

“Framing Brecht: Photography and Experiment in the *Modellbücher*, *Arbeitsjournale*,
and *Kriegsfibel*”

By

Kristopher Imbrigotta

A dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(German)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2013

Date of final oral examination: 8/2/2013

Marc Silberman, Professor, German
Sabine Gross, Professor, German
Weijia Li, Assistant Professor, German and Education
Charles James, Professor, German and Education
Barbara Buenger, Professor, Art History

For Breann: without you this project would not have been possible

“Man muß so gut schreiben, als man kann, und das muß eben schlecht genug sein.”
(Brecht, BFA 27: 177)

Acknowledgements

My work has benefited from being in a department of Brecht scholars and enthusiasts!

With many thanks to:

Marc Silberman, a wonderful advisor who gives the most valuable feedback, steering my research and ideas in new directions, who helped from the very beginning with brainstorming possible (and practical) ideas for my dissertation, who collaborated with me on the online Brecht bibliography, which led to my growing interest in Brecht. But most of all, thanks for being a colleague, not just an advisor;

Sabine Gross, the best reader I know, who encouraged me to be clear and precise with my language and thoughts;

Jost Hermand, I will always treasure the many pleasant and fruitful discussions over lunch about Brecht, our research, and working in the garden;

my family and friends, for the continued support of my life's endeavors;

the entire team at the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv in Berlin, for their invaluable help in locating archival materials, with special thanks to director Erdmut Wizisla, and librarians Helgrid Streidt and Anett Schubotz;

Veronika Zickendraht, always a gracious host during my multiple research stays in Berlin;

the "diss group," providing a forum for exchange of ideas, feedback, and welcomed encouragement from colleagues, which is often the most helpful kind!

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Dissertation Abstract

“Framing Brecht: Photography and Experiment in the *Kriegsfibel*, *Arbeitsjournale*, and *Modellbücher*”

Theater is not just a visual art form but also a performative and interactive one. Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) developed an innovative theater aesthetic that engaged in distinct ways with visual imagery—especially photographs. These images were vital to both the performance aspect and dramaturgical reception of his craft. Photographs figure significantly in his prose and poetry as well as his essayistic work. While scholars have devoted attention to Brecht’s films and his work in other experimental media, few have addressed the fundamental questions I investigate: How does Brecht employ photography to expose and critique social relations? How did his engagement with the photographic medium differ from that of his contemporaries? This study 1) investigates how photography and mixed-genre experimentation impact his conception of the epic theater, especially in the *Modellbücher* (model books of the play productions in collaboration with Ruth Berlau and others at the Berliner Ensemble); 2) examines Brecht’s engagement with photography, looking at how the image-texts interrelate in his *Kriegsfibel* photograms and autographic entries in *Arbeitsjournale*; 3) locates instances in the corpus of textual and visual materials relating to his thoughts on and artistic production with images. This study argues for a visual approach to Brecht’s work, providing new insight into his dramatic theories (*Gestus*, *Verfremdungseffekt*), theatrical praxis, and his contributions to visual historiography. Brecht developed techniques to redefine how we “read” mass media images in order to expose contradictions and re-function history.

Chapter One

Introduction

In a short note from 1931, Bertolt Brecht warns of the dangers of misappropriating photographic images. He targets the “Bourgeoisie,” those on the political right, and the publishers, who attempt to manipulate and monopolize the production and distribution of information in the later years of the Weimar Republic.

Die ungeheuere Entwicklung der Bildreportage ist für die *Wahrheit* über die Zustände, die auf der Welt herrschen, kaum ein Gewinn gewesen: die Photographie ist in den Händen der Bourgeoisie zu einer furchtbaren Waffe *gegen* die Wahrheit geworden. Das riesige Bildmaterial, das tagtäglich von den Druckerpressen ausgespien wird und das doch den Charakter der Wahrheit zu haben scheint, dient in Wirklichkeit nur der Verdunkelung der Tatbestände. Der Photographenapparat kann ebenso lügen wie die Setzmaschine. Die Aufgabe der “AIZ” [*Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*], hier der Wahrheit zu dienen und die wirklichen Tatbestände wiederherzustellen, ist von unübersehbarer Wichtigkeit und wird von ihr, wie mir scheint, glänzend gelöst.¹

¹ Bertolt Brecht, [“Zum zehnjährigen Bestehen der *AIZ*”], *Werke. Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, Vol. 21, eds. Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei, Klaus-Detlev Müller (Berlin und Frankfurt am Main: Aufbau and Suhrkamp, 1988 ff.), 515. Brecht’s collected works from Aufbau/Suhrkamp will be cited subsequently as “BFA volume: page number” throughout this study.

This quote, dissected into three constitutive parts, reveals much of what originally prompted him to problematize the medium and its contested claim to truth. He begins with the development of the technical reproduction process in the history of photography itself (“Entwicklung der Bildreportage”) that, according to Brecht, has not advanced the access to truth. Instead, the problems associated with covering up social conditions had culminated in the further obfuscation of reality and resulted in the “Verdunkelung der Tatbestände.” Second, Brecht criticizes both photographic and textual print media for their potential to deceive. His comparison directly connects the written word to the photographic image by linking the camera and the typesetter—their means of production; in doing so, he faults both machine and human being for perpetuating “lies.” Artists’ abilities to faithfully represent reality rely on their capabilities to operate such machines like the camera and the typewriter.

In a second quote from 1951, Brecht reiterates his praise of the *AIZ*’s implementation of photography in the news media. His admiration of John Heartfield’s artistic accomplishments center on the idea that photographs, specifically photomontage, can alter our perceptions of the truth. Accomplished through confrontation of different photographic fragments, Heartfield’s montages combined multiple sources and images to produce new social critiques.

John Heartfield ist einer der bedeutendsten europäischen Künstler. Er arbeitet auf einem selbst geschaffenen Feld, der Fotomontage. Vermittels dieses neuen Kunstmittels übt er Gesellschaftskritik. Unentwegt auf der Seite der Arbeiterklasse, entlarvte er die zum Krieg treibenden Kräfte der Weimarer Republik und, ins Exil getrieben, bekämpfte er Hitler. Die

Blätter dieses großen Satirikers, erschienen in Arbeiterzeitschriften, werden von vielen, darunter dem Verfasser dieser Zeilen, für klassisch gehalten.²

Brecht fashions the congratulatory note to compare his own exile experience of “battling Hitler” with Heartfield’s satirical pieces critical of the rise of fascism, the oppression of the working class, and war. Can we see any apparent contradictions in these two statements about the potential of photography? Had Brecht’s position on the status of photography changed over time? Photomontage was hardly new by the early 1950s, but it is striking nonetheless that he defines it as a “Kunstmittel.” And although he praises the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* (*German Workers’ Illustrated*) for being in the service of truth, he does not state *how* the use of photomontage was effective in restoring the truth. In both cases the textual and visual apparatuses are only as effective as the person taking the photograph. Brecht sets the *AIZ*’s “task” to uncover the truth as one that is primarily visual, not to be “overlooked” by its reader. He regards the *AIZ* as a model exemplar of the print media because it restores truth to the events of the day.

These notes on photography locate two instances spanning twenty years in a corpus of textual and visual materials relating to Brecht’s thoughts on and artistic production with images. Many questions still remain in current scholarship: How does Brecht employ photography to expose and uncover social relationships? How did he differ from his contemporaries in his engagement with the photographic medium? Examining these questions expands current knowledge for an audience interested in Brecht’s writings and in the intersections of photography and visual culture,

² Brecht, [“Für John Heartfield”], BFA 23: 154.

literature/cultural studies, and performance studies. This study includes several appendices that introduce and evaluate extant archival materials associated with the *Arbeitsjournale* and *Modellbücher* housed at the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv (BBA)/Akademie der Künste in Berlin.

