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April 17, 2012

“Der Mangel an Schönheit”: Life in Hohenschönhausen in the 1950s

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2012

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An abstract of  
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences  
of Emory University in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

German Studies Department

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## Abstract

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This project is a functional linguistic discourse analysis of prison narratives from former inmates of Hohenschönhausen, the main Stasi prison in Berlin. The Stasi, a name for the former German Democratic Republic's (GDR) Ministry for State Security, was a tool of the socialist state from the late 1940s until 1989. The main work that this analysis draws from is *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen* (Knabe, 2007), a collection of personal narratives from former Hohenschönhausen inmates. This project's analysis focuses on three former political prisoners from the 1950s who offer vibrant and extensive narratives: Erica Wallach, a woman who was accused of being an American spy, Karl Wilhelm Fricke, a journalist who criticized the GDR for political oppression, and Horst Fichter, a man who openly criticized the controlling political party, the SED. This project uses a functional linguistic discourse analysis of these recounts in order to highlight the effects of surveillance and manipulation on a group of the Stasi's victims. This analysis contributes to the insufficient body of academic GDR scholarship surrounding first person accounts and perspectives of the Stasi prison system and, in doing so, draws attention to the contradictions between the GDR's professed principles of egalitarianism, equality, and justice and the practices of surveillance and control of its citizens.

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## I. Introduction

Hohenschönhausen, the main former prison of the German Democratic Republic's (GDR) Ministry for State Security, sits in the quiet Berlin neighborhood of Lichtenberg. Hohenschönhausen no longer functions as a prison, but rather as a museum for visitors interested in the history of the Ministry, otherwise known as the *Stasi*, as well as the legacy of the former German Democratic Republic. From the outside it looks like any other prison with barbed wire and watchtowers, but for its former prisoners sentences in Hohenschönhausen could be hardly considered the average prison experience. Not only were the physical conditions these prisoners were forced to endure far from comfortable, the Stasi's methods were specifically designed to inflict psychological harm. In the words of former prisoner Erica Wallach (2007), "*Der Mangel an Schönheit hier Musik, ein angenehmer Duft, etwas Hübsches zum Anschauen—war manchmal schwerer zu ertragen als Einsamkeit, Mangel an Liebe und der Verlust der Freiheit*" (p. 137). For Wallach the Stasi's method of separating her from everything she loved or found beautiful was more effective than denying her freedom. Thanks to the efforts of GDR scholars, Wallach and other former prisoners have come forward to share their experiences in Hohenschönhausen. These autobiographical recounts give novel insight into the Stasi's methods and the hypocrisy of the GDR as a whole. In order to effectively analyze the former prisoners' true opinions and beliefs about the Stasi apparatus this project uses a functional linguistic discourse analysis. This type of analysis focuses on the choices behind an author's writing and the linguistic means used to express meaning. Ultimately, this project intends to show the hypocrisy of the GDR regime through a functional linguistic discourse analysis of the autobiographical recounts of former political prisoners in Hohenschönhausen.

### **a. Project's Goal**

The purpose of this project is to contribute to the insufficient body of academic scholarship surrounding first person accounts and perspectives of the Stasi prison system and, in doing so, to draw attention to the contradictions between the GDR principles of egalitarianism, equality, and justice and the practices of surveillance and control of its citizens.

### **b. Significance of the Project**

#### **i. German Studies**

As may seem obvious, the topic of life in the GDR has been a major theme in historical and political literature. The controversial nature of the regime and the impact it had on so many individuals' lives lends itself perfectly to a broad range of works. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a surge of books, articles, films, and memoirs were published chronicling everyday life in the GDR, including both criticisms of the system and, in contrast, nostalgic remembrances of a bygone era. Popular examples of such works include *Goodbye Lenin!* (2003), a movie about a son who struggles to protect his sick mother from the reality of a newly reunited Germany, and *Sonnenallee* (1999), a movie about East German teenagers during the 1970s. Although a wide variety of genres are included in this growing body of GDR work, for the purpose of this project only the autobiographical recounts of life in the GDR are significant.

Much of the force behind this wave of publications stemmed from the feelings of former East Germans struggling to find their place in the new Germany. Their feelings of discomfort with their new identity led to the cleverly coined term, *Ostalgie*, a combination of the German words for East, *Ost*, and nostalgia, *Nostalgie*. Although German unification was seen largely as a success, some individuals still yearned for the old days in the GDR. Fulbrook, a renowned



historian, explains this arguably odd yearning in her essay, “Aspects of Society and Identity in the New Germany” (1994) :

“In the former GDR, everything now looks different, or nearly everything. Although the lines on the map remain much the same, some of them have been reconnected and blank areas filled in, the names, symbols, and colors of the environment have changed. This is disorienting, particularly for the old, who are unnerved by the new card-operated telephones, the changes in the names of streets and squares, the revolutions in the transport networks, and the expansion of horizons.” (p. 213)

The many changes to the newly unified German society led many East Germans to reconsider the past. Much of the literature expressing this nostalgic viewpoint does not directly advocate a return to the former socialist way of life, but rather reflects a newfound respect for the old system and an appreciation for the past. A prime example of this viewpoint can be found in Hensel’s bestselling collection of memoirs, *After the Wall* or *Zonenkinder*, published in Germany in 2002 and in the United States in 2004. Interestingly Hensel’s and many others’ autobiographical accounts of life in the GDR came out more than ten years after unification, pointing to a delayed processing of the past. In many of the works this delay in writing captures the GDR as a distant, almost other-worldly place. Throughout *Zonenkinder*, Hensel uses language that reflects almost positively on her childhood in the GDR. For example, she writes, “Now, when I look back on those years before the Wall fell and the whole world changed around us, it seems like a far-away, fairy-tale time” (p. 3). Many would disagree with the comparison of life into the GDR with a fairy-tale, and thus the relevancy of *Zonenkinder* has been debated in academic circles.

Another such widely read memoir with both nostalgic and critical undertones is Rusch's memoir, *Meine Freie Deutsche Jugend* (2003). Both Rusch's and Hensel's memoirs compromise a very specific perspective on life in the former GDR because they were just children when the Wall came down. The title of Rusch's memoir exemplifies the youthful focus of the book. Rusch plays with the name of the East German youth group, *Freie Deutsche Jugend*, whose main goal was to foster socialist values among young adults. A literal translation of the title is "my free German youth", but with an understanding of the history the title becomes all the more poignant. According to a review by Voigt (2003) in *Der Spiegel*, a prominent German news magazine, Rusch's book is:

*"Anders als Jana Hensel ("Zonenkinder") erzählt hier eine Autorin, die sich nicht zurücksehnt. "Da ist überhaupt nichts, was ich hätte mitnehmen wollen aus der DDR", sagt Rusch, "es war ein durch und durch unfreies Land." Aber Rusch ist auch ohne jede Bitterkeit, und sie würde ihre Kindheit "auf keinen Fall" tauschen wollen gegen eine aus dem Westen."* (Voigt, 2003)

Although Hensel's and Rusch's memoirs are controversial, in that they have sympathetic attitudes towards life in the GDR, their works exemplify the importance for many of looking back on life in East Germany from 1945 to 1989 and trying to understand the effects of the socialist regime on East German citizens as they themselves are having to move forward and come to terms with a new identity in their new state, a psychological phenomenon termed *Identitätsverlust* in GDR studies. Despite being widely read autobiographical recounts of life in the former GDR and prototypical examples of the Ostalgie phenomenon, *Zonenkinder* and *Meine Freie Deutsche Jugend* do not fully lend themselves to a complete and accurate examination of life under the ever watchful eye of the Stasi, the East German secret police and the focus of this

project, because these works do not specifically thematize the Stasi apparatus. A better work for this topic is Funder's *Stasiland: True Stories from behind the Berlin Wall* (2003). Despite being an Australian, Funder is able to, in Overy's words in the *Sunday Telegraph* (2003), capture "the brutal reality of East German repression" with her collection of stories from individuals terrorized by the Stasi. Funder's work focuses on a broad range of interviews, including one with a woman whose husband was imprisoned by the Stasi and then under suspicious circumstances committed suicide while in prison and one with an East German journalist who hosted a famous propagandist television show, *Der schwarze Kanal*.

Even though *Stasiland* gives new insight into the depth of the Stasi's control of the GDR citizenry, Funder's literary style and editing of the interviews creates a barrier between the reader and the individuals who truly experienced the brutality of Stasi manipulation. In order to break down this barrier, it is only natural to go directly to works produced by the Stasi's victims, specifically to works produced by political prisoners detained in Stasi prisons.

Unfortunately, the body of work about these prisons and their inmates is extremely limited. Only three main texts exist describing life in the Stasi prisons from the perspective of inmates. The first text, *"Ich kam mir vor wie'n Tier"-Knast in der DDR* (1991) edited by Heyme and Schumann, includes a short characterization of life in various Stasi prisons followed by a collection of interviews with former "*Gefangenen*" (prisoners) conducted by Heyme. Although this collection is extremely informative, the interview genre establishes a filter to the prisoners' story that prevents the unadulterated examination of the prisoners' experiences.

Another work including first person accounts of life in a Stasi prison is *Zeitzeugen Inhaftiert in Berlin-Hohenschönhausen: Erinnerungen, Protokolle, und Fotos zur ehemaligen*

*Lager und Haftanstalt Berlin-Hohenschönhausen* published in 1998 by Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. This work, as the title relates, includes prisoner narratives, prison protocols, and photos. Although this work is relatively complete, *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen* (Knabe, 2007) (detailed later in section e.ii.) provides a more extensive collection of former prisoner autobiographical recounts. Interestingly, two of the individuals included in the *Zeitzeugen* collection are also included in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen*. Although *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen* and *Zeit Zeugen Inhaftiert in Berlin-Hohenschönhasen* only chronicle the stories of individuals in Hohenschönhausen, the main Stasi prison in Berlin, their recounts give insight into the Stasi prison system as a whole as well as viewpoints on the GDR government. Another relevant collection of narratives published in a magazine is Morawe's *Untersuchungshaft bei der Staatsicherheit der DDR: Realitätsdiffussion Infolge Pyschischer Folter* (1999).

Outside of first hand accounts, basic background information and prison protocol was available from the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial website, specifically with respect to the Stasi's victims. One such publication is *Das zentrale Untersuchungsgefängnis Berlin-Hohenschönhausne im Spiegel von Opferberichten* (Lazai, Spohr & Voss, 2009). Besides this publication *Haftbedinugen und Geständnisproduktion in den Untersuchungs-Haftanstalten des MfS. Psychologische Aspekte und biographische Veranschaulichung* (Zahn, 1997) is another useful description of the Stasi's methods and the psychological aspects of such imprisonment.

Finally, most of the information or research surrounding the Hohenschönhausen prison grounds and facilities has only focused on the debate over the appropriateness of its use as a memorial and its controversial role in German history. By analyzing recounts from *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen* this project contributes to the lacking body of work surrounding the Stasi

prison system as well as the lacking body of information on the political prisoners' perspective on imprisonment in the GDR. It also serves to further the discussion on the contradictions between the GDR's professed principles of egalitarianism, equality, and justice and the practices of surveillance and control of its citizens.

## **ii. Prison Narratives and Surveillance Studies**

Although this project originally stemmed purely from an interest in the GDR and German studies, research into the topics of prison narratives and surveillance studies was also necessary. Because prison narratives are a relatively specific genre of autobiographical texts there is also not much academic literature describing how to correctly approach analyzing a prison narrative. One useful work on the topic is Haslam's *Fitting Sentences: Identity in the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Prison Narrative* (1971). For Haslam, "A history of prisons is a history of prisoners...Prison policy and practice are engaged in an extensive and constant construction of the prisoner, the mythic body and identity of the generic prison unfortunate enough to be incarcerated" (p. 3). Furthermore, "the modern prison and its practices are said to arise from a Protestant rhetoric of the individual's ability to reform..." (p. 4). Haslam's conclusions make this project's analysis of prisoner's narratives all the more significant because, as Haslam writes, their behavior and existence shaped prison policy. Furthermore, Haslam's definition of the modern prison serves to identify the main purpose of a prison to be reform. For the Stasi, reform meant changing the minds and behaviors of its political prisoners.

Furthermore, an understanding of the concepts of surveillance and observation in a prison setting is also essential to this project. Therefore, it is necessary to include a discussion on the writings and designs of Foucault, twentieth-century French philosopher, and Bentham,

nineteenth-century English philosopher. For the purposes of this project, Haslam's (1971) discussion of Foucault provides an effective summary of the central issues to consider when examining the control and surveillance practiced in prisons:

“Foucault uses Jeremy Bentham's construction of the panopticon as a figure that demonstrates the effectiveness and pervasiveness of the disciplinary mechanisms of society. In general Bentham's architectural design of this institution allowed for inmates to be constantly watched—or at least feel as if they were—while the inmates themselves could never see the officials in charge of them. This structure, according to Bentham, permits the exercise of complete and total discipline in that it makes those subject to its control feel as if any infraction of the rules will be noticed and the perpetrator punished [...] Bentham writes that ‘the more constantly the persons to be inspected are under the eyes of those who inspect them, the more perfectly will the purpose of the establishment have been attained.’ [...] Foucault interprets Bentham's plan in terms of its intended effects on the inmates and their relationship to the exercise of social power. He writes that the ‘major effect of the Panopticon’ was to ‘induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power’.” (p. 8)

Although Hohenschönhausen was not built in the shape of the panopticon, described here by Bentham and Foucault, the idea of constant surveillance was one of the many methods the Stasi used to control both the general citizenry and the prison population. As described later by inmates included in this project, guards constantly monitored the cells by peering into peepholes in the doors. Even though the Stasi prison inmates do not immediately connect this observation

with the functioning of power, they acknowledge the effects it had on their behavior and state of mind.

