uncertainty and fear are recurring themes in these excerpts. 'Ich habe in Hohenschönhausen am bedrückendsten das Gefühl des Ausgeliefertseins gefunden' ['In Hohenschönhausen I found the feeling of subjection to be the most oppressive of all'], former inmate Michael Lotsch recalls, articulating the overwhelming sense of helplessness experienced by detainees. The deeply traumatising and long-term effects of imprisonment are expressed by Matthias Meister: 'Die Hafterfahrung hat mein Leben komplett verändert. Ich bin aus diesem Gefängnis als ein komplett anderer Mensch herausgekommen.' ['The experience of imprisonment completely changed my life. I left this prison as a completely different person.'] Giving voice to those so forcefully silenced in the GDR, these audio clips mediate eyewitness testimony in a very powerful way.

Figure 1. Photo of *Vorraum* (to be inserted here)

The main display space is a rectangular hall housing five large exhibit blocks. Outer panels along three of the walls provide a chronological narrative of the site from 1945 to 2000 in German and in English. Running along the top of the panels are significant dates in the history of the prison and in the history of the GDR. Exhibits encompass falsified passports, secret cameras and listening devices developed in the Operative Technical Sector,

and even a discoloration machine, which was used to destroy documents, that was discovered in 2010 in a former garage of the Investigative Division. Interactive elements include a series of folders that can be pulled out of the wall and that provide information on Stasi officials at different levels in the hierarchy of control, who are described as 'Verfolgsspezialisten' [specialists in persecution] in the section subheading. Such vocabulary makes clear that the exhibition develops a very particular narrative of subordination and persecution.

Imprisonment is the central narrative linking the five groups of display blocks which serve as the visual and thematic focus in the main hall. Andreas Engwert, the researcher responsible for developing and implementing the exhibition concept, underscores the fact that the history of Hohenschönhausen involved several different phases of incarceration; imprisonment thus emerged as the 'Kernerzählung', the story at the very heart of the exhibition, he explained in a telephone interview I conducted with him on 7 August 2014. Recalling the words of Arnold-de Simine, this space is indeed 'driven by narratives' (2013, 1). The display blocks are arranged around five inter-connected themes: imprisonment, violence, interrogation, surveillance and self-assertion. Exhibits include one of the wooden beds used in the *U-Boot*, prison doors complete with peep holes, glass jars containing odour samples, various bugging devices and even the Stasi manual for undercover shadowing. The threat of violence is ever-present, with a recording of a Stasi interrogation providing a particularly chilling example.

Built into the display blocks, multimedia stations allow for the expression of powerful, poignant testimony. Former prisoners narrate trauma, recalling cramped cells, sleep deprivation, isolation, physical and psychological abuse. In one particularly moving clip, a former inmate describes the lasting emotional damage caused by the period he spent in Hohenschönhausen and his inability to forge relationships with others since his release. Trauma is not only recalled, but re-enacted in this space. During the guided tour he conducted on 16 July 2014, while standing with visitors in one of the cells, Wolfgang Warnke explained how prisoners had to adopt a particular sitting and a particular seating position. At the display blocks devoted to the topic of surveillance, visitors are invited to look through a peep hole and see there an image of Warnke in the very cell (Nr. 115) where he had been imprisoned decades previously. He has adopted the seating position demanded of prisoners in Hohenschönhausen. His unrelenting stare disconcerts the visitor, with the result that, in an unnerving reversal of roles, the observer becomes the observed.

Self-assertion is the uplifting theme of the final group of display blocks. Enclosed in a large glass case is Vera Lengsfeld's banner demanding free expression. This was the banner

with which she had planned to participate in the SED's annual Liebknecht-Luxemburg Demonstration in 1988, but she was intercepted en route and brought to Hohenschönhausen. Today she gives guided tours of the site. The eyewitnesses feature strongly in this narrative of resistance and self-assertion. An information panel interprets their work on site in terms of regaining control: 'Die Rückkehr an den Ort ihrer Gefangenschaft hilft ihnen, ihre Erlebnisse zu verarbeiten. Dass sie gerade hier davon berichten können, ist für viele wie ein später Sieg über den Staatsicherheitsdienst.' [Returning to the place of their imprisonment helps them to work through their experiences. For many the fact that they can relate their experiences on site is like a late victory over the Stasi.] As an effective counterpart to the triptych structure used in the first room, photos of twelve eyewitnesses are displayed in a merger of past and present—images of them at work in Hohenschönhausen today, together with the trio of photographs taken at the time of their arrest, testify to the value of their role on site in the present. These images displayed side by side are also a powerful expression of the way in which their own view of the prison has changed—the site of trauma has become for them a space of agency.