While Brecht scholarship has treated radio, music, and film with some frequency, more recent scholarship has trended towards critical examinations of Brecht's work in the area of the visual arts. Research on this area has been sporadic during the last several decades, ranging from book-length studies to specific articles by scholars such as Jost Hermand, Roswitha Müller, Reinhold Grimm, and Dieter Wöhrle. A closer (and sustained) look at his media theories and his work with images is long overdue, as there is a wealth of material in Brecht's prodigious *œuvre* yet to cover. The paucity of attention is starting to reverse itself: "Bild und Bildlichkeit" was the focus of the *Brecht-Tage* in 2010 at the Brecht-Haus in Berlin, and a number of scholars have begun to carve out a niche such as Georges Didi-Huberman, Grischa Meyer, in addition to studies by Tom Kuhn, Philippe Invernél, Welf Kienast, J. J. Long, Andreas Zinn, and Jan Gerstner.³

This project seeks to situate Brecht's interest and engagement with photography within the existing media theory that has developed around his work, making new contributions to the discourse on the visual imagery in the production model books from the Berliner Ensemble, the *Arbeitsjournale*, and *Kriegsfibel*. It would be difficult to build the case for a project on Brecht the "photographer." Granted, Brecht was keen on taking photos and wanted to find ways to include photographs in the production processes for

³ See the extended bibliography for specific information on these and other relevant authors.

his work.⁴ Yet, to speak of him as photographer would be misleading. He relied heavily on others who had more experience (such as Ruth Berlau or Willi Saeger) to visually record what he wanted—both his successes and failures. However, to fully discount Brecht’s various experiments with the medium itself would also neglect some of his more significant work. To say that Brecht “loathed” photography is hyperbole, an assertion simply too black-and-white;⁵ in photography, like any other artistic medium, he saw both potential and peril.

Brecht experimented in visual theory and wrote a number of important essays dealing with contemporary theoretical treatises on the photographic medium. For example, a volume sitting in the shelves of Brecht’s *Nachlassbibliothek* demonstrates both his awareness of contemporary theoretical debates as well as his primary interest in how photographs function. *Der Gegenstand der Photographie* by Friedrich Springorum contains numerous marginalia and hand-written notes by Brecht as he attempted to engage with and process the abstract and practical “types” of photography at the time

⁴ See chapter four on the *Arbeitsjournale*. Brecht includes personal photographs of family and friends who visited him in exile. The journals also include many entries in which he mentions his cameras and/or taking photos.

⁵ See Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 20. Linfield states that Brecht “loathed” photography, but this assertion is simplistic. As this study shows, Brecht’s position on photography was more nuanced as it evolved during the phases of his artistic and geographic shifts in major projects such as the *Kriegsfibel* and model books.

(1930).⁶ He could relate to some of what Springorum discussed in his 83-page book, but it appears that things became too abstract and too theoretical for his taste; the handwritten notes in the margins trail off completely by page 21. It is unclear whether Brecht actually read the entire volume or indeed stopped at that point, but his side notes are telling. He was apparently interested in the “Wille zur Photographie,” what Springorum calls the medium’s “innere Plattform.”⁷ Why do humans feel the need to photograph things and events? How do photographs lend themselves well to capturing human interactions? Brecht may have agreed with Springorum’s assertion: “Fotos ändern unsere Einstellung der Außenwelt gegenüber.” There are also similarities to Brecht’s writings on montage techniques (and to those of his contemporaries, including Benjamin and Kracauer), both in the epic theater and in the visual arts such as photomontage or the cinema: “Das Auge sieht immer, muß immer sehen; die Kamera jedoch arbeitet nicht selbsttätig, sondern nur, wenn der Mensch es will. Der kontinuierlichen Erlebnisreihe des Auges gegenüber stehen die Zäsuren, die von der Kamera in die Erscheinungswelt eingeschnitten werden.”⁸

Most interesting within the context of this study are Brecht’s critiques in Springorum’s volume. First, the author asserts that photography is “Abbild durch

⁶ Friedrich Springorum, *Der Gegenstand der Photographie. Eine philosophische Studie* (München: Ernst Reinhardt, 1930) [BBA call number: B 10 / 031]. On page 12, for example, Brecht had written “Mensch → Klasse” referring to Springorum’s discussion of humans as “überlogisch” and “überrational.”

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

Technik” and “umfaßt alles: Mechanismus, Vorgang und Ergebnis in einem.”⁹ This means that photographs are always a “vollkommenes Bild,” or a complete image that encompasses “Meinung, Kritik, Anschauung und Wertung.” Brecht would never find such a statement accurate or useful, and in fact, actively fought against such a definition (see his essays “Über Fotografie” and sections of the “Dreigroschenprozess”). Images do not supply meaning or inherent criticism because, according to Brecht, they do not show what things do, only what they are. Second, Springorum proceeds to divide photography into three categories. “Naive Photographie” are those images that include amateur photography and family snapshots, those taken in order to remember life events or vacations, etc. “Reine Photographie” is supposedly the highest form including art photography, and is therefore an example of the “complete image” quoted above.¹⁰ Finally, “Zweckbilder” (functional images)—Brecht’s main interest—are documentary images employed to engage spectators and refer them back to the world, which include

⁹ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰ These first two types of photographs (“naive” and “pure”) were not entirely useless for Brecht. For example, he included a number of family photos in the Danish work journals, specifically to comment visually on his exile situation. Contrast this with a very early poem (1920) titled “Betrachtung vor der Fotografie der Therese Meier,” in which Brecht’s narrator finds (and mocks) a faded old photograph of a recently deceased woman left behind by a former apartment renter. While the poem pokes fun at this type of bourgeois portraiture, it also displays a more nuanced, critical knowledge of theories surrounding the photographic image, such as its referential and temporal qualities. See Brecht, BFA 13: 188-89.

“Abbildungen für Forscher und Wissenschaftler,” “Zeitschriften,” Kataloge,” “Ansichten und Karten von Städten und Ländern,” and “Reklame,” including reproductions for researchers and scientists, periodicals, catalogues, views and maps of cities and states, and advertisements.¹¹ This third category of “Zweckbild” highlights the functional character of the image, and in most cases, juxtaposes images against/with some form of caption or text so that the image itself could be excised (or as Brecht notes in the margin: “Bild tritt in Vordergrund”). Here, as we see in his projects such as the *Arbeitsjournale* and *Kriegsfibel*, the purpose of the image exists external to the image, and the spectator must engage critically with what is visible to derive significance from it. Unlike Springorum, for Brecht the only category with potential is the “Zweckbild”; all other photographs he lumps together dismissively as “alles andere.” He was less interested in the theories related to the conception and development of photography (the art of “light writing,” or the reaction of chemicals and light on sensitive paper); rather, he preferred the material objects—the actual photographs per se, products that he could employ, appropriate, and manipulate in order to engage his audience and readers in critical thinking.¹² This focus on *photographs* rather than on *photography* supports Brecht’s way of working: collecting, observing, editing, adapting, etc.

¹¹ Ibid., 15-17.

¹² Other recent monographs dealing with modern authors and their engagement with photography and/or photographs have come to a similar conclusion. See, for example, Carolin Duttlinger, *Kafka and Photography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 250 f.

The following provide a summary of how this study will proceed, using three major examples of Brecht's engagement with photography in the *Modellbücher*, *Arbeitsjournale*, and *Kriegsfibel*, and why each work is included.