Foucault also outlines another important aspect of imprisonment relevant to this project, specifically the notion of isolation. Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1995) “Lastly, and perhaps above all, the isolation of the convicts guarantees that it is possible to exercise over them, with maximum intensity, a power that will not be overthrown by any other influence; solitude is the primary condition of total submission” (p. 237). Like Foucault suggests, the Stasi was able to isolate effectively the prisoners with the intention of making them submit to the will of the state.

Despite the fact that prisons are inherently a very distinct and separate part of society, the procedures used and actions taken within prison walls speak to the principles and ideals held by the society or more specifically the government as a whole. In Halsam’s work with prison narratives he ultimately concludes that, “all prison writings comment to one degree or another on the oppressive forces of the prison itself, and of the sociological structures of which the prison is a part” (p. 12). Due to this conclusion it is fair to make claims about the Stasi and the GDR based on the recounts of individuals detained in Hohenschönhausen. In doing so this project also contributes to the broad body of work surrounding prison studies.

### **c. The Stasi**

In February of 1950 the GDR Volkskammer, the single chamber legislature controlled by the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED), “unanimously passed the ‘Bill to establish a Ministry for State Security’” (Gieseke, 2006, p. 15). On this significant day, Karl Steinhoff, the Minister of the Interior, explained that the ministry’s main task was:

“to protect the people’s own enterprises and works, transport and the people’s own property against the plots of criminal elements as well as against the activity of enemy agents, subversives, saboteurs and spies, to conduct an energetic fight against bandits, to protect our democratic development and to ensure uninterrupted fulfillment of the economic plans of our peace economy.” (Dennis, 2003, p. 25)

Although Steinhoff’s explanation of the newly formed Ministry for State Security (MfS) comes across as relatively straightforward and regular in terms of the standard role of governmental police powers, the MfS’s true role was to be the “shield and sword of the party” (Gieseke, 2006, p. 5), furthering socialism and the agenda of the SED in every action taken.

At the heart of the MfS was the secret police organization, *Staatssicherheit*, more commonly known as the Stasi. In Gieseke’s (2006) critical appraisal of the Stasi, it “was the most frightening and at the same time the most grotesque part of the power apparatus of the SED and therewith a cornerstone of the GDR state” (p. 5). Although arguments have been made that the Stasi “was one of the world’s most successful intelligence services for espionage and counter espionage” (p. 5), the use of the word successful puts a positive spin on the variety of the atrocities that the Stasi committed in their efforts to elevate socialism within the East German state and abroad (p. 5).

In order to protect the country from the dangers of capitalism and imperialism, the Stasi intruded into every aspect of society. Stasi scholar Koehler (1999) describes its behavior as being “like a giant octopus, the Stasi’s tentacles probed every aspect of life” (p. 9). In Koehler’s book,



*Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police* (1999), he outlines the many extremes to which the Stasi would go to exercise control over the East German citizens:

“Full time officers were posted to all major industrial plants. Without exception, one tenant in every apartment building was designated as a watchdog reporting to an area representative of the *Volkspolizei*, the People’s Police...If a relative of friend came to stay overnight it was reported. Schools, universities, and hospitals were infiltrated from top to bottom...Doctors, lawyers, journalists, writers, actors, and sports figures were co-opted by Stasi officers as were waiters and hotel personnel. Tapping about 100,000 telephone lines in West Germany and West Berlin around the clock was the job of 2,000 officers...Stasi officers knew no limits and had no shame when it came to ‘protecting the party and the state.’ Churchmen, including high officials of Protestant and Catholic denominations, were recruited en masse as secret informers...Tiny holes were bored in apartment and hotel room walls through which Stasi agents filmed their “suspects” with special video cameras...Like the Nazi Gestapo, the Stasi was the sinister side of *deutsche Gründlichkeit* (German thoroughness).” (p. 9)

From these extensive observational practices the Stasi was able to collect a massive amount of in-depth intelligence on the East German citizenry. In order to maintain control of the citizenry, the Stasi kept meticulous records, in the form of files, of their findings. Although a significant portion of the files were destroyed or damaged following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, many of the files still exist and are housed with other MfS materials by the *Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatsicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, or the BStU for short. This organization has shelves of file archives,

which if lined up “would stretch for 185 kilometers” (Dennis, 2003, p. 7). These files are now open to the public, although only the individual’s name that is on the file may read it. In reading their files:

“many have been shocked at the details they contain about their political and social activities and their private lives, much of it trivial but some of it extremely sensitive and hurtful. Whereas one can usually live with entries on when the lights were switched off at home or when household rubbish was emptied into a bin, it is difficult to come to terms with the discovery that one’s husband or brother had acted as an informer or that trusted work colleagues or members of a peace group had reported your views to their Stasi controlling officer.” (Dennis, 2003, p. 7)

Like in these examples, the Stasi invaded the private lives of countless East German citizens and some West German citizens, extracting the information they needed to maintain control of the GDR society. Although this invasion of privacy is enough to criticize the actions of the Stasi, the misconduct did not end there. From the time of its founding in 1950 to their fall in 1989, the Stasi “could arrest people and keep them prisoner in its own interrogation and detention facilities until they could be brought to trial” (Gieske, 2006, p. 5). This behavior was a direct violation of the East German criminal code which stated that the intent of the code was to “safeguard the dignity of humankind, its freedom and rights under the aegis of the criminal code of the socialist state,’ and that ‘a person can be prosecuted under the criminal code only in strictest concurrence with the law” (Koehler, 1999, p. 18). Despite these promises:

“many of the codified offenses for which East German citizens were prosecuted and imprisoned were unique to totalitarian regimes, both fascist and

communist...Moreover, certain sections of the code, such as those on “Reasonable Relaying of Information” and “Reasonable Agent Activity”, were perversely applied, landing countless East Germans in maximum security penitentiaries.” (Koehler, 1999, p. 18)

Even though the Stasi was particularly known for its extreme methods of observation in the everyday world, the methods it used within its prison walls are also significant to a complete understanding of the Stasi apparatus.

#### **d. Discrepancies Between Principles and Practice**

Despite being named the German Democratic Republic, the GDR was far from what is generally defined as a democracy. For the purpose of this project it is unnecessary to go into a deep discussion of what exactly the GDR was or was not, especially with respect to political classifications such as dictatorship or totalitarianism regime. For this project it is only necessary to classify the GDR as a socialist state.

The GDR defined itself in its constitution by simply outlining its goals: “All power serves the wealth of the people. It assures peaceful life, protects socialist society and guarantees the rise of the living standard, the free development of man, preserves his dignity and guarantees the rights granted by this constitution” (Bothe, 1969, p. 276). These goals were reiterated in the SED’s, or the GDR’s controlling party’s, slogan, “‘Alles zum Wohle des Volkes (Everything for the Benefit of the People)’” (Fulbrook, 1995, p. 29). Essentially, the goal of the GDR was to move towards a complete socialist state in which all citizens would prosper from the elimination of the class system.

More specifically with regard to due process, the GDR's constitution guaranteed "a limitation on pre-trial detention, a right to be judged by a lawfully constituted tribunal, a right to a hearing and the right of defense, and a right of petition" (Bothe, 1969, p. 286) as well as personal liberties such as "the inviolability of personal freedom, the privacy of mail and communications, [and] the freedom of movement..." (p. 285). During the course of the GDR's history and the development of the Stasi many of these rights were explicitly violated.

Besides the constitution, the GDR's criminal code also outlined the principles that the system intended to maintain in order to further the socialist agenda. In the criminal code's preamble the purpose is stated as being to "safeguard the dignity of humankind, its freedom and rights under the aegis of criminal code of the socialist state' and that 'a person can be prosecuted under the criminal code only in the strictest concurrence with the law'" (Koehler, 1999, p. 18). Koehler (1999) emphasizes that "certain sections of the code, such as those on 'Treasonable Relaying of Information' and 'Treasonable Agent Activity' were perversely applied, landing countless East Germans in maximum security penitentiaries" (p. 18). Furthermore, he goes on to show how the principles of the socialist state were manipulated through changes to the law:

"The East German party chiefs were not content to rely only on the Stasi's millions of informers to ferret out antistate sentiments. Leaving nothing to chance, they created a law that made the failure to denounce fellow citizens a crime punishable by up to five years' imprisonment." (p. 19)

Each example Koehler shares with respect to the criminal code lays down more evidence for the case of the GDR's hypocrisy. Koehler's final example is especially interesting. He writes:

“Ironically, another part of this section of the criminal code decreed that ‘glorifying militarism’ also was a punishable offense, although the DDR itself ‘glorified’ its People’s Army beyond any Western norm. That army was clad in uniforms and insignia identical to those of the Nazi Wehrmacht, albeit without eagles and swastikas.” (p. 19)

This example highlights the hypocritical nature of the regime. Although individuals could not participate in certain behaviors, the SED and the GDR could do so in the name of the regime.

Finally, for the political prisoners in Hohenschönhausen, the legal process although guaranteed to be fair by the GDR’s constitution provided no redemption. In *The Stasi: Myth and Reality*, Dennis (2003) explains this denial of legal rights:

“So much for the theory, practice was different: justice had to be unseen to be undone. The MfS controlled the prosecutors rather than vice versa; the judiciary and legal profession was thoroughly penetrated by Stasi informers; the right to see evidence was often infringed; and the MfS rather than the prosecutor decided whether or not to proceed to a trial” (p. 65).

Here Dennis highlights the complete disregard by the Stasi for the constitutional rights and protections given to “criminals” in the GDR. Unfortunately for the prisoners of Hohenschönhausen these unjust practices were prevalent.

Despite the GDR’s proclamations of egalitarianism and protection of personal rights guaranteed by the East German constitution, the actions of the GDR, specifically through the injustices of the Stasi, speak to the hypocrisy of the regime and the contradictions between

principle and practice. The autobiographical recounts analyzed in this project provide further evidence for these observations.

### **e. Description of the Stasi Prison System**

Just as the Stasi was the “shield and sword of the party” (Gieseke, 2006, p.5) the Stasi prison system served as a further means to control the citizens of the GDR. For the most part the prisons run by the MfS served as centers for manipulation and intimidation. Although it is difficult to nail down exact statistics about the Stasi prison system, due to the inherent secrecy of the organization, some numbers are available. On November 20, 1983 there were in total 39,646 individuals imprisoned in Stasi facilities, 34,981 of which were men and 4,665 of which were women. In September of 1985, 35 individuals were imprisoned for crimes against “peace, humanity, and human rights”, 301 were imprisoned for crimes against the GDR, 4,640 were imprisoned for crimes against other individuals, 1,178 were imprisoned for crimes against children and family, 6,259 individuals were imprisoned for crimes against socialist property and the national economy, 4,509 were imprisoned for crimes against personal and private property, and 1,970 were imprisoned for crimes against the general security. From this set of data, most of the individuals imprisoned by the Stasi were taken in for crimes against socialism (Heyme & Schumann, 1991, p. 13).

#### **e.i. Description of Hohenschönhausen**

Due to the extensiveness of the Stasi system, prisons were placed in almost every region of the GDR. For example the Stasi either built or renovated facilities in Stollberg, Brandenburg, Waldheim, Ictershausen, Halle, Cottbus, and Bautzen (Heyme & Schumann, 1991, p. 13-24). Although prisons existed throughout the GDR, the main Stasi prison, Hohenschönhausen was

located in Berlin, specifically in a formerly industrial area in the northeastern district of Lichtenberg. Because Hohenschönhausen was the main prison where a large number of significant political prisoners were held it was the natural choice for this project. The prison complex stretches across multiple city blocks between Genselerstraße, Lichtenauerstraße, and Goeckestraße (Erler & Knabe, 2005, p. 6-7). Before serving as a Stasi prison, the National Socialist People's Welfare Association used the main building as a kitchen (Erler & Knabe, 2005, p. 55). The Soviets later used Hoheschönhausen as a detainment and transit camp following the Second World War. The Stasi took over and expanded the complex in 1951 by adding a building with more cells and interrogation rooms (Erler & Knabe, 2005, p. 32).

Although the structure and organization of the building changed over the course of the GDR regime, cells in Hohenschönhausen remained relatively consistent. Most of the occupied cells existed in the basement of the main building, nicknamed the "U-boot" by both guards and prisoners. These cells either had small windows at the top of the ceiling or no windows at all. Very little in the manner of personal hygiene was provided for the prisoners, only a bucket to use to go to the bathroom. Usually each cell had a wooden pallet for sleeping, but this was not always the case. Light bulbs lit the cells all day and all night, making the sleeping conditions less than ideal. Towards the late 1980s conditions improved at Hohenschönhausen. For example, prisoners were provided with mattresses and restroom facilities, but for the most part every day life was torturous for the political prisoners (Erler & Knabe, 2005). Besides cells, the Hohenschönhausen hosted interrogation rooms, office space for Stasi officers, garages for prisoner transport vehicles, and a small infirmary.

**e.ii. *Gefangenen in Hohenschönhausen: Stasi- Häftlinge berichten***

*Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen: Stasi- Häftlinge berichten* is a collection of recounts from individuals imprisoned in Hohenschönhausen. The twenty-four narratives span from 1945 until Hohenschönhausen's closing in 1989 and are organized by decade.