The exhibition space that runs parallel to the main hall is located on the site of the prison director's offices. The focus shifts at this point from the prisoners to Stasi employees. Along a yellow wall in the leadership corridor the names of interrogators and members of the Stasi hierarchy appear in white. The constant sound of a typewriter provides the auditory backdrop to the secretary's office. The office of the prison director is reconstructed on the basis of photographs and contains the original built-in furniture. The adjoining surveillance room with its many television units remind the visitor of the state's constant monitoring, even of its most dedicated personnel. In another room eight display cases document the ideology and the working lives of Stasi employees. The audio-visual clip of an interview with Siegfried Rataizick, head of prison department XIV for twenty-five years, provides a powerful, if disturbing end, to this section of the exhibition. The inclusion here of the perpetrator voice confronts visitors with a very different version of the past to the one mediated so powerfully both during the tours and throughout the exhibition. In this clip, entitled 'Ohne Reue' [Without regret], Rataizick vehemently rejects the idea of the GDR as 'Unrechtsstaat', a state without justice, even accusing the eyewitnesses of falsifying history.

It is to the eyewitnesses that attention returns in the final section of the exhibition—the epilogue, as Engwert called it in the telephone interview of 7 August 2014. 'Ehemalige Hohenschönhausen-Häftlinge blicken zurück 2009–13' [Former Hohenschönhausen prisoners look back 2009–13] is a series of ten audio-visual clips arranged in the form of

small screens set at eye level into the light grey walls. As was the case with the illumination of photographs in the very first room, the order in which the clips are activated is not consecutively sequential. The disrupted nature of the exhibition here points once again to the tension between the present of the visitor experience and the uncomfortable narrative related by former inmates. Engwert, who filmed the clips, describes them as 'reflektierende Aussagen', reflective statements on Hohenschönhausen. For former inmate Gilbert Furian, the prison provided 'ein Röntgenaufnahme für den Blick in das Innere der DDR-Gesellschaft' ['an X-ray image of the inner workings of GDR society']. Several of the interviewees explain their reasons for working at the memorial site today. Hans-Jochen Scheidler describes his work as follows: 'Ich betrachte meine Arbeit in der Gedenkstätte als Beitrag dazu, Demokratie zu verteidigen und zu schützen.' ['I consider my work at the memorial as a contribution to the defence and protection of democracy.'] In the context of an article which has explored the process of giving voice to those once-silenced it seems fitting to leave the final words to former inmate Andreas Mehlstäubl who describes the catalyst for his work on site as follows: 'den Leuten eine Stimme zu geben, die es nicht können. Das ist, was mich antreibt', ['giving those who cannot speak a voice—that is what drives me on'].

Conclusion

Almost three decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the former prohibited district remains a troubling topography. While it is certainly the case that the eyewitness testimony, afforded a central role on site, reinforces a very particular narrative of the GDR as a state based on fear, oppression and the silencing of oppositional voices, the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial remains nonetheless an important and subversive site of memory. Memory texts should 'open up their subjects rather than close them down', Jessica Rapson writes (2015, 181). In the case of the memory practices at the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial, the visitor becomes immersed in this experiential site and is unsettled by exposure to such poignant accounts of deprivation and incarceration; there is undoubtedly a sense that the narrative is controlled and that the performance is a choreographed one. However, by bearing witness to past trauma in the present of the guided tour, the eyewitnesses perform essential memory work, recalling and enacting trauma as a way of working through and regaining control over the past, of reclaiming autonomy, of recovering their voice. Through its careful exploration of the use of eyewitness testimony throughout the permanent exhibition, this article has sought to offer a more complete picture of memory practices at the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen site.