The Modellbücher of the Berliner Ensemble

The *Modellbücher* for stage productions were joint efforts on the part of theater practitioners at the Berliner Ensemble. They consist mainly of book-length photo-documentaries assembled by Brecht's long-time colleague and collaborator Ruth Berlau in combination with commentary and captions by Brecht. Photographer and writer Grischa Meyer has published preliminary research on these production models. Meyer connects the production and inception of the theater photographs with Brecht's interest in photography; as this engagement grew between the 1930s and 1950s, he became increasingly impressed with photography's capability to store information in the form of images, "die den Probenprozess und die Umstände der Produktion [der Aufführungen] abbildeten."¹³ Each sequence of theater photographs is intended to guide directors and dramaturges of Brecht's plays. The photographs reveal precisely what was brought out by the details and notes of Brecht's own production process (Brecht's lengthy collection of "Anmerkungen zu den Stücken" in BFA volume 24).

Brecht's larger oeuvre is deeply invested in the power of photography.¹⁴ Epic theater and the technique of photography share characteristics represented in the various

¹³ Grischa Meyer, "Berlau fotografiert bei Brecht. Eine Zusammenarbeit (mehr oder weniger)," *Brecht Yearbook* 30 (2005): 187.

¹⁴ Roland Barthes, "Seven photo models of *Mother Courage*," *TDR* 12:1 (1967): 44.

production photo models: for example, the isolation of human behavior(s); the distancing effect of photography and epic theater; or the creation of independent scenic moments that oppose totality. For Roland Barthes, the photo models become “stage pictures” which come to signify the moments of epic theater.¹⁵ The theater models’ form realizes elements of epic theater that, while present on stage, are perhaps not wholly perceptible to theater practitioners without the aid of a photograph. Paradoxically, we see aspects of epic theater that are not realized exclusively on stage but are teased out in the photographs themselves.

Brecht’s theater demands a great deal from its audience; calling it “ambitious” would be an understatement: distanced reflection, emphasis on social relationships over storyline, a theater of individual scenic gestures that resist totality, the insistence of “taking a position/stance” (Haltung) over simple stylization, a learning experience through critical engagement not empathy. Brecht seeks not only to teach the spectator how to look and what to look for, but also to model new approaches to the theater for other artists. This is evident in his numerous essays on theater performance, in the *Messingkauf* fragments, including the *Übungsstücke für Schauspieler*. Brecht’s goal to change the theater institution per se led him to set an example for other authors. Walter Benjamin credits Brecht with this achievement, claiming: “Ein Autor, der die Schriftsteller nichts lehrt, lehrt niemanden.”¹⁶ Not only do we read about this in his texts

¹⁵ Sean Carney, *Brecht and Critical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 89.

¹⁶ Walter Benjamin, “Der Autor als Produzent,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 2.2, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), 696. Cited subsequently as “BGS volume: page number.”

but we also see it through visual representations of the epic stage. To that end, the series of “Theatermodelle” allowed theater practitioners closer visual access to the staging process and deeper critical study of the characters’ individual “Haltungen” for correction after the production.¹⁷

This study integrates the *Modellbücher* photographs into an introductory discussion that seeks to situate and explain theories of epic theater visually. It focuses on four areas in particular to which Brecht devoted substantial effort: “epische Darstellung” (epic representation), “Verfremdungseffekt,” (defamiliarization or making something strange) “Aufbau der Figuren aus sozialem anstatt ‘biologischem’ Material” (constructing the characters out of social instead of “biological” material), and “Gestaltung des Klassenkampfes” (formation of class struggle).¹⁸ Furthering the ideas presented above, this section questions how the *Modellbücher* fit into Brecht’s wider engagement with photography.

Arbeitsjournale (1938-1955)

Brecht seems to privilege photographs by their very inclusion in the *Arbeitsjournale*. Implicitly, we might read this work in its entirety as suggesting that photographs elucidate his ideas and trigger new approaches to art, whether to illustrate his thoughts on the status of World War II, or simply to add an element of visuality to his reflections on life, art, class struggle, and exile. He includes photographs from various sources to present the reader with the manifold contradictions that are the crux of his exile situation.

¹⁷ Brecht refers to this as “Zweitverwertung” or secondary utilization.

¹⁸ See Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 143.

In the journals we read his thoughts on the origins and execution of a war defined as a struggle against fascism and class inequality, where a political dissident like Brecht remains effectively powerless to stop the atrocities; despite this, he employs photographs as a means to comment on and simultaneously archive his daily events. The volatile spectrum of the war combines with photographic images and journal entries, both to be read in various ways.

The *Arbeitsjournale* present Brecht and his positions in a multifaceted way. Typical of his project of dialectical writing, they also uncover the day-to-day banalities underlying the very nature of war, whose definition has evolved into one of polarization, conflict, and disavowal of so-called truths. They display a greater tendency for experiment than the *Kriegsfibel* regarding its juxtaposed/montage forms of photograph and poetic narrative. Their heterogeneous qualities help to illustrate characteristics in Brecht's work such as historicization and the changeable nature of humans. To that end, this part of the study examines how he challenges the conventional form of the journal. Scrutinizing the numerous photographs of Brecht and his family, positioned between images of World War II, facilitates a reading of a personal *Gestus* at work in the *Arbeitsjournale*. In the same vein as the "Versuche," Brecht's experiments with literary and pictorial forms display his penchant for innovation and "Bearbeitung."

Kriegsfibel

Brecht's *Kriegsfibel* activates historical interest; it instructs the viewer to critically engage with and question the many images of history; it also contributes to Benjamin's claim that history is conceived as images that correspond to the language of

photography.¹⁹ The hybrid collection offers the reader a series of carefully conceptualized photograph/text combinations to guide us through different snapshots of history. To awaken historical interest, Brecht's four-line epigrams incorporate themes, events, and people from the past; the newspaper photographs are meant to visually recall specific perspectives of war. We are invited to confront history and challenge what we believe to see as truth. The photograph becomes the critical record of history in order for us to see its many gestures. Photography encourages the isolation of history into fragmentary moments for the examination of its trends, its breaks, and its subtexts.

This study focuses its attention on three aspects of Brecht's *Kriegsfibel*. It investigates not only the multiple interactions between epigram, photograph, caption, editing, etc., but also how the photographs interact with each other within the larger scope of this collection. The import of photographs exemplifies the modernist development that productively exploited photographs as a means to write and archive history's events. Many scholars have commented on the visual dialectics of photography, where hybrid forms of image and text invite us to create a new form of historiography. The photographs not only underscore the *Kriegsfibel*'s historical significance but also position it alongside other visual historiographies that transform images into documents of the past. The analysis provides stronger links between the production of the *Kriegsfibel* and the *Arbeitsjournale*, thereby expanding that aspect of the *Kriegsfibel*'s treatment in

¹⁹ See Benjamin's fifth thesis in "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" (1940): "Das wahre Bild der Vergangenheit huscht vorbei. Nur als Bild, das auf Nimmerwiedersehen im Augenblick seiner Erkennbarkeit eben aufblitzt, ist die Vergangenheit festzuhalten." In Benjamin, BGS 2.2: 694.

the secondary literature. Additionally, it relates Brecht's work on photography in the *Kriegsfibel* to his *Arbeitsjournale* and the production model books produced at the Berliner Ensemble.