For the purposes of this project only recounts from the 1950s were selected for the following reasons. First, the 1950s were a formative time period for the GDR following its founding in 1949. It was arguably a developmental time period for this new socialist state yet the prisoner narratives already point to the fact that even in its infancy the GDR did not hesitate to adopt repressive policies towards its citizens. The narratives are especially interesting from the 1950s because they show this tension between the developing socialist state and the political oppression. For example, Erica Wallach's recount discusses the conflict between the old and new guards. This conflict exemplifies the deteriorating and extremely harsh conditions in the Stasi prisons. Second, the narratives chosen provide a vibrant and extensive portrayal of the Stasi prison system during that time. Each of the individuals was in prison for a year or more, giving them plenty of experiences to share in their recount. Furthermore, the length of the recounts range from seventeen to nine pages, allowing the former inmates to focus on their most significant experiences. Third, all three accounts share similar narrative structure and topical foci. Wallach, Fricke, and Fichter all pattern their narratives in similar ways by starting with their first days at Hohenschönhausen, followed by their everyday experiences and emotions while incarcerated, and ending with their opinions and perspectives on the GDR and the Stasi. Such similarities lend themselves to a comparative analysis of the three narratives. Fourth, all three individuals were incarcerated for political reasons. As such, the analysis is able to focus on the effects of Stasi imprisonment on political dissent. Fifth, although the collection includes far more



narratives from men than women, the narratives chosen for this analysis represent both genders, thereby providing another variable for comparison. Last, two of the individuals, Wallach and Fricke, have backgrounds in writing, making their narratives more compelling and captivating to the reader.

Although the classification of the pieces in this collection as historical autobiographical recounts is not the focus of this project, an understanding of this classification was useful in recognizing specific linguistic elements prevalent in such a genre. According to Derewianka (1990) in her analysis of different text types from a functional perspective, a recount is defined as “the unfolding of a sequence of events over time” (p. 14). Recounts “tell what happened” and are distinctive in that they usually start with an orientation followed by a description of a series of events and often include “personal comment on the incident” (Derewianka, 1990, p. 15). The writings in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen* follow this pattern, in that the authors describe their time in the prison, generally beginning with a description of the prison itself followed with a series of anecdotes about their time spent in their cell or in the interrogation rooms. Often the prisoners include personal comments about how they were feeling at the time and their reflections about the nature of the regime. The recounts in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen* are quite obviously autobiographical because they were written by the prisoners themselves. Due to this autobiographical nature it is natural to expect the use of the first person and the inclusion of personal details. Not only are these recounts autobiographical, they are also historical in nature. According to Coffin (2006), in her discussion of different discourses used in historical writings, “the purpose of a historical recount is to chronicle past events regarded historically significant, and it is designed to inform rather than to entertain” (p. 56). The recounts in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen*, although occasionally entertaining, were written by the prisoners to inform

the public about their situation in a Stasi prison. Due to these characteristics the texts analyzed in this project are classified as autobiographical historical recounts.

List Taschenbuch Verlag originally published *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen* in 2007, but certain recounts had been previously published in other publications prior to this. For example, Erica Wallach's chapter, "Ein Grab voller Erinnerungen" is a segment from her book, *Light at Midnight*, first published in English in the United States in 1967 and later in German in 1969. (More about Horst Fichter and Karl Wilhelm Fricke's recounts and publications is included in their individual chapters.) All of the recounts are the original works of the inmates themselves, but Hubertus Knabe, the volume's editor, chose the titles of each of the narratives from quotations from the texts themselves. Knabe is also responsible for editing some of the narratives. Once again, Wallach's piece in its original form is much longer than what is included in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen*. Wallach spent time in multiple prisons in the GDR as well as in the Soviet Union. She details all of these internments in *Light at Midnight*, but Knabe logically chose to include only the passages about Hohenschönhausen (more information on the prisoners included in this project is detailed at the beginning of their individual chapters). Taken together the recounts in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen* paint a painful picture of what it was like to be a political prisoner under the oppressive state security system of the GDR.

### **e.iii. Hubertus Knabe**

*Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen: Stasi-Häftlinge berichten* was edited by Hubertus Knabe. Like the other individuals who contributed to this narrative, Knabe was also a vocal critic of the East German state. Knabe first arrived on the national stage in the Federal Republic through his work with the Green Party and the peace movement. Later his political focus shifted

to the repressive policies of the GDR and, as a result, he was singled out by the GDR as an enemy of the state. Most importantly to this study, Knabe is a German historian whose works focus on the GDR and its impact on its citizens, specifically the individuals who were victimized by the state. Some of Knabe's other titles include *Die unterwanderte Republik: Stasi im Westen* (1999), *Der diskrete Charme der DDR. Stasi und Westmedien* (2001), *17. Juni 1953. Ein deutscher Aufstand* (2003), *Tag der Befreiung? Das Kriegsende in Ostdeutschland* (2005), and *“Die Täter sind unter uns“ Über das Schönreden der SED-Diktatur* (2007).

Despite having grown up for the most part in West Germany, Knabe has strong feelings about the victims of the GDR and the politics surrounding Germany's tumultuous history. In a 2006 interview with Spiegel Online he expressed his concerns:

*“Die Opfer der kommunistischen Diktatur haben oft das Gefühl, von der Politik allein gelassen zu werden. Die Kanzlerin sollte den regelmäßigen Kontakt, den sie etwa zum Zentralrat der Juden pflegt, auch zu ihnen pflegen.”* (Spiegel Online, 2006)

This statement makes it clear that Knabe has no problem discussing controversial topics in order to further his agenda of consideration for the Stasi's victims. This tendency for controversial statements has brought Knabe both allies and critics, yet Knabe's importance in the debate about the treatment of the history of the Stasi is undeniable.

Today Knabe serves as the scientific director of the *Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen im ehemaligen zentralen Untersuchungsgefängnis des DDR-Staatssicherheitsdienstes*, or the memorial of Berlin-Hohenschönhausen in the former main detention center of the GDR state security service. This role has allowed him access to the many

individuals included in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen*. His expertise on the topic and the history behind the prison make him an appropriate editor for such a publication. His knowledge of the Stasi and its prison system has also led him to develop firm opinions about the prison, as is clear already in his introduction to the volume:

*“Anders als im preisgekrönten Film “Das Leben der Anderen” von Florian Henckel von Donnersmark machte keiner der in Hohenschönhausen Inhaftierten die Erfahrung, dass ihm ein Offiziers des Staatsicherheitsdienstes heimlich zu Hilfe kam. Die hier veröffentlichten Berichte demonstrieren aber noch etwas anderes: Sie zeigen, dass sich selbst in der Situation größere Charakterstärke gegenüber einem unmenschlichen Regime behaupten können. Nicht die fiktiven, von Skrupeln gepackten Täter im Kino, sondern die realen, von einer Diktatur gequälten Opfer sind deshalb die wahren Helden der Geschichte.”* (Knabe, 2007, p. 19)

In this passage Knabe emphasizes the importance of the recounts in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen*. In fact, he positions his volume in juxtaposition with the movie, *Das Leben der Anderen* (2006) and stresses the importance of the narratives in his volume being true stories coming from actual individuals who suffered at the hands of the Stasi. Unlike in the fictional depictions, the Stasi officers guarding the prisoners in Hohenschönhausen were not ultimately humanized by a final kind act. Knabe makes this distinction in order to highlight the true nature of the regime and draw attention to the Stasi’s malignant legacy. As editor of this volume, Knabe had complete latitude in choosing the works included in this collection. Thus it is easy to make the argument that because of Knabe’s strong opposition of the GDR he intentionally only included negative portrayals of the GDR and focused exclusively on recounts with the harshest

criticisms. Although this criticism is possible, Knabe's work includes a broad range of individuals whose works have also been featured in other collections such as the previously discussed *Zeitzeugen Inhaftiert in Berlin-Hohenschönhausen* (Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, 1998). Furthermore, just as Haslam wrote, "all prison writings comment to one degree or another on the oppressive forces of the prison itself" (1971, p.12). Therefore, it is hard to imagine that any narrative about prison life would provide justification for prison practices.

#### **f. Means of Analysis: A Functional Linguistic Discourse Analysis**

Although the prisoners' recounts speak volumes after only a single reading, a more systematic approach was necessary to complete this project successfully. The systematic approach used in this project is a functional linguistic discourse analysis. This project analyzes each recount from a functional linguistic perspective to tease out qualitative and quantitative features of the recount that highlight the inmates' interaction with the Stasi prison apparatus. Based on Halliday's *Systemic-Functional Linguistics* (2004), a functional approach to discourse analysis focuses on how language functions to make meaning in specific registers and contexts. Inherently, each context requires the language user to make a range of lexico-grammatical choices that ultimately affect the meaning conveyed. The task of a functional discourse analyst therefore is to analyze the specific choices made in terms of such lexico-grammatical topics as voice, tense, mood, conjunction, reference, lexicon, and theme. From such a fine-grained linguistic analysis the project points to the specific language-based features in each recount that reveal the effects of imprisonment, surveillance, and control on the inmates' thought and language. By using this form of analysis the project seeks to focus on the meaning in the language the inmates chose to use. Although Systemic-Functional-Linguistics offers a variety of

avenues for analysis, such as the analysis of verb form, adjective type, or noun form, for the purposes of this project a focus on (1) theme, (2) passive voice, (3) repetition, (4) semantic field, and (5) personal possessive pronouns proved most effective and revealing.

Before embarking on the analyses themselves, explanations of each of these five linguistic features are necessary. First, theme is essentially the first element in the sentence before the main verb. According to Halliday, the primary architect of Systemic-Functional Linguistics, the theme serves as “‘the point of departure for the clause as a message’ and as ‘the peg on which the message is hung’” (Fries & Gregory, 1995, p. 48). For example, in the sentence, *I rode my bike to the store yesterday*, “I” is both the theme and the subject of this sentence. Another example would be, *Yesterday I rode my bike to the store*. In this sentence, the theme is “yesterday”. Although the sentences have comparable meanings, the first sentence emphasizes the subject, “I”, and in the second sentence “yesterday” is emphasized. This project also refers to the concept of a marked theme, which is a theme that is not the subject of the sentence. For example, in the sentence, *Yesterday I rode my bike to the store*, yesterday is a marked theme. If the theme of the sentence is the same as the subject the theme is unmarked. Themes are especially important in German because of the flexibility with which elements can be placed in the so-called first position of the sentence. Ultimately, identifying themes in a written work is useful because it allows the discourse analyst to detect what is emphasized or thematized in a text and what is not.

Another way for the author to place emphasis on certain words is through the use of repetition. By repeating certain words or phrases the author drills these concepts into the reader’s mind. For the purposes of this project, words the prisoners choose to repeat relating to the Stasi and their methods are especially relevant.

The semantic fields that the author draws upon and establishes also give the reader clues as to the author's perspective. By tabulating the words that are used and that appear in conjunction with each other, the analyst can begin to make statements about the meaning that the text conveys. In the case of the prison narratives, the semantic field ultimately gives the reader insight into how the prison situation is portrayed.

The use of the passive voice is also important for the purposes of this project. Each time former inmates choose to use the passive voice they are choosing to not name the agent responsible for carrying out the action expressed by the verb. The passive voice is especially interesting for the prison recounts because the prisoners often write about what was done to them using the passive and thus avoid naming the perpetrators. It also simply keeps the focus on the prisoners themselves, not on the perpetrators.

Finally, this project includes the analysis of the use of personal possessive pronouns. These pronouns or lack thereof allow the reader to lay claim to objects and situations. For example, the prisoners lay claim to their opinions or beliefs by using "*mein*", but they rarely lay claim to things like their cells or other aspects of Hohenschönhausen.

Because a functional linguistic discourse analysis allows for a methodically close reading of a text, it is effective for the purposes of this project, namely, an analysis of prison recounts. By identifying specific lexico-grammatical choices that prisoners made in their retelling of their prison experiences, this analysis is able to come to concrete conclusions about the prisoners' perspectives on their treatment in Hohenschönhausen, the Stasi apparatus as a whole, and ultimately the GDR.

## II. Karl Wilhelm Fricke

### a. Description of Karl Wilhelm Fricke

Karl Wilhelm Fricke is a German journalist born in 1929. After studying Political Science in West Germany he began to publish articles criticizing the GDR, specifically with respect to political persecution. Fricke's criticism stemmed from his personal experiences with the GDR, beginning when his father, Oskar Karl Fricke, was arrested by Soviet Police despite his innocence. Because of Fricke's critical publications, Stasi representatives drugged and kidnapped Fricke in 1955 from a West Berlin apartment, bringing him to Berlin-Hohenschönhausen and detaining him there for fifteen months. In 1956 Fricke was sentenced to four years imprisonment for *Boykotthetze* and *Spionage*. Fricke was released in 1959 back to West Germany. Fricke continued to detail GDR oppression as a journalist following his imprisonment, but was continuously watched by the Stasi until 1989. Due to his history with the prison and his research into the GDR regime, Fricke served as the pre-eminent advisor to the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial during the 2000s (Knabe, 2007, p. 367).

Fricke's kidnapping was not his only painful connection to the Stasi and the GDR. Both of Fricke's parents also had experiences in eastern prisons. After his arrest by the Soviets, Fricke's father was "sentenced to twelve years in a penitentiary during the notorious Waldheim trials. He died behind bars in 1952" (Robert Havemann Society, 2009), three years before Fricke's kidnapping. Fricke's mother, Edith Fricke, was also kidnapped by the Stasi in 1955 under accusations that "she had been aware of and supported his activities. She was given a two-year sentence in February 1956" (Robert Havemann Society, 2009).