Examining the memorial against the backdrop of interwoven concepts of marginalisation—both in terms of the site's peripheral location and in the metaphorical sense of pushing to the margins of discourse those who dared express a differing view—demonstrates the centrality of the eyewitness testimony from this perspective also. Former prisoners, once marginalised and ultimately silenced by the Stasi, recall and articulate their experience of imprisonment and isolation at the very site where the trauma occurred. The former blank on the map has thus become, in the complex post-unification memorial landscape, an essential space of agency where once-marginalised voices find lasting expression.

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Interviews

Arndt, Wolfgang. Interview by author. Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial, 18 July 2014.

Engwert, Andreas. Interview by author. Telephone interview, Berlin, 7 August 2014.

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[1] The German term *Gedenkstätte* can be translated as 'memorial'; in what follows, I will use the English translation when referring to the former prison.

[2] The biographies of these and other prisoners can be found on the memorial website, which has a German and an English version: http://www.stiftung-hsh.de.

[3] More detailed information about the various stages of the prison's history can be found on the memorial website.

[4] I am grateful to André Kockish, Press and Information Officer at the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial site, for the 2016 visitor figures provided in email correspondence with me on 2 March 2017.

[5] Unless otherwise stated, all English translations provided are my own.

[6] The full text of the Law can be viewed on pages 99–100 of the *Tätigkeitsbericht* 2013/2014.

[7] Sara Jones briefly considers the permanent exhibition in chapter five of her book *The Media of Testimony: Remembering the East German Stasi in the Berlin Republic* (2014, 146–148); in the 2015 article '(Extra)ordinary Life: The Rhetoric of Representing the Socialist Everyday after Unification', she argues that the exhibition presents a 'narrowing of the past', which offers 'little space for alternative views or perspectives' (122). Jones has written extensively about eyewitness testimony at the Hohenschönhausen memorial—see, for example, her chapter 'At Home with the *Stasi: Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen* as Historic House' in the 2011 volume *Remembering the German Democratic Republic: Divided Memory in a United Germany*, edited by David Clarke and Ute Wölfel (211–222). She has also explored eyewitness testimony in other media, such as the unpublished interviews recorded by the Eyewitness Archive at the site—see 'Community and Genre: Autobiographical Rememberings of Stasi Oppression' in the volume *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities*, edited by Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold (2013).

[8] Sara Jones considers Paul Williams's concept in her article 'At Home with the *Stasi: Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen* as Historic House' (214).

[9] Williams makes a brief reference to the Hohenschönhausen memorial in chapter five of *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Remember Atrocities* (2007, 115).

[10] Sara Jones has considered the applicability of Alison Landsberg's theory of prosthetic memory to the visitor experience at Berlin-Hohenschönhausen (2011, 215). For Landsberg, this form of memory emerges in experiential sites, such as cinemas and museums, which engage the viewer or visitor both physically and cognitively, encouraging them to take on the memory of a past event through which they did not live. There is, Landsberg posits, a political dimension to the prosthetic appropriation of memories: because it encourages empathy and identification with the victim group, it can evoke a political response on the part of the visitor. Experiential sites have the potential to transform political consciousness, and Landsberg contends that 'the act of taking on these prosthetic memories transfigures our own subjectivities' (2004, 137). However, as Jones points out, this approach can also produce singular historical narratives which leave no room for a different interpretation of past events.

[11] Responding to the growing number of visitors from abroad, the site offers three tours in English daily.

[12] I have obtained written permission from Wolfgang Arndt and from Wolfgang Warnke to name them in my article and to quote directly from them. Warnke was imprisoned in Hohenschönhausen in 1975 and Arndt in 1980. Information about these tour guides can be found on the memorial website: http://www.stiftung-hsh.de/service/fuehrungen/zeitzeugen/inhaftierte-der-80er-jahre/wolfgang-arndt/ [accessed 6 March 2017] and http://www.stiftung-hsh.de/service/fuehrungen/zeitzeugen/inhaftierte-der-70er-jahre/wolfgang-warnke/ [accessed 6 March 2017].