As this study demonstrates, Brecht was keenly aware of the theories and visual culture of his time. He had an extraordinary feel for language, culture, and history, and consistently sought new ways in which these areas could come together on stage. He worked with visual media for most of his artistic career, whether in the theater, cinema, painting, or photography. Engaging and experimenting with hybrid forms of media has influenced much of his work, including his dramatic texts, theoretical essays, and theatrical praxis. This study offers a more detailed analysis of how visual elements—specifically photographs—shape, and to some extent, reproduce his texts. The function of the photographs in the *Kriegsfibel*, *Arbeitsjournale*, and model books visually demonstrates how Brecht conceived and crafted these works. The photographs prompt further theoretical questions related to the medium—e.g., their claims to objectivity, representational fidelity, or being documents in the struggle over the access to meaning. This last aspect is particularly important for Marxist theory (in its contempt for mass media imagery) and was his point of departure for the *Kriegsfibel* project.

The images play an important role for scholars in discerning how Brecht viewed events from multiple perspectives; they also participate in the different ways in which the spectator and/or reader can assume the role of “observer” (“der Beobachtende”): the photographic image is inherently observer-oriented and is a sign or referent that serves as a device for communication for what is visible. Studying the production photographs in

the *Modellbücher* of the Berliner Ensemble focuses our attention on the performance aspects of Brecht's theatrical practice; not only can we examine visual strings of representation in the epic theater and how theater practitioners construct plays, but we also see the problems associated with these productions and are asked to think of alternatives. Comparing the photographs found in the *Arbeitsjournale* and *Modellbücher* generates more queries: what is/are the difference(s), if any, between the "staged" photography in the journal sets, that is, the images that thematize and reference Brecht the author and subject (mimetic "Selbstinszenierungen" or self-dramatizations), and the "stage" photography as seen in the various model books documenting production aspects of the Berliner Ensemble that visually represent concepts such as *Fabel* (narrative content of the play), stage design, character development, and other foundational elements of the epic theater such as *Gestus*, *Verfremdungseffekt*, and *Haltung* (taking a stance or position).

Brecht's engagement with photography and photographs acts as a nodal point for further reflection. Photographs bring events, places, and people closer to the spectator and can make them more accessible. However, photographs also possess a quality of distance and defamiliarization to what is visible, exposing its contradictory nature; one can hold the image close, yet the original is not present and may not even exist anymore. Perhaps the dialectical contradiction inherent in photographs attracted Brecht to the medium: distance and immediacy, objective document and subjective bias, appearance and essence, showing what things are, as opposed to how things function historically. Despite his best efforts to create art containing critical messages that could also appeal to the broad masses, Brecht's theater requires an audience sophisticated enough to recognize

complex themes and techniques so that they can critically engage with and think about contemporary social issues on stage. The target audience, therefore, would be those who are informed but also critical of what they see. This insistence on the public's intellectual curiosity could also be claimed for his projects dealing with photography—possessing knowledge of the medium's history, theories, and applications. In fact, Brecht employed photographs in order to provide a better visual understanding of his work, and to educate the public about the dangers of media imagery and how to expose and reinterpret what we see. This study contributes to that discourse, arguing for a visual approach to Brecht's work.

Chapter Two

From Theory to Praxis: Photography, Literature, History

I. “*This has been*”: Photography’s Truth in Time

Owing to discoveries by the Frenchmen Niepce and Daguerre and the Englishman Fox Talbot, since the mid-nineteenth century scholars and practitioners of photography have problematized truth claims in the visual arts. As they recognized, the so-called objective eye of the camera can only take in or record what it sees, directed by the one pushing the button. Through a chemical process the recorded image on film is transferred to paper to create the visual record or document of some thing or action that has taken place.

However, the notoriously disputed truth claim of photography has much more to do with the problem of fixing a moment on paper, essentially producing a visual record of an invisible and abstract notion of time.

A discussion of photography is a discussion of modernity—the fragmentation, mediation, and estrangement of humans from culture and personal communication. In Susie Linfield’s recent book on images and contemporary theory, she describes photography as “a proxy for modern life and its discontents, which may explain some of the high expectations, bitter disappointments, and pure vitriol it has engendered.”²⁰ The modernist theoretical discourse, which stems from the advancement of photographic technology, has its roots in Enlightenment theories of image and text. G. E. Lessing’s study of the *Laokoon* (1766) sculpture provides a counterpoint to the statements above. His essay insists on distinguishing between the visual arts and poetry/literature, dealing with the question of time and its function. According to Lessing, the visual arts have an

²⁰ See Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 13.

inherent disadvantage in that they can only show one “pregnant moment” (“prägnanter Augenblick”) or one specific moment of characteristic recognition and nothing more.²¹ Literature, conversely, has the advantage of narrative to mark progression in time. The visual artist, therefore, has to make decisions about the most expressive and pertinent moment of action, otherwise risking his entire project. The poet/writer can build and position the narrative to make the action occur in a certain order. With painting and sculpture everything must be visible (“sichtbar”) to be spatially understood. For Lessing, this means that the visual arts’ inability to depict sequential time makes them contradictory and imperfect.

Scholarship has struggled to rescue the image, mostly in painting and photography, by insisting that implicit signs are imbedded in images, and in that sense, they can be read like a text (Mitchell’s “Word and Image,” Marin’s theory of “narration without a narrator” in images, Bryson’s reading “into” painting).²² Reading a text is not

²¹ G. E. Lessing, “Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie,” *Werke*. Vol. 6, ed. Albert von Schirnding (München: Hanser, 1974), 103 f.

²² See W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Louis Marin, “Towards a Theory of Reading in the Visual Arts: Poussin’s *The Arcadian Shepherds*,” *Calligram: Essays in the New Art History from France*, ed. Norman Bryson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 63-90; and Norman Bryson, “Watteau and Reverie,” *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 58-88.

exactly identical to “reading” an image, painting, comic, or photograph.²³ The act of reading, it should be noted, also depends upon cultural factors and linguistic practices; for example, a speaker of Arabic, which is read from right to left, would likely approach a text, image, or series of images in a similar way, reading or scanning from right to left, whereas a speaker of any Western European language would have the opposite orientation and point of departure. In many ways, the cognitive perception associated with understanding texts cannot be fully separated from the way we visually perceive images, just as reading cannot be separated from seeing or looking.²⁴ The human eye moves, stops, and moves again. These stops constitute pauses when the eye fixates on a point of interest and then continues the reading process. For the purposes of this study on Brecht’s engagement with visual images and the photographic medium, the bimodal combination of photograph and text can be considered in yet another way that is also related to reading texts or images. The image-texts can be analyzed simultaneously as one unit and/or read comparatively against each other. In both instances, we examine the narrative potential of each combination: on the one hand, how the encounter with

²³ In this study, the term “spectator” appears in chapter three within the context of Brecht’s visual theories and *Modellbücher* photographs in their relation to a theater audience and/or theater practitioners; the term “reader” will be used in chapters four, five, and six when analyzing and interpreting the images and texts found mainly in the *Arbeitsjournale* and *Kriegsfibel*.

²⁴ See Anne-Kathrin Hillenbach, *Literatur und Fotografie. Analysen eines intermedialen Verhältnisses* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), 69 ff.

“Textualität” in the narrative produces imagery or, on the other hand, how we tend to narrativize the images like texts.²⁵

Images cannot be separated from language. To react to an image is to accept that language permeates and infuses images; similarly, it could be argued that images are also embedded in language. Many images, including photographs, are accompanied by some form of writing or speech such as captions.²⁶ Reading a photograph is related to the analytic process of thought, and in contrast to Lessing’s dichotomy between the arts, one can affirm the textuality of images as well as the visuality of texts. The main difference between the reception or reading of painting and a photograph, Bazin suggests, is not only the proclivity of the latter for mass reproduction; photographic images (unlike paintings) satisfy our fascination with illusion as a mechanical process independent of man. This process is an act of preservation: “Photography does not create eternity, as art does, it embalms time.”²⁷

²⁵ Elisabeth Bronfen, *Crossmappings. Essays zur visuellen Kultur* (Zürich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2011), 45. Bronfen explains that readers cannot hinder the process: “wir [können] kaum verhindern, *Bilder zu lesen*, Geschichten für Bilder, die wir sehen, zu produzieren, sowie Geschichten über unseren Umgang mit diesen Bildern zu erzählen.”