Because of Fricke's torturous experiences with the GDR and the Stasi, it would be fair for Fricke's works to be totally biased negatively towards the GDR, but surprisingly:

“Although he had good reason to sow hate and anger, Karl Wilhelm Fricke was at all times clear and appropriate, showing incorruptible judgment but never unfair, unjust or unobjective. That earned him even the respect of his political opponents.” (Robert Havemann Society, 2009)

Ultimately, this “clear and appropriate” character of Fricke, an individual repeatedly persecuted by the Stasi, makes his recount of his experiences in Hohenschönhausen all the more useful for an understanding of GDR prison tactics.

## **b. Discourse Analysis**

### **i. Themes**

Unsurprisingly, Fricke carefully documents the size and structure of Hohenschönhausen prison in his autobiographical recount. This documentation is made evident through the repeated use of the theme “*Zelle*”. The term “*Zelle*” is repeated nine times as a theme in Fricke's narrative. Fricke even goes so far as to spend a whole segment of his text describing the specific layout of the prison. Perhaps because he was stuck alone in an isolated prison cell for so long, Fricke's knowledge of the organization of the compound is extensive. For example, he writes:

*“Diese Zellen waren im Keller des zweistöckigen Gebäudes eingebaut. Lediglich die an Außenwände angrenzenden einundzwanzig Zellen hatten etwa 60 mal 90 Zentimeter großes vergittertes Fenster mit blinder Scheibe im oberen Drittel der Zellenhinterwand. Alle anderen Zellen waren fensterlos. Die fensterlosen Zellen*

*wurden (und werden) Tag und Nacht von einer vertikal über der Zellentür in der Vorderwand eingelassenen Leuchte ausgestrahlt (die Tageslichtzellen nur bei Dunkelheit). Die Vernehmungsoffiziere nannten dieses Gefängnis zynisch das ‘Hotel zur Ewigen Lampe’.* (Fricke, 2007, p. 168)

Unlike many other aspects of his imprisonment, the cells are something easy to describe without appealing to any specific emotions. Although it would be easy to write a very negative portrayal of the cells, Fricke chooses a matter-of-fact description of the cells' appearance. This type of straight forward description is significant considering how much he must have suffered in Hohenschönhausen. By thematizing his cell, Fricke is able to detail a part of his experience and through those details critique his treatment. Just by straightforwardly describing his cells he is able to share with the reader his dire situation. The cells were in the basement, and if they had windows, they were very small with blinds and bars. The only deviation from this evident pattern of straightforward description of the cells is in the last sentence of this excerpt. In this sentence, Fricke thematizes the interrogators, who cynically describe the prison as a hotel. This contrast of straightforward characterization of the cells by a former inmate, which astonishingly lacks any negative spin, with the critical characterization of the prison by the interrogators, who are free to leave the prison at any time, reminds the reader of the prison's dire atmosphere and its ultimate purpose.

What may be most surprising about this autobiographical recount is that Fricke is reluctant to use himself as the theme of the sentence. It would be expected that an individual describing a trying situation he was forced to face would start almost every sentence with "I", for example, sentences like "I was forced to admit to crimes..." or "I could not believe what was happening to me..." would seem totally acceptable in such a recount. Oddly enough, Fricke only

uses “I”, or “*ich*” in German, as the theme of his sentence in total nine times, in a recount of 85 sentences. Fricke does use “*ich*” more than this, but in instances outside the theme of the sentence. This tendency reflects an unwillingness to place himself as the most important part of his experience in Hohenschönhausen.

Because his use of “*ich*” is limited, it is useful to look at the sentences in which he does thematize himself. The first use of “*ich*” occurs when he is introduced into his cell:

*“Ich taumelte daraufhin stark benommen auf eine Zimmertür zu, um den Raum zu verlassen, fand diese aber verschlossen. Während ich mechanisch die Türklinke mit der linken Hand zu öffnen und einen von innen steckenden Schlüssel mit der rechten Hand umzudrehen versuchte, wurde ich zurückgerissen. Ich schrie mehrmals gellend um Hilfe und schlug, da ich die Ausweglosigkeit meiner Situation nicht erkennen konnte, rasend um mich, bis ich im Verlauf des Handgemenges erneut bewußtlos zu Boden stürzte...”* (p. 167)

Three of the nine uses of “*ich*” as a theme come from this excerpt. Here Fricke is describing his first few moments in Hohenschönhausen. It makes sense that “*ich*” is thematized here because in these frantic moments, all Fricke was thinking about was himself, barely even acknowledging anything else in the room besides the door and the door handle.

The other uses of “*ich*” are more sporadic. For example, “*Ich war 455 Tage in Untersuchungshaft...*” (p. 167) or “*Ich habe das Vernehmungsprotokoll selbst gelesen*” (p. 170). These uses of “*ich*” are mainly for the purpose of describing his actions during the time of prison. They do not focus on his emotions or opinions, but rather relate either facts about himself or his behavior in prison.

Although Fricke is hesitant to thematize himself, he repeatedly thematizes Kurt Rittwagen, his kidnapper, and the situation in which he was kidnapped. The very first sentence of the recount begins, “*Es geschah in der frühen Mittagsstunden des 1. April 1955...*” (p. 164). In this sentence, “*es*” is his kidnapping. He goes on to describe Rittwagen in the narrative’s second sentence, “*Dieser Mann, ein langjähriger Kommunist namens Kurt Rittwagen, 1914 in Hamburg geboren, der selbst ein Jahrzehnt seines Lebens deportiert und inhaftiert gewesen war*” (p. 164). Here Fricke reflects within the theme of the sentence, the long series of modifying clauses about Rittwagen, on the irony that Rittwagen was imprisoned and deported during his lifetime, yet still willing to perpetrate such a crime against someone else. Although Rittwagen is obviously not representative of the entire GDR regime, for Fricke Rittwagen’s behavior is directly linked to his political persecution.

Fricke further thematizes his situation by describing his own drugging. In order to kidnap him, Rittwagen placed “*eine genau dosierte Mischung aus Atropin und Scopolamin*” in a drink (p. 166). Fricke goes on to describe his drugging, “*Im Jargon des Staatsicherheitsdienstes werden solchen betäubenden Getränke, die bereits die nationalsozialistische Gestapo ‘servieren’ ließ, ‘Knock-out-Cocktails genannt*” (p. 166). In this sentence Fricke chooses “*Im Jargon des Staatsicherheitsdienstes*” as his theme, but follows it up with a comparison to the Nazis. In doing so, Fricke creates a controversial, albeit factually critical, connection between the two oppressive regimes. This connection is especially significant considering the complete renunciation of all National Socialist behavior by the SED.

Not only does Fricke criticize the way in which the Stasi kidnapped him, he also is highly critical of the protocols they used to control him mentally within the prison. Fricke calls these methods “*psychologische Einkreisung*” (p. 172). Interestingly, Knabe chooses this phrase as the

title of Fricke's narrative, lending special significance to this topic. Even though Fricke was also a victim of these methods, he thematizes the other prisoners, "*Die Haftlinge*", more than he does himself. He describes one of the methods in detail, "*In Augenhöhe jeder Zellentür war ein Guckloch, ein 'Spion' angebracht, was an sich nichts Ungewöhnliches in Gefängnissen ist; aber beim Staatssicherheitsdienst hatte es damit eine besondere Bewandnis*" (p. 169). The Stasi guards would come by each door to look in on the prisoners, but the prisoners would become aware of this observation when they heard the clinking of the metal lid close after the guard was done observing. According to Fricke this clinking was a constant reminder of their hopeless situation. By using the marked theme "*In Augenhöhe jeder Zellentür war ein Guckloch,*" Fricke emphasizes the benign nature of the eye hole in order to contrast it with the Stasi's sinister use of it to make prisoners uncomfortable. Fricke goes on to describe the Stasi's torturous methods:

*“Die Wirkung wird dadurch verstärkt, dass die Untersuchungshäftlinge beim Staatssicherheitsdienst für gewöhnlich nicht nur völlig isoliert von der Außenwelt leben, ohne Nachricht von ihren Angehörigen, ohne Verbindung zu Rechtsanwälten...sondern auch keinerlei Lektüre, weder Bücher noch Zeitungen oder andere Beschäftigungsmittel [hatten] ...”* (p. 170)

The theme of this excerpt is the effect (*Die Wirkung*) of the Stasi's methods. Through the use of the passive voice, Fricke is able to thematize "*Die Wirkung*" and thereby emphasize the effect that the Stasi's complete control had on the prisoners

Within this controlled atmosphere, it seems relatively likely that a prisoner would begin to feel emotions of helplessness. Amazingly, in most of Fricke's narrative he portrays himself as both mentally and physically strong. Occasionally, however, Fricke's psychological suffering

appears into the text. This hopelessness is thematized when Fricke first arrives at Hohenschönhausen. Fricke wakes up from a drugged stupor in a strange place, “*Einigermaßen hilflos auf einem Stuhl sitzend, vor einem runden Tisch, in einem großen, hell erleuchteten, mir fremden Zimmer kam ich nach etwa sechs oder sieben Stunden wieder zu mir*” (p. 166). Fricke chooses to begin this sentence with a marked theme consisting of a series of descriptions about his situation that emphasize how helpless he was. By thematizing the setting Fricke allows the reader to experience those first few frightening moments with him. Fricke goes on:

*“Um mich herum standen vier und zeitweilig fünf kommunistische Sicherheitsoffiziere, teils in Zivil, teils in Uniform, die mich mit groben proletenhaften Schimpfwörtern anbrüllten, vulgar und obszön, wohl um mir klar zu machen, dass ich im ‘demokratischen Sektor’ sei.”* (p. 166)

From this excerpt, Fricke emphasizes his complete insecurity when first waking up. The marked theme “*Um mich herum*” accentuates Fricke’s sense of being surrounded; he had no chance to escape and could do nothing to avoid being abused by these intimidating guards. Despite Fricke’s overwhelming feeling of helplessness, Fricke is still willing to sneak a criticism of the GDR into this portion of the narrative by ironically calling the GDR the “*demokratischen Sektor*”. Fricke refuses to recognize the GDR as a democratic republic.

Finally, Fricke uses a significant amount of grammatically complex themes, or themes that contain complex grammatical structures and that prolong the introduction of the finite verb. He is especially fond of using long relative clauses like the one cited before about Rittwagen:

*“Dieser Mann, ein langjähriger Kommunist namens Kurt Rittwagen, 1914 in Hamburg geboren, der selbst ein Jahrzehnt seines Lebens deportiert und*

*inhaftiert gewesen war (fünf Jahre bei Stalin und, nach seiner Auslieferung in der Ära des Stalin-Hitler-Bündnisses, fünf Jahre bei Hitler), lebte nach dem Kriege in der sowjetischen Zone, bis er 1952 nach West Berlin 'flüchtete'.*" (p. 164)

The subject of the sentence is Rittwagen but the main verb does not appear in the sentence until much later, after three descriptive clauses. This attention to detail, describing the exact amount of time Rittwagen was incarcerated and where he was born, allows the reader to see how much Fricke has thought about his own experiences in relation to Rittwagen's experiences.

A final predominant theme, which is particularly relevant to the treatment of a prison recount, is the concept of time or the passing of time. Fricke begins his sentences nine times with different temporal phrases. For example, he writes "*In seinem Telephonanruf am 1. April 1955*" (p. 165), "*In den Vormittagstunden*" (p. 171), or "*Nach 455 Tagen Untersuchungshaft in Hohenschönhausen*" (p. 172). As may seem obvious, the concept of the passing of time for prisoners is especially important. Each moment spent in prison was either torturous, boring, or nerve-wracking. In Fricke's recount, time is also used as a way to map his changing frame of mind and to make neat transitions between anecdotes. Fricke, like the other prisoners who wrote recounts, recognize that a significant portion of their life was taken from them by the Stasi.

## **ii. Personal Possessive Pronouns**

Another prominent linguistic feature in Fricke's account is his use of personal pronouns. Fricke's use of personal pronouns is telling because they show an unwillingness to bind himself with anything related to his time in prison. Although Fricke uses other possessive personal pronouns, such as "his" and "theirs", the most interesting usage is of "my".

After having spent more than 400 days in a cell it would seem reasonable to claim the cell as yours, but Fricke never writes “my cell”. He only ever refers to it as “*Die Zellen*” (p. 168) or “*diese Zellen*” (p. 168) or “*die fensterlosen Zellen*” (p. 168). This refusal to use “*mein*” to describe his residence, the cell in Hohenschönhausen, stands in contrast with his first sentence in which he describes his apartment, “*in meiner West-Berliner Wohnung*” (p. 164). Fricke claims the apartment in which he chose to live, but not a cell in which he was forced to live in for more than a year. Fricke uses “*mein*” to take ownership of things he wishes to associate with, but avoids using “*mein*” in connection with the GDR and his torturous time in prison.

On the other hand Fricke does repeatedly use “*mein*” to refer to his own situation. He almost goes so far as to blame himself for his kidnapping. He reflects on the day he went to Rittwagen’s apartment:

*“Hingegen erhielt ich, als ich verabredungsgemäß mit dem Geheimagenten zusammentraf, das Buch nicht ausgehändigt. Stattdessen folgte ich, um das Buch in Empfang zu nehmen, seiner Einladung in eine nahegelegene Wohnung. Und das war mein entscheidener Fehler, der nur daraus erklärlich ist, dass ich als Journalist in West-Berlin keinen Grund sah, mich nach konspirativen Regeln zu verhalten—also beispielsweise auch fremde Wohnungen zu meiden.”* (p. 165)

Fricke uses “*mein*” to describe the mistake he made by going to the strange apartment. He was not forced to go get this book at the fated apartment, but rather chose to go with Rittwagen. He blames this faulty decision on his status as a western journalist, who usually did not need to be concerned with danger, insinuating that East German journalists, who were willing to criticize



the regime, had to have been constantly aware of conspiracies or the possibility of being kidnapped or worse.

Besides accepting the decision to go to Rittwagen's fake apartment as his own, Fricke also lays claim to his general situation in prison. He refers to this situation six times throughout the recount in various ways. For example he writes quite simply, "*die Auswegslosigkeit meiner Situation*" (p. 167), "*die meiste Zeit meiner Untersuchungshaft*" (p. 167), "*Meine Untersuchungshaft*" and "*meine Untersuchungshaft*" (p. 171, p. 172). In these examples, Fricke acknowledges his imprisonment as his own rather than as a shared experience of the larger group of political prisoners.

Although Fricke lays claim to his situation, the remaining two instances in which he uses "*mein*" show a hesitancy to blame himself as well as an uncertainty about who to blame.

*"Bei der Bearbeitung meines 'Falles' versuchte der für mich zuständige Oberleutnant, der allerdings nicht allein verantwortlich war für meinen 'kollektiv' bearbeiteten Fall, sondern auf Weisung mehrerer und der Untersuchung meiner Sache beteiligter Offizier handelte, mich zu einem 'vollen Geständnis' zu bewegen."* (p. 170)

Fricke places "*Fall*" in quotation marks here to emphasize the egregiousness of his wrongful imprisonment. He also places quotation marks around "*kollektiv*" in order to point out that his supervising officer was not the only individual responsible for his wrongful treatment. It was a group effort by members of the GDR regime that led to his dire situation. Ultimately, Fricke's use of "*mein*" creates a confusing contrast of self-blame and personal acceptance and blame focused towards the GDR and the specific group of individuals responsible for his imprisonment.

Despite the confusion surrounding his oppressors, Fricke is very certain about his personal beliefs. He emphasizes this certainty by once again laying claim to them with the use of the possessive personal pronoun “*mein*”. For example, he writes “*meine Zeitungsartikel*” (p. 164), and “*meine Vorstellungen*” (p. 166). These are things that Fricke holds dear, despite the fact that they are consistently tested in Hohenschönhausen. During his time in prison, Stasi officers interrogated Fricke, in order to get him to admit to wrongdoing. Fricke describes such an interrogation:

*“Bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt hatte ich in meiner eigenen Sache immer wahrheitsgemässe Aussagen gemacht. Da ich niemals konspirativ tätig gewesen war, konnte ich mich auch logischerweise mit meinen Aussagen nicht nur belasten, sondern sogar entlasten.”* (p. 172)

Despite consistent pressure from his interrogators to apologize for his behavior in the West Fricke never gives up his personal critical views of the GDR. This resiliency is something he is proud of and therefore repeatedly lays claim to it through the use of the possessive personal pronoun “*mein*”.

Despite the long time Fricke spent in Hohenschönhausen, he refuses to accept anything associated with the Stasi, such as the cells or their doctrine, as his own. He only lays claim to his own criticisms of the GDR.

### **iii. Repetition**

Repetition is one of the most effective ways of driving a point across in any sort of text. Fricke uses repetition in his recount to emphasize his own hardness to the Stasi’s efforts to intimidate or change him. One of the most prevalent words repeated is “*versuchen*” or “to try”.

Fricke uses “*versuchen*” three times in the text. The first time “*versuchen*” is used in the previously mentioned section in which he attempts to escape from the cell, “*Während ich mechanisch die Türklinke mit der linken Hand zu öffnen und eine von innen steckenden Schlüssel mit der rechten Hand umzudrehen versuchte.*” (p. 167). Fricke tries his best to escape from the cell, but fails. This example is the most basic form of resistance against the Stasi in that Fricke is willing to use physical aggression to avoid being further persecuted by the GDR.

Fricke also uses the verb “*versuchen*” in two other situations, but in these situations it is the Stasi who are unsuccessfully trying to change Fricke’s views. One of the uses of “*versuchen*” comes from the previously analyzed interrogation excerpt, “*Bei der Bearbeitung meines ‘Falles’ versuchte der für mich zuständige Oberleutnant...mich zu einem ‘vollen Geständnis’ zu bewegen*” (p. 170). Even though the lieutenant tries to get Fricke to change his understanding of the GDR, Fricke is unwilling to bend. Fricke continues his resistance to their heightened attempts later:

*“Nach solchen fruchtlosen Anstrengungen versuchte der Vernehmungsoffizier, unterstützt von einigen an der Bearbeitung meines Falles beteiligten Genossen, mich durch Versprechungen zum Verrat zu verführen beziehungsweise durch Drohungen zum Verrat zu nötigen. Mir wurde einerseits ‘Straffreiheit’ angeboten, dazu eine ‘schöne Wohnung’ nebst Möbelkredit und ‘gute Arbeit’. Andererseits suchte man mich wiederholt damit einzuschüchtern und zu erpressen, dass ich mindestens ‘ein Dutzend Jahre’ eingekerkert würde. Als dies alles fehlschlug, glaubten die Kommunisten, mich mit dem Schicksal meiner Mutter erpressen zu können...Als dies ebenfalls keinerlei positive Ergebnisse zeitigte...”* (p. 171)

In this example Fricke emphasizes the many different ways in which the Stasi attempted to get him to change his views and repent for formally criticizing the GDR. Fricke's stubbornness is impressive considering the threats to his mother and the possibility of a twelve-year prison sentence. Fricke's repeated use of "*versuchen*" emphasizes his resilience to and abhorrence of the Stasi and their procedures.

#### **iv. Word Choice**

Similar to Fricke's use of repetition, his word choice is critical to an understanding of his views about the Stasi and the GDR as a whole. Specifically relevant is Fricke's lexical choices with respect to the characterization of the Stasi and the practices they used.

Fricke refers to Rittwagen, the officers who interrogate and imprison him, and the regime in its entirety as being "*Kommunist*" ten different times within his recount. By referring to the regime as "*Kommunist*", Fricke opens up the door to a wide range of other vocabulary associated with communism. Fricke essentially classifies the GDR and the Stasi as communist entities.

Fricke also focuses on the methods that these "*Kommunisten*" used to manipulate their prisoners. He refers to these efforts euphemistically as the "*kulturelle Methoden*" of the state security:

*“Die Bemühungen, mit denen er Staatsicherheitsdienst ein Geständnis aus mir herauspressen wollte, beschränkten sich auf ‘kulturelle Methoden’, das heißt auf Geständniserpressung unter Verzicht auf Mißhandlungen.”* (p. 171)

By appropriating the Stasi term "*kulturelle Methoden*" and placing it in quotation marks, Fricke points out how this euphemism downplays the brutality of the treatment of the prisoners.

According to Fricke there was a total disregard for the treatment of the prisoner, but this harsh

treatment was never officially recognized by the regime. Instead the regime used such euphemisms as “*kulturelle Methoden*”. Fricke goes on to describe these methods in detail with a variety of descriptive word choices. For example he writes:

*“Unter ‘Schmoren’, auch ‘Weichkochen’, wird im Jargon des Staatssicherheitsdienstes verstanden, einen Häftling unter den üblichen Bedingungen der Untersuchungshaft wochen- und monatelang ohne jede Vernehmung zu lassen. Auf diese Weise verstärken sich die Wirkungen ‘der psychologischen Einkreisung’ ganz erheblich...”* (p. 172)

Here Fricke uses cooking terminology employed by the Stasi to make his point. Prisoners like him were left to “stew” (*schmoren*) and “boil” (*kochen*) in their own hopelessness, creating the powerful “psychological encirclement” (*psychologische Einkreisung*) that the Stasi used to force the prisoners’ cooperation. By leaving the prisoners to their own devices alone in their cells, the Stasi were able to make them feel so isolated that they were eventually willing to succumb to the regime. Fricke makes this point very clear, when describing how the Stasi guards would consistently peek into the inmates’ cells:

*“Die Kommunisten nennen diese Methode die ‘Technik der psychologischen Einkreisung’—und treffen damit genau der Kern der Sache: Die Häftlinge werden innerlich zermürbt, sollen sich durch eigene Grübeleien auch selbst zermürben...”* (p. 169)

Fricke’s analysis of the Stasi’s methods is extremely successful, in that he easily identifies the heart of their effectiveness, their ability to completely discourage their prisoners. Although the

Stasi initiate this demoralization, the prisoners themselves are the ones who complete it by succumbing to the bleakness of their situation.

#### v. Passive Voice

In most instances Fricke readily identifies the agent in his sentences, but sometimes Fricke chooses to use the passive voice instead, leaving the agent undesignated. Although Fricke uses the passive form rarely, these instances highlight further the confusion surrounding who is to blame for his treatment in prison and during his kidnapping.

For Fricke one of the worst things about being in Hohenschönhausen is the psychological methods used by the Stasi to make the prisoners feel completely without hope. Interestingly, when describing their actions with regard to these methods, Fricke does not name the Stasi or the guards as the actor, but rather chooses to use the passive:

*“Die unvermeidliche Folge dieser scheinbar geringfügigen und nicht einmal lauten Signale war, daß den Häftlingen, vor allem jedem Einzelhäftling, unablässig die eigene ‘ausweglose’ Situation in Erinnerung gebracht wurde.”* (p. 169)

Fricke states that the prisoners are reminded of the direness of their situations, but Fricke does not clarify who does this reminding.

Most striking is Fricke’s use of the passive in the last two sentences of his final paragraph:

*“Nach 455 Tagen Untersuchungshaft in Hohenschönhausen, zugebracht in einer fensterlosen Kellerzelle, wurde ich unvermittelt in das Gefängnis Berlin-*

*Lichtenberg übergeführt, in Stahlschellen gefesselt, nebenbei bemerkt. Dort wurden mir eine Woche später eine Anklageschrift und ein Beschluß des Obersten Gerichts über die Eröffnung des Hauptverfahrens ausgehändigt.” (p. 172)*

Fricke does not name who transported him, who placed him in handcuffs, or who handed him over to freedom. It is obvious that the Stasi did all of these things, but Fricke does not name the Stasi or any individual member of the Stasi as an actor in these sentences.

### **c. Summative Commentary**

What is most remarkable about Fricke’s recount, “Die Technik der psychologischen Einkreisung”, is his attention to detail and his willingness to carefully reflect on his kidnapping and imprisonment.

Fricke chooses to focus less on himself, only rarely thematizing “*ich*” in his recount. Instead Fricke focuses more on the cells and the structure of Hohenschönhausen. By thematizing the cells Fricke can relate the facts of his experience, rather than the emotions he felt while imprisoned. In doing so Fricke avoids making unfair claims. Ultimately, Fricke’s limited use of “*ich*” shows his detachment from his time in prison and his unwillingness to place himself back into the situation. The few times he does use “*ich*” are to share extreme moments of panic or to simply describe the actions he took while trapped in Hohenschönhausen.

Because Fricke is so careful to be exact in his descriptions he uses modifying clauses extensively. His sentences are at times almost confusing because he packs so much thought into each line. Besides giving the reader extra information, the clauses capture the feel of the prison and the torturous emotions that Fricke has as a result of being locked up for so long. Fricke’s

recount is similar to the stream of thought he could have had while sitting in his cell reflecting on his situation, just as the Stasi intended with their “*kulturelle Methode*”.

Although Fricke remains relatively neutral in many of his characterization, he is unwilling to stray from his beliefs about the flaws in the GDR system. This stubbornness is especially evident in his characterization of the Stasi guards and GDR system as “*Kommunist*”. This is significant because technically the GDR did not characterize itself as a communist form of government, but rather as a democratic republic. The main party, the SED, was a self-proclaimed socialist, not communist party. Although this distinction is often disregarded, it is important to recognize that the GDR and the SED identified themselves as socialist and not communist. Fricke is disregarding this self-identification by only referring to the regime as communist. In doing so Fricke refuses to acknowledge the official GDR terminology, thus highlighting his western perspective.

Finally, just as Germany has struggled to identify who exactly is to blame for the atrocities committed in its turbulent history, Fricke struggles to clarify who exactly is to blame for his kidnapping and imprisonment. At times Fricke almost seems to blame himself for his kidnapping, although ultimately he thematizes Rittwagen. Later in his recount Fricke uses the passive voice to avoid specifically naming any perpetrators individually or the Stasi as a whole.

Despite being kidnapped from the West and taken to a Stasi prison in East Berlin simply for having published articles critical of the GDR, Fricke remains relatively unemotional and unbiased in his recount. Ultimately, Fricke shares the facts about his situation and his personal beliefs, but leaves the final conclusions about the GDR and the Stasi for the reader to draw.



### III. Horst Fichter

#### a. Description of Horst Fichter

Unlike the other two individuals included in this project Horst Fichter was imprisoned by the Stasi for attempting to escape to West Berlin. In 1952 Fichter and a group of his friends attempted to cross the border in an ambulance, hoping that by being in an emergency vehicle their attempts would be successful. Horst Fichter details this attempt, as well as his childhood, his time in prison, and his opinions about the GDR in his book, *Veflucht sei die Menschenwürde: Erlebnisbericht aus den Zuchthäusern der ehemaligen DDR*, which was published in 1996. In this memoir Fichter relates the mindset of his friends during their attempted crossing, “*’Mensch, Johannes, wenn alles gutgeht, dann sind wir in zwei Stunden im Westteil Berlins. Mit dem Roten Kreuz am Auto kommen wir überall durch.’ ‘Ich denke auch, daß wir bald in Freiheit sind’*” (p. 125).