²⁶ Victor Burgin, “Looking at Photographs,” *Thinking Photography* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 144.

²⁷ André Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” *What is Cinema?* trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 14.

A photograph is a tangible “suspension of time.”²⁸ The manifest physicality of this instant reveals to the viewer its relation to the problem of time—the past, present, and future simultaneously. Michael Wetzel argues that the photographic process is analogous to the thought process of humans in that we have the ability to think anachronistically, just as a photograph shows anachronism: “Die Zeitlichkeit der Photographie muß so immer aus dem Gesamtprozess ihrer Entstehung heraus begriffen werden, also als Verschränkung der *Zeit der Belichtung* und der *Zeit der Entwicklung*.”²⁹ Wetzel traces both from fixing the idea (“Aufnahme/Fixierung”), to its development and processing (“Verarbeitung/Entwicklung”), and finally to its capture in memory for later recall (“Sicherung”). In her book, Anne-Kathrin Hillenbach extends this discussion by showing how image-texts interact with one another to produce impressions at various moments during the reading or analysis.³⁰ In another example, Roland Barthes’s notes that the “Portrait of Lewis Payne” or the infamous “Winter Garden” photograph of his mother meticulously discussed (but not included) in his *Camera Lucida* are for him examples of this anachronistic feature of photography: the latter, for example, recalls his

²⁸ Hubertus von Amelunxen, “Photographie und Literatur. Prolegomena zu einer Theoriegeschichte der Photographie,” *Literatur Intermedial. Musik—Malerei—Photographie—Film*, ed. Peter V. Zima (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), 214.

²⁹ Michael Wetzel, “Die Zeit der Entwicklung. Photographie als Spurensicherung und Metapher,” *Zeit-Zeichen. Aufschieben und Interferenzen zwischen Endzeit und Echtzeit*, eds. G. C. Tholen and Michael Scholl (Weinheim: VCH, 1990), 268.

³⁰ See Anne-Kathrin Hillenbach, *Literatur und Fotografie*, 73 f.

mother as she was at the moment the photograph was recorded (past); the photograph physically represents the memory of his mother now (present); yet, the image extends beyond the present time and reveals the shock of all photography that ultimately what was recorded and what is now being remembered will one day be gone (future). All these points in time converge into one photographic object, which, according to Barthes, is the photographic “*noeme*”—photography’s tautological assertion that what we see “has been” (“ça a été”) at a certain place in space and time.³¹

The legibility of a photograph depends on the spectator’s ability to recognize the embedded textual codes. For theorist Vilém Flusser, the photographic apparatus itself inscribes or “imprints” such codes onto the surface of every photo.³² This, in turn, is part of the distinction between how photographic images and paintings are constructed, and how spectators perceive each medium. In a photograph, the subject is technically imprinted onto the surface through a series of technical processes and human decisions, from the photographer’s positioning of the angle of the lens and when exactly to push the button and fix the moment in time, to the chemical reaction that occurs between the film’s exposure to light over a certain time span while the shutter is open, and finally to the purposeful manipulation during the chemical development process. (Granted, this process is now mostly digital.) Or, as Flusser points out in semiotic terms the distinction between the index and icon:

³¹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 115.

³² Vilém Flusser, “The Gesture of Photographing,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 10:3 (2011): 283.

A photograph is a kind of “fingerprint” that the subject leaves on the surface, and not a depiction as in painting. The subject is the *cause* of the photograph and the *meaning* of painting. The photographic revolution reverses the traditional relationship between a concrete phenomenon and the idea of the phenomenon [...] In fact, the invention of photography is a delayed technical resolution of the theoretical conflict between the rationalistic and empirical idealism.³³

Essentially, learning how to read photographs has led to the development of a novel way of seeing and decoding visual imagery, a distinct artistic and theoretical discourse juxtaposed against, yet parallel to, the complex and sometimes contradictory discourses in painting. The tradition in painting has been to let the eye linger, allowing the spectator to form an idea in order to fix the “phenomenon” on the surface; this is how paintings “depict” some subject and/or idea. By contrast in the photograph, the phenomenon itself generates its own idea for the spectator as a “fingerprint”; it is the “cause” of the photograph. Herein lies the difference between the inherent subjectivity in painting and the ideology imprinted in the photograph. However, it would be incorrect to assume that photographs are not in some sense subjective—both media are constructed by humans and therefore exhibit the “gesture” of their creators observing. Just as we might say (perhaps with greater certainty) that a particular painting is a “Rembrandt” or a “Picasso,” so too it may be possible to claim that a photograph is a “Mapplethorpe,” a “Newton,” or an “Arbus.” Likewise, Flusser’s assertion that the photograph “generates its own idea” is meant to be a provocative statement. While useful in distinguishing between the modes of

³³ Ibid.

painting and photography, such a statement grants the photograph too much agency in regard to the image's potential message, which must originate with the critical spectator.

Siegfried Kracauer alludes to other differences in his 1931 essay on photography, which specifically outlines the proliferation of photographic images as a major “turning point” in visual perception. Unlike other arts (painting, music, writing, etc.), photography is a modern invention and depends on a machine (apparatus) to prepare (Lat. “apparare”) and deliver a moment in time. And, unlike those other arts, photographs are tangible evidence of the modern struggle with technology. According to Kracauer, photographs—especially mass-produced images—have affected the way in which humans view one another and their relationship to their exterior environment. Within the span of one century, photographs had changed how we see things and, in essence, had led humans to view the world photographically.³⁴ Kracauer further separates painting and photography by the way in which they self-destruct over time; paintings decompose and disintegrate (“zerfallen”) with the passage of time, whereas a photograph, with its chemical imprint of light on paper, secures the elements of image and holds them in place (“verstauen”). It is also true, however, that photographic images can fade over time if not properly stored away from a light source; here is the irony that photographs can be destroyed by the very same thing that creates it. The turning point of viewing the world “photographically” also prompted modern painters to conform and adapt: “Moderne Maler haben ihre Bilder aus photographischen Fragmenten zusammengesetzt.”³⁵ Critics such as Kracauer and

³⁴ Siegfried Kracauer, “Die Photographie,” *Das Ornament der Masse* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963), 27 f.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

Benjamin often appropriate the language of photography, and as discussed below, in terms of (photo)montage, where the modern artists construct their works by piecing together ready-made images. This, too, has its disadvantages. By constructing works photographically, the painter necessarily relinquishes certain artistic freedoms that the photographer does not possess, such as the discretion to eliminate elements or depict them differently (subjectively). For example, a photograph of a person's visage must include all that is captured in the camera eye; a painting of the same face could be radically different depending on what the artist chooses to render. This uniformity of photography due to its reproductive capabilities (and limitations), as echoed by Flusser, signaled a waning interest in the artist's signature and increased emphasis on the mass-production.

Brecht also comments on the significance of the textual levels within images. While looking at a photograph of a San Francisco skyscraper, he says "Ich glaube: die Oberfläche hat eine große Zukunft."³⁶ The "surface" can be read ironically as topographic superficiality in the American architectural styles of the late 1920s, but also quite literally as the recognition and affirmation of the growing importance of the photographic image to tell stories along with the need to see past the surface level into the deeper layers of social meaning. Victor Burgin argues for the intelligibility of photographs within this interaction of language and image, actually prescribing it as its own multimedia discourse: "Photographic discourse [...], like any other, engages discourses beyond itself, the 'photographic text,' like any other, is the site of a complex

³⁶ Brecht, in an autobiographical note from 1925, BFA 26: 283.