Unfortunately for Fichter and his friends they did not make it to the other side of Berlin, having been intercepted by the Stasi on the way. Due to this escape attempt Fichter was charged with “*Boykott-und Kriegshetze*” and given a ten-year sentence in Hohenschönhausen. Following Fichter’s release from prison in 1958 he successfully left the GDR, taking up residence in the West (Knabe, p. 367). In the last paragraph of his memoir Fichter (1996) writes:

*“Die DDR war ein verbrecherisches Staatsgebilde, das ist eine historische Tatsache, und eine noch so große Hetze kann die Wahrheit nicht verdrängen; Hunderttausende von Eingekerkerten und davon ca. 94.000 tote politische Häftlinge in den Jahren 1945-1989 werden diese sogenannten Kommunisten immer wieder anklagen, anklagen wegen Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit.”* (p. 212)

From these statements it is clear that Fichter, like many others, feels that the actions of the Stasi were crimes against humanity. To him there is no question that the GDR was a criminal state and that historically it should be held accountable.

Fichter's recount in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen*, "*Lebendig begraben*" (2007) is taken directly out of *Verflucht sei die Menschenwürde*. Knabe chose to leave Fichter's text mostly untouched, only adding paragraph breaks to make the work easier to read. Although it is made very clear from Fichter's memoir that he holds extreme negative feelings towards the GDR, Fichter's recount in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen* is less directly negative. In order to tease Fichter's true feelings out of his narrative a linguistic discourse analysis is effective.

## **b. Discourse Analysis**

### **i. Themes**

Out of the 176 sentences or phrases in Fichter's recount 35 of them begin with some sort of temporal phrase. Fichter is very precise about describing exactly how long any activity in Hohenschönhausen lasted or exactly when it occurred during his imprisonment. For example immediately after his arrest he writes, "*Nach zirka einenhalb Stunden hielten wir an*" (p. 154). This attention to detail with respect to time is interesting because one could imagine that for most of the individuals included in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen* the amount of fear and anxiety in the first few days of imprisonment makes everything blurry, especially the passing of time. Fichter is even so precise as to be able to describe exactly when he was moved to different rooms within the prison, "*Nach einer Stunde Wartezeit wurde ich herausgeholt und durch zwei Türen und Treppe nach unten in einen langen Gang geführt*" (p. 155). Fichter's precision continues into his description of the first day, "*Morgens um 6 Uhr rasselten die Schlüssel in den*

*Zellenschlössern; in dem Kellergewölbe ein Höllenlärm, also Wecken. Für drei Minuten wurde eine Schüssel mit Wasser zum Waschen reingereicht*” (p. 156). Fichter thematizes the time, “*Morgens um 6 Uhr*” and “*Für drei Minuten*” instead of the actual subjects of the sentences.

Besides detailing simple activities like washing, Fichter also uses time to introduce events especially significant to his life in prison. For example he writes, “*Erst nach 14 Tagen wurde ich nachts zur ersten Vernehmung geholt*” (p. 157). Fichter tells the reader that he is nervous about this interrogation, but instead of thematizing the interrogation Fichter uses “*Erst nach 14 Tagen*” as the theme of the sentence. Fichter also does this when describing the day one of his cellmates is removed, “*Nach acht Tagen wurde Gerhard aus der Zelle geholt*” (p. 157). The attention to detail with respect to time shows the precision with which Fichter recalled these events, especially since they were most likely painful.

Finally, Fichter uses temporal phrases to emphasize the boredom he felt in prison. He writes, “*In all den Monaten wurden diese Fragen und ähnliche gestellt...Immer wieder wurden mir die Lügen vorgehalten. Tag für Tag, Nacht für Nacht...*” (p. 159). He repeats this wordage, “*Tag und Nacht in diesem Grab. Tag und Nacht nur die Glühbirne, keine Nachricht von den Familienangehörigen, also lebendig begraben*” (p. 158). For Fichter his days in Hohenschönhausen were a monotonous blend of useless interrogations and extended periods of total isolation.

As may seem obvious for a prison recount, Fichter chooses to thematize his cell. He uses “*Zelle*” as the theme of his sentence nine times throughout his recount. For example Fichter writes, “*Zellen, Zellen und nochmals Zellen*” (p. 155). He also writes, “*Da es keinen Tisch in der*

*Kellerzelle gab...*” (p. 156). The language Fichter uses to describe his cell only furthers the feeling of boredom and repetition previously mentioned.

Although not a major theme with respect to number of times repeated, hunger is a significant part of Fichter’s recount. Fichter spends two paragraphs on a description of meal time in Hohenschönhausen. Instead of thematizing the food the guards give him Fichter thematizes his hunger. Fricke writes, “*Also Hunger morgens, Hunger mittags und Hunger am Abend...Ja, das war bewußte Methode, um die politischen Feinde kirre und gefügig zu machen...Durch Hunger, Schlafentzug...das waren typische Stalin-Methoden*” (p. 156). Fichter focuses his recount on the hunger he felt in order to show the abominable conditions that existed in the Stasi prisons.

Besides suffering from a lack of food, Fichter also thematizes the conditions he must endure. He goes on to write, “*Durch Hunger, Schlafentzug, körperliche Züchtigungen, Tag-und Nachtverhöre, durch monatelanges Dahinvegetieren im Kellerloch ohne Fenster, durch Dunkelhaft und Stehkarzer, durch Schreib-und Besuchsverbot, das waren typische Stalin-Methoden*” (p. 156). He goes on to describe his craving for information or interaction, “*Keine Abwechslung, keine Zeitung, kein Buch, kein nichts, mit niemandem sprechen, man döst vor sich hin. Kein Laut von draußen zu hören...*” (p. 157). For Fichter one of the worst parts of being in Hohenschönhausen is being completely isolated from human interaction. This complete isolation was just one of the many tactics the Stasi used to further a prisoner’s compliance.

Because Fichter craved such interaction, the few interactions he does have with other individuals are thematized in his recount. During Fichter’s sentence in Hohenschönhausen he had two cellmates, 26-year-old Gerhard and 53-year-old Richard. Throughout Fichter’s recount

he thematizes Gerhard five times and Richard ten times. Fichter thematizes Gerhard only a few times because he was only in the cell with Gerhard for eight days whereas Richard is thematized extensively. Fichter at first feels no connection to Richard because of their age difference and dissimilar opinions, but eventually grows to hold Richard as a dear friend. Richard is especially significant to Fichter because he had done nothing to deserve imprisonment, *“Richard hatte überhaupt nichts gemacht, sondern diesem Staat gedient als SED-Mitglied. Ich sagte auch zu ihm: ‘Richard, dir können sie nichts anhaben, dich müssen sie wieder rauslassen. Du kannst noch in diesem Jahr Äpfel und Birnen essen: Obst, das du so gerne magst’* (p. 160). Fichter thematizes these other individuals because they were such a large part of his life in Hohenschönhausen, giving him some way to break up his loneliness and boredom as well as opening his eyes to the injustices of the regime.

Fichter does not only thematize other individuals, he also thematizes himself with the use of *“ich”* as the theme of the sentence 26 times. Most of these sentences describe Fichter’s actions while in Hohenschönhausen, but others relate his opinions about his imprisonment. For example he shares a conversation that he has with one of his interrogators. In this conversation Fichter shouts at the interrogator, *“Ich habe bis jetzt an das Gute, das Anständige geglaubt, aber ich weiß jetzt, das nicht ich, sondern Sie, Ihr System, Verbrechen begehen, und zwar Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit. Nicht ich, sondern Sie sind ein Verbrecher”* (p. 162). In these lines Fichter thematizes *“ich”*, the supposed criminal, in order to compare himself to the true criminal, the Stasi interrogator and the GDR system.

## ii. Personal Possessive Pronouns

Although Fichter only makes use of “*mein*” ten times in his recount, these nine times create a confusing pattern. For the first nine pages Fichter only uses “*mein*” to describe nouns that are either truly his or to describe his loved ones. For example Fichter lays claim to his body parts, “*meine blinzelnden Augen*” (p. 161) and his age, “*meiner jungen Jahre*” (p. 160). Fichter also lays claim to family and friends in the first nine pages of the recount, “*mein väterlicher Freund [Richard]*” (p. 160) and “*dass ich die nächsten Jahre meine Familie und Freunde nicht wiedersehen werde*” (p. 159).

On the final page of Fichter’s narrative he switches to include his cell as something he lays claim to, “*Ich wurde nicht in meine Zelle gebracht...Nach vier Stunden mit unangenehmen Empfindungen brachten mich die Ratten wieder in meine Kellerzelle*” (p. 163). Before this page Fichter had exclusively referred to the cell in which he was imprisoned as “*die Zelle*” (p. 162) or “*Zelle 25*” (p. 155). This shift is challenging to understand, but a possible explanation lies in the fact that the sentences in which this shift happens occur at the end of his narrative. In this part of the recount, Fichter describes a form of Stasi intimidation in which they moved him to a tiny cell in which there was only enough room to stand, leaving him on his feet for more than four hours at a time. In comparison to this “*kleines Loch*” Fichter’s cell may have seemed appealing and thus led him to lay claim to it through the use of a personal possessive pronoun.

## iii. Semantic Field

Fichter’s semantic field is extremely important to a complete discourse analysis of his recount because of the vocabulary he is careful to include. Despite having survived a horrendous experience in Hohenschönhausen, Fichter still manages to maintain a certain sense of humor in

his writing, albeit a dark one. He himself recognizes this characteristic, *“Ganz den Humor habe ich trotz der unsagbar schweren Stunden im ‘U-Boot’ nicht verloren. Aufgegeben habe ich mich nie, und auch lachen mußte man manchmal, und das war gut”* (p. 161). This acknowledgement for a need to laugh comes directly before a story in which Fichter describes Richard getting caught in an awkward situation. Prisoners were only given two pieces of toilet paper per day and were allowed no privacy from their cell mates when they needed to go to the bathroom. One day Richard uses the bucket left in the room for prisoners, but accidentally gets some of his own feces stuck to the edge of the bucket. In order to clean up his mess, Richard tears a small piece of his toilet paper and carefully tries to wipe the bucket clean without Fichter noticing. Fichter writes:

*“Man muß sich das Bild vorstellen; Richard mit heruntergelassenen Hosen und nacktem Hintern und fummelt und fummelt mit der Nase vor diesem Stück ‘Stuhlgang’ herum. Nun, es war ein Bild für Götter, ein Bild für Zille zum Malen. Ja, auch solche Situationen kamen vor und konnte man nicht vergessen”* (p. 161).

Instead of letting this demeaning situation get to him, Fichter makes a joke out of it, describing it as if it were some practical joke between friends.

Fichter’s sense of humor is further reflected in his semantic field in his use of sarcasm. When describing his cell he writes, *“Da es keinen Tisch in der Kellerzelle gab, sondern eine drei Meter breite Holzpritsche mit den Matratzen am Kopfende geschichtet, die zur ‘Nachtruhe’ ausgebreitet werden durften”* (p. 156). Instead of simply writing that the wooden cot is used to sleep, Fichter uses the word *Nachtruhe* in quotation marks to emphasize how little sleep was actually done there. The cot was most likely so uncomfortable that sleep was nearly impossible.

Another example of the sarcastic use of quotation marks occurs in a conversation Fichter has with Gerhard. Fichter relates Gerhard's situation, "*Er saß schon drei Monate, hatte also schon, 'Erfahrung' in diesem Affenkasten, kannte den Ablauf dieses 'Hotels' genau*" (p. 155). Although Fichter is most likely repeating what Gerhard told him, the use of quotation marks around *Erfahrung* and *Hotels* is sarcastic. Gerhard's "*Erfahrung*" in Hohenschönhausen has been terrible and the prison is nothing like a hotel.

Another part of Fichter's semantic field is his use of derogatory names to refer to the Stasi guards. He uses a variety of terms including, "*Schergen*" (p. 163), "*Hyänen*" (p. 161), "*Schakale*" (p. 160), "*Stasi-Parasiten*" (p. 157), and "*Stasi-Ratten*" (p. 159). These terms make Fichter's opinions of the Stasi very clear.

Finally, Fichter's semantic field also includes a set of vocabulary which specifically refers to the GDR's crimes and the Stasi's abominable techniques. First, Fichter equates the GDR to the Soviet Union. He writes, "*Der Russe verknackt jenen, ob schuldig oder unschuldig, meistens 25 Jahre Arbeitslager*" (p. 155). Even though at first read this sentence seems like he is specifically naming the Russians he is actually referring to the entity, which sentenced Gerhard to prison, the Stasi. Fichter furthers this comparison, "*...das waren typischen Stalin-Methoden: Von der Sowjetunion lernen, heißt Siegen lernen, von deutschen Kommunisten wunderbar übernommen, durchgeführt und die Vernehmungsdetails noch verfeinert*" (p. 156). Not only did the Stasi learn from the Soviets and Stalin, they also perfected the torturous methods according to Fichter.



#### iv. Passive Voice

The passive voice is also an important part of Fichter's recount, so important that it even makes an appearance in Fichter's title "*Lebendig begraben*". Fichter uses the passive voice almost exclusively with respect to what is done to him. Most of the examples of the passive voice have to do with Fichter being moved around the prison or taken to other places. Fichter writes, "*In Zelle 25 wurde ich reingesteckt*" (p. 155), "*Immer wieder wurden mir die Lügen vorgehalten*" (p. 159), and "*Nach einer Stunde Wartezeit wurde ich herausgeholt*" (p. 155). Fricke does not name who puts him in his cell, accuses him of lies, or picks him up, but in all instances it is the Stasi.

One of the most striking uses of the passive comes in the final sentence, "*Dies [Fichter is referring to his actions of ripping a piece of his blanket to mend his broken shoes] wurde natürlich von den Posten durch den Spion in der Tür beobachtet, und sofort reagierten die Schergen: 'Beschädigung von Volkseigentum'*" (p. 163). By using the passive Fichter emphasizes his own rebellious action instead of allowing the Stasi to be the focus of the sentence.

#### c. Summative Commentary

Unlike many of the other narratives included in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen*, Fichter's recount is straightforward in its criticisms of the GDR and the Stasi.

Fichter criticizes the Stasi's methods for their effectiveness at creating feelings of isolation and loneliness. Fichter's frustration and boredom are made most evident by his focus on the passing of time in Hohenschönhausen and his craving for interaction with other individuals. For Fichter these psychological methods of isolation are more horrifying than any actual physical

torture could be. Furthermore, Fichter compares these methods to those used by the Soviets and Stalin himself, something that carries extreme negative connotations in the West and modern day society.

Although Fichter intentionally includes humor in his recount, this humor leaves the reader with a bad taste in her mouth. The image of a man with his pants down carefully wiping his own stool from the edge of a bucket may at first thought seem funny, but considering the circumstances, that the man is unnecessarily in prison and that he has no personal privacy, the image becomes far from comical.

By describing his relationships with his cellmates, Gerhard and Richard, Fichter connects himself to other victims of the Stasi, relating their hardships as well as his own within his recount. Fichter builds a stronger case against the Stasi and the GDR with each detail he shares about Gerhard and Richard's lives.

Fichter's recount directly criticizes the Stasi and the GDR, holding them accountable for the atrocities committed in Hohenschönhausen during the 1950s. Although Fichter was the one imprisoned for allegedly being a criminal, he is certain that the Stasi were the true criminals in his situation.

#### **IV. Erica Wallach**

##### **a. Description of Erica Wallach**

Erica Glaser Wallach like the other individuals in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen* was a political prisoner. Because of her historically and politically significant life Richard Lyons wrote an informative obituary for her in the *New York Times* on January 12, 1994. In it he details that

during the Cold War she spent five years in Communist prisons under falsified charges of espionage. Wallach's case is interesting because of her complicated personal life. Unlike the other individuals in this narrative Wallach was married. Her husband, Robert Wallach, was a captain in the U.S. Army. Furthermore, she was mother to two children, something that resonates, when reading about her experiences. Wallach is also an interesting case because of her connections to the United States and "the fact that she once worked for the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency, and later had briefly been a member of the Communist Party" (Lyons, 1994). Following her time in prison Wallach moved to the United States with her family, spending the remainder of her life teaching at the Highland School in West Virginia.

Although Wallach died in January of 1994 her experiences in the prisons live on in her writings. In 1967 Wallach wrote about both the Soviet prisons and Hohenschönhausen in her autobiography, *Light at Midnight*. Wallach was arrested in East Berlin in 1950 where she was held until she was transported to Moscow. In Moscow she was "tried for espionage, found guilty and given a death sentence that was later commuted to 15 years in prison" (Lyons, 1994). Finally in 1955 the Soviets released Wallach from a Siberian labor camp declaring "that she was innocent of the charges against her. They never explained their change of mind" (Lyons, 1994). In Wallach's obituary in *The New York Times* her cousin, Renee Glaser, clarified Wallach's situation, "the Soviets thought that she was an American spy, while the Western authorities believed she was working for the Communists, and she was caught in the middle of conflicting political forces in postwar Europe" (Lyons, 1994). Wallach's unique political position left her stranded in Stasi and Soviet prisons.

## b. Discourse Analysis

### i. Themes

As is obvious from the personal nature of the text “*ich*” is one of the main themes in Wallach’s recount in *Gefangen in Hoheschnöhenhausen, “Ein Grab voller Erinnerungen”* (2007). Wallach thematizes “*ich*” a total of 53 times in her recount. Some of these thematizations occur in dialogue with other prisoners or guards, but the majority are located within her own personal descriptions of her situation. Most of the sentences she begins with “*ich*” describe her actions. For example she writes, “*Ich klopfte langsam...*” (p. 144), “*Ich stritt und argumentierte...*” (p. 140), “*Ich aß so langsam wie möglich*” (p. 131), “*Ich saß auf...*” (p. 134), “*Ich spielte stundenlang mit mir selbst...*” (p. 136). In other cases the sentences with “*ich*” as the theme are in connection with verbs that describe her emotions, “*Ich war sehr stolz*” (p. 142), “*Ich fühlte mich wohlig entspannt*” (p. 144), “*Ich war stets davon überzeugt gewesen*” (p. 136). Essentially the repeated use of “*ich*” reminds the reader that Wallach is the central and most important figure in this recount.

Somewhat surprisingly considering the thematization of “*ich*”, “*wir*” is another one of Wallach’s major themes. Within her text Wallach begins her sentences with “*wir*” eight times. Although this may not at first consideration not seem like very many times, the instances that Wallach uses “*wir*” are very significant. For the most part Wallach uses “*wir*” to refer to herself and the other guards. She writes “*Wir betraten das Erdgeschoß des Gebäudes*” (p. 130) or “*Wir gingen durch zwei gut bewachte Eisentüren einige Stufen hinunter*” (p. 132). In these examples Wallach is purely describing the actions she takes with the guards, but in another instance she discusses a conversation she has with one of her interrogators:

*“Wir zankten uns ständig über Worte, ihre politische Bedeutung, über Lenins Doktrin, verglichen mit der Stalins, über den Antisemitismus in der Sowjetunion... Wir hatten interessante, oft auch heftige Diskussionen, und ich langweilte mich bei ihm nicht.” (p. 138)*

Instead of saying that she was forced or questioned by her interrogator, by using “wir” Wallach makes her interrogation seem more like a free and open discussion between her and her interrogator. She even goes so far to say that she was not bored by him, but rather that she found their conversations fierce, interesting, and intense.

Wallach also uses “*wir*” when recalling another conversation with one her guards. According to Wallach many of the guards in charge of overseeing her were individuals who had been imprisoned by the Nazis, either in concentration camps or in other military prisons. Many of them had been specifically chosen for jobs in Hohenschönhausen in order to make sure that prisoners were treated fairly and that the atrocities of the Nazis were not repeated. Wallach recalls that one such guard said, *“Wir wissen, wie schlimm es ist, hinter Gittern zu sein; es ist, auch ohne Greultaten, schlimm genug. Wir wollen unser neues Deutschland auf Gerechtigkeit und Humanismus aufbauen”* (p. 133). This guard emphasizes the goals that he and his fellow former Nazi victims share. He wants desperately for his new country to protect justice. Wallach’s choice to include this conversation and her use of “*wir*” as the guard’s theme, emphasizes that her treatment was not the choice of one individual, but rather a group of individuals. In this example it would seem that her treatment should not have been all that unjust due to this guard’s idealistic intentions. Later Wallach discusses the replacement of these guards with those of “*der neuen Schule*” (p. 134), who were much less considerate.

Finally, Wallach also uses “*wir*” with respect to her fellow inmates. Although much of Wallach’s recount is about the time she spends alone in her cell, one day she hears a knock from the adjacent cell. Her neighbor and she eventually communicate regularly and share details about their lives with one another. In the second to last paragraph of Wallach’s recount she writes of their relationship, “*Wir verstanden einander fast ohne Worte*” (p. 146). Even though the two have no way of speaking or even seeing each other their shared situation creates a level of intimacy in which they can understand each other without words. In this use of “*wir*” as a theme, Wallach ties herself intimately to another inmate.

Like in the other texts temporal phrases make repeated appearances as the themes of sentences. Wallach uses temporal phrases 35 times in her recount out of a total of 322 themes. On pages 142 and 143 alone, Wallach uses temporal phrases eight times to introduce her sentences. For example she writes, “*Viele Monate hindurch wurde ich...*”, “*Im heißesten Sommermonat jedoch wurden...*”, and “*Aber im Winter, als mir nach einem Spaziergang im Schnee...*” (p. 142). Every moment Wallach was kept in Hohenschönhausen and the other Soviet prisons was another moment she spent away from her husband and children. Her discontent is clear from other descriptions such as, “*Die Reihe der langweiligen, ermüdenden, vergeudeteten Nächte...*” (p. 144) or “*Monatelang hatte ich mich gezwungen, nicht an meine Kinder zu denken—ich rief mir nicht einmal ihre Namen ins Gedächtnis oder dachte darüber nach, ob mein Sohn am Leben war oder nicht...*” (p. 142). As a mother, not thinking about ones’ own children would be more than unbearable for more than a minute, let alone for months, especially if you fear one of your children may be dead. Although many of these temporal phrases are used to chronologically organize the autobiographical recount, they also serve as ways for Wallach to

emphasize her own personal focus on the passing of time during her prison sentence, opening the reader's eyes to the true unjustness of her situation.

Another major theme in Wallach's recount is her cell. Wallach thematizes her cell or aspects thereof a total of twenty times. During her time in Hohenschönhausen the Stasi placed Wallach in multiple cells, the first being much more comfortable than the others. Wallach writes about the first within the second paragraph:

*“Nummer 4 war ziemlich groß, die Decke sehr hoch; ein Fenster über der Tür ging auf den Flur. Der Kübel war leicht und bequem. Es gab eine regelrechte Pritsche mit Matratze, Kopfkissen und Decke; die hellgrauen Wände des Raumes waren frisch getüncht.”* (p. 131)

From this description cell number four does not seem that awful. Wallach's first impression allows the reader to almost feel relief about her living situation. Unfortunately, Wallach's description of her second cell, “*Nummer 61*” is in direct contrast to the comfortable “*Nummer 4*”:

*“Nummer 61 war ein viereckiges Loch, ein Meter sechzig im Quadrat...Die Decke war so niedrig, dass ich sie mit den Fingern zu erreichen vermochte; an beiden Seiten der Zelle waren Holzkisten eingebaut, die als Betten dienten...Hinten an der Wand, in der Mitte der Zelle, stand der unumgängliche Kübel. Es gab keine Ecke, in der man ihn verstecken konnte.”* (p. 134)

Cell number 61, unlike her first cell, is extremely uncomfortable and offers no privacy. Like Wallach, the reader is shocked at this change. Further mentions of the cell go on to describe the horror and discomfort of her situation. For Wallach, her cell was naturally a major part of her time in Hohenschönhausen.

Finally, one of the most interesting themes in Wallach's recount is her consistent use of nicknames for the prison guards and staff. Unlike Fichter and Fricke, Wallach specifically names the Stasi personnel with whom she interacts. Such nicknames include, "Bonzo", "Eule", "Ackergaul", "Dackel", "Brillen", "Bademeister", "Nasenbohrer", "Drecksack", and "Zähnchen". (According to Knabe (2007), "Den Häftlingen waren die Namen ihrer Bewacher und Vernehmer meist unbekannt. Viele gaben ihnen daher fiktive Namen, wie hier Erica Wallach" (p. 146).) As is obvious, the nicknames are derogatory, often focusing on personal or physical characteristics that were evident to Wallach. For example, Wallach writes, "*Die Eule brachte es mir; als er sah, wer sein neuer Schützling war, ließ er fast die Schlüssel fallen, und seine runden Augen wurden noch runder*" (p. 131). "Die Eule" is named so because of his round eyes, which Wallach felt grew even larger at the sight of her. Wallach also writes, "*Ackergaul war in den Vierzigern, groß und vierschrötig, hatte derbe Knochen und enorme, abstehende rote Ohren. Er reichte mir sogar einen Kamm. Als ich ihm schließlich die Utensilien zurückgab, fühlte ich mich sauber und menschlich*" (p. 132). Although Wallach was most likely unaware of the names of her handlers, the connections she felt to them were strong. Ackergaul made her feel tidy and human. Wallach writes in the second sentence of her narrative, "*Aber Bonzo, der Gefängnischef, der von Nasenbohrer meine Papiere übernahm, und Bademeister waren mir aus den guten alten Zeiten in der Schumannstraße bekannt*" (p. 130). Wallach got to know her guards and interrogators even though the relationships were forced. Wallach even goes so far as to write about the kindness Bonzo showed her during one of the few times she was allowed to bathe:

*"Bonzo versorgte mich wie eine Mutter; er tauchte die Hand in das Wasser, sah, als ich entstieg, zu, um sich zu vergewissern, dass es nicht zu heiß war und erbot*



*sich, mir den Rücken zu waschen, was ich ablehnte. Er erlaubte mir, mein Haar zu waschen und lange in dem warmen Bad herumzuplätchern; gleichzeitig erkundigte er sich nach den Bademöglichkeiten im russischen Gefängnis.”* (p. 144)

By describing these kindnesses as the actions of Bonzo and by giving Bonzo a name, albeit a critical one, Wallach humanizes him. It is also important to keep in mind that Wallach was only allowed to bathe a total of three times during her year at Hohenschönhausen. Even though Bonzo helps Wallach bathe, this small kindness is miniscule in comparison to the extensiveness of Wallach’s mistreatment. Ultimately Wallach mocks the guards, but her confused appreciation for them is clear from the rest of the text and her decision to thematize their nicknames.

Like in the other autobiographical historical recounts from Fricke and Fichter, Wallach’s choice of themes highlight what she found to be most significant during her sentence in Hohenschönhausen.