‘intertextuality,’ an overlapping series of previous texts ‘taken for granted’ at a particular cultural and historical conjuncture.”³⁷

Lessing’s “moment” actually necessitates the cultivation of a repetitive and distinct type of cognitive visual ability in the spectator who is able view objects over and over, or what he terms “das Transitorische in der Kunst”: “Je mehr wir sehen, desto mehr müssen wir dazu denken, je mehr wir dazu denken, desto mehr müssen wir zu sehen glauben.”³⁸ In fact, Lessing placed importance not only in repeated viewing but also the process of unfolding in the imagination. A photographic image references a network of differences that the spectator must tease out through the play of presence and absence. The “pregnant moment” provides the spectator with a locus of fruitful recognition that can supplement the spectator’s description of what is visible. In that sense, the reading process through which the spectator must proceed can be located in this oscillation from the image into word and back to the image. The spectator seeks to temporally reconstruct that which is represented in the image, and creates the “latente Präsenz des Abwesenden, das schon Vergangene sowie auch das Versprechen auf ein Künftiges.”³⁹ Following this, it would seem that, contrary to Lessing, the arts are not limited vis-à-vis poetry in their ability to create and represent time.

Hubertus Amelunxen’s interrogates the limits of photography and literature more in terms of a symbiosis than of opposed and mutually exclusive media. His analysis consists of “and”-“in” comparisons instead of “versus” and “or.” He engages Barthes’s

³⁷ Burgin, “Looking at Photographs,” 144.

³⁸ Lessing, “Laokoon,” 26.

³⁹ Amelunxen, “Photographie und Literatur,” 216.

studium/punctum and seeks to apply this same theory of photography to literature. He concludes that photography is not a fully disparate entity from literature, insisting on a distinctive approach within the field that treats photographs and texts as similar. Fundamentally characteristic of both is their propensity for reference.⁴⁰ Just as photography's *noeme* ("this has been") points to both temporal and spatial components, so too does the function of language go beyond the present time to reference itself and other works deictically and otherwise. Further questions need to be asked about verisimilitude and the generic boundaries of the photograph and literature: What are the potential effects of treating word as image or vice versa? What are the limits of truth and narrative?

This study investigates firstly, how photography impacts Brecht's works by making abstract literary ideas and tropes "sichtbar", and secondly how the spectator can interpret multiple narrative elements with the images. Bimediality in Brecht's work is a device that pushes us to think critically about the nature and import of historiography, aesthetics, and artistic production.

II. *Visual Limitations: The Aesthetics and Ethics of Photography*

In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s the emergence of a new materialist analysis of the image transformed the developing (postmodern) theory and criticism of photography. Spurred by the rediscovery of earlier works by German thinkers like Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, László Maholy-Nagy, Alfred Renger-Patzsch, Russian modernists like Alexander Rodchenko and Sergei Tretyakov, and in certain respects by the French

⁴⁰ Ibid., 212.

Surrealists Man Ray and André Breton, contemporary writers such as semiologist Roland Barthes, social theorist Pierre Bourdieu, and critics and photographers such as Victor Burgin, Allan Sekula, John Tagg, and Susan Sontag renewed the interest in social documentary photography. This specific genre focuses its most trenchant and persistent critiques on the very aestheticization of the so-called documentary image. One measure of the success of this critique of social implications of the photographic medium is the extent to which its assumptions and conclusions were accepted and absorbed into mainstream scholarship dealing with photography today.

Marxist critics have treated the alleged power of imagery to faithfully reveal social relationships with a certain degree of skepticism, and the debate surrounding photography's aesthetic and social value is no exception. The understanding of photography as a tool for focusing social awareness and change rests on critical positions articulated in the now classic debate within German Marxism, which took place mainly between the 1930s and 1950s. The *Expressionismusdebatte* was an exercise in criticism as much as it was about arguing the merits of realism.⁴¹ The debate revolved around the disputed legacy of Expressionism as well as the fate of realism as a viable artistic means with which to represent the working-class in literature and the other arts in the rising age of capitalism, involving Ernst Bloch, Georg Lukács, Anna Seghers, Benjamin, Adorno, and Brecht. Notions of dialectic thinking marked Modernism for artists and critics like

⁴¹ In a tangential note, the first photographic inclusion in the *Arbeitsjournale* (Denmark 1938) is situated between entries on the efficacy and worth of this debate in the arts. See Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 320, and chapter four of this study.

those named here. It was an open-ended and political movement with a penchant for self-reflexivity and experimentation.

For Brecht, realism in the arts was not simply an aesthetic category. He argued that for art to be realistic it must be understood, and in order for the public to understand they must play an active role in the creative and interpretive process:

Realistisch heißt: den gesellschaftlichen Kausalkomplex aufdeckend / die herrschenden Gesichtspunkte als die Gesichtspunkte der Herrschenden entlarvend / Vom Standpunkt der Klasse aus schreibend, welche für die dringendsten Schwierigkeiten, in denen die menschliche Gesellschaft steckt, die breitesten Lösungen bereit hält / das Moment der Entwicklung betonend / konkret und das Abstrahieren ermöglichend.⁴²

Brecht emphasizes the processes involved in making the work realistic by employing language that amplifies process and practical action: “aufdeckend,” entlarvend,” “schreibend,” “betonend,” and “ermöglichend.” These adverbial participles stress the importance of process and agency when thinking about an action. For example, it is not enough for art to exist as an institution to uncover the underlying motives behind human interactions. Instead, as Brecht notes, the emphasis must be on the spectator’s active involvement in the critical process of making something realistic and understood, i.e., one’s ability to discern differences, to act as an outside observer, or to examine an action or image from multiple perspectives or standpoints. Brecht’s definition calls for the spectator to question and criticize anew over and over again. This emphasis on process was a major point of contention with his contemporary Lukács’s skepticism in the debate

⁴² Brecht, “Volkstümlichkeit und Realismus,” BFA 21.1: 409.

over the role of modernist art practices. Unlike Lukács, Brecht's realism was "kämpferisch," not one based on the critical realism and aesthetic categories derived from nineteenth-century writers, mostly novelists. He wanted to question and problematize tradition—but was not in favor of an absolute break with "das gute Alte"—and develop a more scientific, empirical art, whose multiple perspectives and experiments prompted the spectator to think while simultaneously making spectators aware that they were engaged in the act of thinking. Realistic art has a use value for social change.

For these reasons the practice of montage and *découpage* was advantageously compatible with Brecht's aesthetics at the time.⁴³ As Roswitha Müller points out, the montage form per se invited spectators to participate and engage by drawing attention to its very construction as political "artifact." Montage, "with its polymorphic possibilities, allows for the articulation of the spectator's own interests and judgments vis-à-vis artistic representation."⁴⁴ For Brecht, montage does not pose any pretense of organic unity because it separates elements and makes those lines of separation visible. It also resists illusionist impulses by stressing both the dialectic message of contradiction and irregularity and the critical process of self-reflection. Not only were montage techniques in the theater and cinema main indicators of modernist art for Brecht, but the language with which he described montage is also linked to his thoughts on realistic representation in the theater, photography, and photomontage: emphasizing "the moment of development" and enabling "the abstract"; in other words, "Abstrahieren" not in terms of

⁴³ Brecht's interest in photomontage and visual historiography, particularly as it relates to the *Kriegsfibel*, will be explored in chapter five of this study.