## **ii. Personal Possessive Pronouns**

Wallach’s use of personal possessive pronouns is also important for a complete discourse analysis of her recount. Like the other individuals included in this project, Wallach is hesitant to use personal possessive pronouns to lay claim to anything directly connected to the Stasi. Her use of “*mein*” is almost exclusively in connection to her body parts, possessions, or personal goals. For example she writes, “*mein Ziel*” (p. 130), “*meinem Leben*”, “*meinem Knie*”, “*meiner Hand*” (p. 136), “*mein Spiel*” (p. 137), “*meine Stimme*” (p. 138), “*meinen nützlichen Übungen*” (p. 143), und “*mein Haar*” (p. 144). Besides these examples, Wallach also uses “*mein*” to describe how she passes her time while stuck in her cell: “*Es war eine meiner schwierigsten,*

*aber auch befriedigendsten Beschäftigungen, aus den Tiefen meiner Erinnerung die Musik zu rekonstruieren...*” (p. 138). Instead of sitting and reflecting on the direness of her situation Wallach reconstructs music from memory. By laying claim to this task and focusing on her own memories Wallach is able to control her emotions and certain aspects of her prison experience.

The only deviation from this consistent pattern of not laying claim to anything Stasi related occurs with respect to Wallach’s first and nicer cell, cell number four. Wallach discusses her first time being left alone in the cell after Bonzo drops her off, *“spazierte ich lange in meiner geräumigen Zelle herum und harrte der Dinge, die da kommen würden”* (p. 131). It is curious that Wallach describes this cell as hers, but does not describe her next cell, cell number 61 as her own. Like Wallach’s choice of themes, her decision to lay claim to certain aspects of her experience provide insight into her feelings about the Stasi and the GDR as a whole.

### **iii. Semantic Field**

Just as Wallach’s choice of themes and personal possessive pronouns is meaningful so is her choice of semantic field. Although not every word of her recount is necessarily loaded with further meaning many of her word choices are significant to a study of the Stasi and the GDR from the perspective of a political prisoner.

Especially significant to this study is Wallach’s repeated use of the word *“Mangel”*. For example she writes, *“Der Mangel an Schönheit hier—Musik, ein angenehmer Duft, etwas Hübsches zum Anschauen—war manchmal schwerer zu ertragen als Einsamkeit, Mangel an Liebe, un der Verlust der Freiheit. In dieser Hinsicht war Nummer 61 besonders arm”* (p. 137). For Wallach the lack of beauty is often harder to bear than her yearning for freedom. She goes on to describe a further lacking in her position as prisoner, *“Mein Geist schärfte sich merklich, und*

*mein Körper war, in Anbetracht des Mangels an Luft und Bewegung, recht gut in Ordnung*” (p. 142). Even though Wallach was stuck in a tiny stuffy cell she made an effort to exercise every day, doing her best to keep her body healthy. Essentially, despite the lack of everything positive in Wallach’s life she was able to survive the challenges of Hohenschönhausen.

Besides Wallach’s repeated use of “*Mangel*”, her semantic field also generally includes a focus on culture. In order for Wallach to keep her mind off of the bleakness of her situation in the hands of the Stasi, away from her husband and children, Wallach tries to recall music, literature, and languages. She recalls symphonies from Beethoven and attempts to memorize the names of the 50 states of the United States. She writes, “*Es gelang mir, die acht Strophen von Goethes “Erlkönig” zusammenzustückeln, den ich zwar oft gehört, aber nie auswendig gelernt hatte*” (p. 134). These distractions of beautiful music and poetry stand in stark contrast to the thick gray walls of the prison. By allowing herself to focus on the beauty within her mind Wallach is able to escape Hohenschönhausen if only mentally.

#### **iv. Passive Voice**

Because Wallach gives names to many of her guards or handlers, very little of her narrative is written in the passive form. Because Wallach rarely uses the narrative, the instances in which she does are worth highlighting. The majority of her use of passive occurs with regard to actions taken against her by the guards. Instead of naming guards in these interactions, Wallach uses the passive to focus on the action itself. For example she writes, “*und als ich aus unbekanntem Gründen für ein paar Tage in eine große, helle Zelle verlegt wurde....*” (p. 135). This sentence does not say that the guards or the Stasi moved her to the new cell, but rather simply that she was moved. Another similar example describes Wallach’s movement to a new

prison, “*Als ich damals in die Schumannstraße gebracht wurde...*” (p. 133). Although it is likely that Wallach does not know the names of the individuals that brought her to the prison, she chooses not to name them by their association with the Stasi.

Another example of the use of passive occurs in her discussion of her interrogations. After each interrogation Wallach was forced to sign a statement or summary of the session. She describes this process, “*Was während der Nacht geschrieben wurde, mußte von mir unterzeichnet werden*” (p. 139). Instead of naming her typist, the person encouraging her to give up on her beliefs and reveal her supposed “criminal activity”, she uses the passive voice.

Besides this, Wallach uses the passive voice when relating a conversation she has with one of the other guards. It is once again in connection with the history of some of the guards being survivors of the Nazi prison system. Wallach relates her conversation with Brille, one of the “old” guards. Brille tells her “*Die Arbeit muß gemacht werden [...] und wir machen sie lieber selbst*” (p. 133). By using the passive here it implies that someone must do the unsavory work of overseeing the prisons. Brille implies that it is better that individuals like him oversee what happens in the prisons. Other, more hardhearted individuals without personal experience behind bars could potentially control the system and make the experience much worse.

Finally, one of the more horrifying stories that Wallach shares within her recount is about one of her fellow inmates. Every night one of the women housed in a cell near Wallach’s suffered from fits of rage. She shouted uncontrollably and stomped about her cell singing Schiller’s “Ode to Joy” at full volume. Eventually the guards intervened. Wallach writes, “*Jede Nacht wurde an ihre Tür geschlagen*” (p. 141). If knocking on her door was unsuccessful, which it usually was, the guards would take further action, “*Daraufhin wurde sie mit einem Eimer*

*kalten Wassers übergossen... Wenn die Posten sie nicht zur Ruhe bringen konnten, wurde sie für kurze Zeit entfernt*” (p. 141). Wallach does not state who poured cold water over the women or who removed her for a short time from her cell.

Most of Wallach’s use of the passive form is in with respect to the actions taken by guards. She chooses not to name the Stasi or the guards.

### **c. Summative Commentary**

For Erica Wallach imprisonment in Hohenschönhausen was a very personal experience. By choosing to write this recount, Wallach was forced to think about every action she took while serving time as a political prisoner of the Stasi. Wallach’s recount focuses on her own experiences, yet unlike many other personal recounts, Wallach also chooses to relate her interactions with other individuals, most notably her guards and interrogators. Although their relationships are far from congenial, Wallach acknowledges the close connection she feels to her handler by thematizing her guards with nicknames and by using “*wir*”, grouping herself with them. Wallach also thematizes her fellow inmates, placing herself within a group of individuals persecuted by the Stasi and showing the significance of the solidarity that existed within this group.

Besides herself and other individuals Wallach thematizes the passing of time through the repeated use of temporal phrases. For Wallach, every day in Hohenschönhausen was another day unjustly stolen from her. By focusing on the passing of time Wallach was able to organize her sentences chronologically, which for the most part was filled with long days trapped in an uncomfortable cell.

Wallach also thematizes the uncomfortable conditions in the cells she inhabited. By thematizing these conditions Wallach gives the reader insight into the horrors of her situation, sleeping on a wooden mat and going to the bathroom in a bucket without privacy. By first focusing on her original relatively comfortable cell Wallach proves to the reader that other conditions existed and that she should not have been treated in such a disgraceful manner.

For Wallach her time spent in Hohenschönhausen is best characterized by a general feeling of lacking. Hohenschönhausen, as most prisons do, lacked beauty. There was no music or pleasant scenery. Furthermore, there was a lack of air and the opportunity to move freely within her little cell. Wallach's craving for anything beautiful makes her secretive pasttime of reconstructing symphonies, remembering poetry, and recalling geographical facts all the more significant. To survive in prison Wallach had to create her own beauty. For Wallach the lack of beauty and the lack of physical comforts were almost more unbearable than the freedom the Stasi had deprived of her. Although this sentiment at first sounds shocking, it makes sense because the idea of freedom is such an illusive and lofty concept. Most basically, Wallach wanted to be able to leave her cell and enjoy the beauty the world had to offer.

Despite having lived in Hohenschönhausen for a year, Wallach lays no claim to the building or the cells. She only uses possessive personal pronouns to take ownership of her personal opinions and body parts. This unwillingness to call her cell her own or to lay claim to anything else connected to the Stasi shows Wallach's hardness towards her experiences in prison. She wishes to distance herself from the Stasi and the atrocities of the GDR.

Wallach suffered immeasurably in Hohenschönhausen at the hands of the Stasi, yet she chooses to mention only the handful of guards who were significant to her experience. She even

goes so far in the opposite direction to share an anecdote in which one of the guards shows her a small kindness. To avoid naming individuals who committed atrocities against her, Wallach uses the passive voice. Linguistically, Wallach avoids blaming the Stasi as a whole or specific individuals for her treatment. Although this decision to use the passive was most likely subconscious, it points to the historical debate over who is to blame for the violence and cruelty of the past or the role of the individual within a corrupt system, something Germany has continued to struggle with up to this day.

Ultimately Wallach was a true victim of the Stasi. Although her experiences were horrific, her personal testimony provides resounding evidence for the inexcusably poor treatment of political prisoners, many of which were unjustly imprisoned.

## **V. Conclusion**

For Fricke, Fichter, and Wallach every day spent in Hohenschönhausen was a physical and mental struggle. Besides being deprived of sleep, food, and other decent living conditions, these individuals were also subjected to the Stasi's brutal psychological methods. Because Fricke, Fichter, and Wallach were willing to share their experiences by writing recounts, their words provide valuable perspectives on the Stasi apparatus and the GDR political system.

By thematizing the slow passing of time, the torturous conditions, their cellmates, and themselves Fricke, Fichter, and Wallach are able to emphasize what aspects of their imprisonment were most relevant. Fricke emphasizes his kidnapping and is careful to detail every aspect of his imprisonment, down to the specific size of his cell, yet avoids any direct criticism of the GDR. Fichter on the other hand is directly critical of the Stasi as well as the GDR. He is extremely critical of the psychological methods the Stasi used and focuses his

recount on the isolation he felt while in Hohenschönhausen. For Wallach this isolation is also significant, but instead of focusing her narrative on it she chooses to share the moments in which she was not alone in prison, such as when she interacts with her guards. Ultimately, the topics Fichter, Fricke, and Wallach choose to thematize provide a thoughtful, albeit critical, perspective of the Stasi and the GDR as a whole.

In all of the recounts, the individuals struggle with naming specific actors thus causing them to choose to use the passive voice. Fricke, Fichter, and Wallach struggle to name the perpetrators in their situation. Wallach chooses to name some of the Stasi guards specifically, but often in cases where she is shown kindness by them. The former prisoners' hesitancy to name perpetrators once again points to the difficulty in German history on where to lay the blame for atrocities such the crimes committed in the name of state security at Hohenschönhausen.

The GDR's constitution and criminal code promised to safeguard the dignity of its citizens and humankind, yet Fricke's, Fichter's, and Wallach's recounts stand in stark contrast to this promise. Their dignity was not safeguarded. In fact, their dignity was ignored by the Stasi. Fulbrook explains the reason behind these discrepancies:

“The problem in practice was that party ideology and goals were elevated above individuals, above the rights of the people in the here and now. If individuals dared to speak out against the system—if they dared to constitute spokes in the works, blocking inexorable progress towards ultimate goals—their value as human beings was to be utterly disgraced.” (Fulbrook, 1995, p. 28)

In order to further the socialist agenda the Stasi abused the rights of individuals like Fricke, Fichter, and Wallach. This abuse is evident through the functional linguistic discourse



analysis included in this project. By carefully choosing which words and in which order to include the words in their recounts, Fricke, Fichter, and Wallach all emphasized the contradictions between the GDR principles of egalitarianism, equality, and justice and the practices of surveillance and control of its citizens.

With this analysis serving as the foundation, subsequent research into Stasi prison narratives could be expanded to include additional recounts. Other recounts from the 1950s could be analyzed, but also more recounts from other time periods such as the 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s could be included. This expansion of time frame could allow for a broader analysis of the GDR. The project could also be expanded to encompass more recounts than those just published in *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen*. Other narratives such as the *Zeitzeugen Inhaftiert in Berlin-Hohenschönhausen* collection could be used for further linguistic analysis. Furthermore, other language features, such as verb form, conjunctions, and text connectors could be analyzed to come to similar conclusions about the prisoners' experiences. The language features used for the analysis of Wallach, Fichter, and Fricke were most relevant to their recounts, but other recounts could potentially be best analyzed by using other language features.

In the end, a linguistics analysis of three prison narratives from a time early in the GDR's existence while still under the firm control of Stalinist doctrine highlights both the human and dehumanizing aspects of imprisonment. The prison experiences of these individuals were all very different, yet fellow humans predominated the thematization patterns in all three recounts. For example, Wallach chose to thematize her guards and Fichter chose to thematize his cellmates. Although the prison experience was a personal one they felt that their limited interactions with other individuals were especially important. While Fricke, Fichter, and Wallach all emphasized the human element of their prison experience, they also chose language that

separated them from the GDR and the Stasi. They wanted nothing to do with the system and made this evident through their recounts by refusing to lay claim to anything within the prison. Instead of naming the Stasi as their oppressor they choose to use the passive voice, leaving their oppressor unnamed. They also thematize themselves and their own importance rather than the system. Ultimately, Fricke, Fichter, and Wallach's narratives point to the human suffering of imprisonment and the failures of the GDR already in its infancy. Unfortunately for Fricke, Fichter, and Wallach as well as the countless other inmates in Stasi prisons, the failed and dehumanizing methods of the GDR continued for another forty years before collapsing in 1989.

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