⁴⁴ Roswitha Müller, "Montage in Brecht," *Theatre Journal* 39:4 (December 1987): 486.

abstract or non-representational art, but rather in the act of stepping back and critically introducing a viewpoint into the debate.

Williams Rollins suggests that Adorno's contested and often misinterpreted 1949 dictum against writing poetry after Auschwitz was a provocation in terms not only of "*Sprachverbot*" but also of "*Bilderverbot*," banning both language on and images of the Holocaust.⁴⁵ The exact significance of this statement—which Adorno revisited later—is still under contention today, but its relevance could extend beyond poetry and literature to historiography and the visual representation of history through photography and film. Adorno is concerned with the inefficiency (or even incapability) of language and images to truthfully convey reality. He places great emphasis on distinguishing between the limits of theory and praxis in cultural criticism and calls for a resurgence in theory that shapes culture and fights against ideology: "Im bürgerlichen Zeitalter war die vorherrschende Theorie die Ideologie und die oppositionelle Praxis stand unmittelbar dagegen. Heute gibt es eigentlich kaum mehr Theorie, und die Ideologie tönt gleichsam aus dem Räderwerk der unausweichlichen Praxis."⁴⁶ Adorno's statements contrast with Brecht's own thoughts on the debate surrounding theory and praxis in the arts, where Brecht unequivocally sides with action-oriented praxis over the formalism of theory—

⁴⁵ William Rollins, "'Bilderverbot' for Historians? Photography vs. Narrative in *Hitler's Willing Executioners*," *Terror and Text: Representing Political Violence in Literature and the Visual Arts*, eds. Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Mark Williams (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2002), 256.

⁴⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, "Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft," *Gesammelte Schriften*. Vol. 10.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 18.

although he was a prolific theorist. However, his work with photographic images seems to acknowledge a different statement by Adorno in the same essay, which discusses the task of Critical Theory as one that seeks to unmask the cultural phenomenon of proliferated images. He calls for cultural criticism to become a “Kulturkritik [...] zur gesellschaftlichen Physiognomik.”⁴⁷ Adorno fails to specify the exact visage of society which should be shown, but we could assume that photography, as employed for example in the *Kriegsfibel*, *Arbeitsjournale*, or various plays by Brecht (*Die Mutter*, for example), may provide a means to show the distinct metaphoric perspective discussed in the essay.

Photographs are able to document the situation but are not entirely equipped to explain it. Further, one could say that photographs are essentially “silent.”⁴⁸ This stability in time as an artifact allows in turn for the pensive pause of looking at a photograph, for the duration of repeated looking. It is not unusual, then, that Brecht’s contemporaries, such as Benjamin, Kracauer, or even Ernst Jünger, who worked with and/or wrote about photography, noted the importance of captions. Benjamin observed that textual captions began to play a larger role around the turn of the century. From this time onward photography assumed a new role in communicating facts and establishing evidence. Contrary to Brecht, Benjamin did find some use for photographic reproductions. Where Brecht saw misleading surface effects, Benjamin saw hidden potential significance. Yet Benjamin’s realization that captions may let the photograph speak recognizes that photographs can solicit different, often contradictory readings. Politically opposed to both Brecht and Benjamin but a similarly acute observer of modern cultural technology,

⁴⁷ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁸ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 54 f.

Jünger agreed. Captions provided the argumentative context for photographs, often showing “both sides” of the war (here: World War I). Jünger, too, warned of the aestheticization of intelligence and technological advancement to the detriment of the common good. A photograph (“Lichtbild”) employs “die selben Mittel, deren Waffen der Zerstörung den Feind auf den genauen Punkt feststellen können, um das große historische Ereignis im Detail aufzubewahren.”⁴⁹ The same technologies used to wage war were used to document and perpetuate it.

A principal source for the “aestheticization” argument comes from Benjamin’s essays on the status of art in modernity (stemming from his readings of Marx and Hegel). The mass reproducibility through the technical advancement of film and photography in particular posed both positive and potentially dangerous consequences for the world thereafter. This revolutionary, dialectical potential of photography to capture any given moment and reproduce it (the “Einzigkeit” of the “Aura”) must be intrinsically opposed at the same time to its ever fading potential for truth (reception and use). In his seminal essay “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit” Benjamin states: “In dem Augenblick aber, da der Maßstab der Echtheit an der Kunstproduktion versagt, hat sich auch die gesamte soziale Funktion der Kunst umgewälzt. An die Stelle ihrer Fundierung aufs Ritual tritt ihre Fundierung auf eine andere Praxis: nämlich ihre Fundierung auf Politik.”⁵⁰ Here, he distinguishes between the “Kultwert” and the

⁴⁹ Ernst Jünger, “Krieg und Lichtbild,” *Das Antlitz des Weltkrieges. Fronterlebnisse deutscher Soldaten*, ed. Ernst Jünger (Berlin: Neufeld & Henius, 1930), 10.

⁵⁰ Walter Benjamin, “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit,” BGS 1.2: 441.

“Austellungswert” of the photograph. Adorno echoes Benjamin’s critique of visual aestheticization of societal ideology, or “[die] Gesellschaft als Erscheinung.”⁵¹ The “Kultwert” deals with the function of art and its basic availability to a specific group, and has its origin in societal rituals and tradition, to which Benjamin alludes. According to Benjamin the technical reproducibility of art specifically (although not exclusively) with the onset of photography has transformed its use value into one where the greater emphasis is placed on the copy (or even the process of copying), not the original, ushering in a radically altered concept of the meaning of art. Some have even linked the difference between original and reproduction to the simple passage of time.⁵²

Because of this shift with the photographic image the focus was transferred from functionality to proliferation, from meaning to aesthetics, i.e., the inevitable shift to the politics of the image. The aesthetic and theoretical discourses surrounding the photographic portrait—the popularization and proliferation in the early half of the twentieth century of the frontal facial photograph—bring politics to the fore. The politics of the portrait, as seen for example in the photo collections by August Sander or Erna

⁵¹ Adorno, “Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft,” 19.

⁵² Amelunxen, “Photographie und Literatur,” 220. Cited from Benjamin’s essay “Der Autor als Produzent”: “Das Leben des Originals ist also ein im hohen Maße ‘eigentümliche(s)’, widerfährt ihm doch in seinem ‘Fortleben’ immer wieder eine neue ‘Entfaltung’, so daß schließlich von einem Original nur in seiner Differenz zu der Zeit der Übersetzung gesprochen werden kann.”

Lendvai-Dircksen, took its cues from traditional nineteenth-century portraiture.⁵³ The creators sought to position their works as objective documents, as an index of facial typologies that could “mark” or reference the human categories of their time.

Photography’s “Reiz der Referenz” was one of the main reasons why socially aware artists, who needed documentary tools to expose injustice and inequality, turned to the facial portrait.⁵⁴ One negative consequence of the facial portraits, which was not entirely overlooked during the 1910s-1930s, was the remarkable leveling effect it had on the ways in which spectators analyze them. Because these images were so politically contentious and raw, they were very sought-after almost to the point of cliché. This mass proliferation of deceptive similarity, in turn, quickly became prosaic when the interest in human physiognomy as a means to visually document social problems was increasingly politicized and then trivialized, especially on the political left.

For Brecht, the idea that an image could elicit a “raw” reaction meant that emotion spurred the spectator’s approach, not the kind of critical, observational rationality he called for in order to discard illusion and arrive at an educated position or

⁵³ See August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit. Sechzig Aufnahmen deutscher Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (München: Kurt Wolff, 1929); see also Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, *Das deutsche Volksgesicht. Mit 140 Kupfertiefdrucktafeln* (Berlin: Drei Masken Verlag, 1932).

⁵⁴ See Silke Horstkotte’s introduction in *Nachbilder. Fotografie und Gedächtnis in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur* (Köln: Böhlau, 2009), 30 ff. See also the volume *Photo-Textualities: Reading Photographs and Literature*, ed. Marsha Bryant (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006).

stance on socio-historical problems of the day. This was entirely unproductive for the critical spectator and Brecht was well aware of the consequences. He was also aware that in order to fix the problem, leftist social critics and artists would need a two-fold, dialectic approach to photography and mass media images—this meant criticizing the medium’s inherent faults as well as utilizing photography’s potential. Distrusting photographs was almost a given; photographs cannot explain why things function the way they do, provide historical context, or tell dynamic stories in any chronological order.⁵⁵ Exposing photography’s failures was the easier task of the two. Making the case for photography’s role in how the spectator can expose social conditions (perhaps not readily seen otherwise) was the harder sell. Herein lies Brecht’s clever maneuver: he succeeded in drawing attention to both aspects in the debate surrounding photography in part by showing what photographs succeed in doing. As Linfield puts it:

Photographs excel in offering an immediate, viscerally emotional connection to the world. People don’t look at photographs to understand the inner contradictions of global capitalism...[spectators] turn to photographs for other things: for a glimpse of what cruelty, strangeness, beauty, agony, love, natural wonder, artistic creation, or depraved violence

⁵⁵ See Brecht, [“Über Photographie”], BFA 21: 264; or Brecht’s oft quoted assertion from the “Dreigroschenprozess” about the photograph of the Krupp factory (BFA 21: 469): “Eine Fotografie der Kruppwerke oder der AEG ergibt beinahe nichts über diese Institute. Die eigentliche Realität ist in die Funktionale gerutscht.”

looks like...to discover what the intuitive reactions to otherness—and to such others—might be.⁵⁶

In many of his theoretical essays Brecht attacked the medium's deception and shortcomings, whereas in his artistic praxis he was able to seize on its potential visual power and popular appeal to instruct how to re-read mass imagery from different perspectives. Critically, he faulted photography for connecting the spectator's visceral emotions to the visual event. Productively, he employed photographs precisely for reasons mentioned in the quote above—to make events, social relations, and human emotions not only visible (“sichtbar machen”), but available for closer examination. In his dramatic praxis he turned to production photographs in the *Modellbücher* to demonstrate and problematize what epic theater looks like; in the *Arbeitsjournale*, he thematizes himself as author and protagonist (in the form of “Selbstinszenierung”) in the current events of the late 1930s to 1955 before his death; in the *Kriegsfibel*, Brecht juxtaposes photographs and poetic texts to invite alternative ways of reading and criticizing modern warfare and its mass media imagery.

In keeping with the documentary debate within photography, Benjamin also speaks of the “Verfahren einer gewissen modischen Photographie, das Elend zum Gegenstand des Konsums [macht].”⁵⁷ Behind photography's so-called claim to truth lies a deeper layer that is often neglected. Siegfried Kracauer also points out that photographs hide something behind their surfaces, referring to the photograph as a dream, or

⁵⁶ Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 22.

⁵⁷ Benjamin, “Der Autor als Produzent,” BGS 2.2: 695.

“Traum,”⁵⁸ which has the ability to superficially mirror reality, but in fact is not real. Those who appropriate this critique today often forget its historical context within this debate. The criticisms above specifically refer to the predominant products of the New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*) movement during the interwar period in Germany. When critics like Benjamin charge that the “New Photography” (propagated by Moholy-Nagy) of the 1920s and 1930s succeeds in turning thematic subjects worthy of attention like poverty, war, and class struggle into objects of enjoyment by its focus on formalism and modish, technical perfection, he explicitly refers to the well-known and often cited photobook by Renger-Patzsch entitled *Die Welt ist schön* (1928). He expressly refers to photographs of the New Objectivity, as opposed to late nineteenth-century portraiture and cityscapes, transforming political struggle so that it ceases to be a compelling motive for action and becomes an object of comfortable contemplation.⁵⁹

When photographs attempt to represent a thing—human, idea, or object—politics is always involved in that representation. Every photograph must therefore be a kind of negotiation, a complex act of communication between viewer and object. Each element exerts influence and pressure on the other. For Bourdieu, the French sociologist interested in social and economic systems, Western cultures treated photography as an objective art because it was perceived as such by the broad masses.⁶⁰ Photography’s reputation as

⁵⁸ Kracauer, “Die Photographie,” 39.

⁵⁹ See chapter five of this study, which discusses the photobooks in Weimar Germany in greater detail.

⁶⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1990), 73 f. Bourdieu makes class relations a central issue in

something objective and true became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Therefore, as society continued to define photographs as “objective documents,” the medium continued to conform to that given definition. Under these circumstances, as Brecht argues, the communicative act between art and the spectator should still be attempted. In his defense of modern art, Brecht writes against Lukács: “In der Kunst gibt es das Faktum des Mißglückten und des teilweise Geglückten. [...] Aber man darf, aus den Niederlagen, die festgestellt werden müssen, nicht die Folgerung ziehen, daß keine Kämpfe mehr stattfinden sollen.”⁶¹ According to Brecht any artistic practice, such as photography, that tries to avoid this communication is not worthy of the name.

III. Defining Terms: *Mimesis*, Verfremdungseffekt, Gestus

The present discussion of mimesis confines itself to the context of the important theoretical influences on Brecht’s work. He crafted his ideas on the function of art’s aesthetic representation by turning to what he saw as false and unproductive, searching for ways to unlock art’s potential for change. Frankfurt School theorists such as Adorno, Benjamin, and Kracauer fought against the notion of history as a teleological progression

the book as evidenced even by its title, in which he positions the medium between high-brow and popular or “low-brow” art. The title is also in direct dialogue with Charles Baudelaire’s famous 1859 essay “Le publique moderne et la photographie,” where he criticizes photography as lower-class art that panders to lower-class tastes.

⁶¹ Brecht, “Über den formalistischen Charakter der Realismustheorie” (1938), BFA 22.1: 442-43.

(“Fortgang”) with some sort of endpoint in the future.⁶² They, along with Brecht, also argued that modernity was a specific historical moment and must be analyzed as such. For them, mimesis was a “genealogical force that undercuts historicist notions of meaning.”⁶³ Indeed, it would seem strange to associate Brecht’s work and theory so closely with the classical dramatic elements, such as identification, catharsis, and mimesis. However, as with most of Brecht’s work, he did not seek to completely disregard what had come before him, the immoveable and unchangeable fortresses known as the “classics.” Instead, he uncovered and reworked traditions and, by questioning the functionality and usefulness of these traditions, could expose the weaknesses in the armor.

In Adorno’s *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, mimesis could be understood as the encounter with the unknown.⁶⁴ To understand it, this involved presenting audiences with juxtapositions of differences, with the unexpected (dramatic irony), with contrasts between what the audience perceived as known and the unknown. Much of Brecht’s theater work consists of organizing (and reorganizing) these factors of the known and

⁶² See for example, Benjamin’s 1940 essay “Über den Begriff der Geschichte,” in BGS 2.2: 698, in which he names this “sture Fortschrittsglaube.” The type of “Fortschritt” for which Benjamin argues is a “Sturm” that will appear in flashes, breaks, and disruptions, in short: a new materialist historiography.

⁶³ Astrid Oesmann, *Staging History: Brecht’s Social Concepts of Ideology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 36-37.

⁶⁴ See Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), 27.

unknown, or more specifically for him the familiar and unfamiliar—from costumes and choices in set design, to folksy language and asides by actors that break through the barriers of the stage and show the audience *how* and *why* humans act. The *Lehrstücke* in particular provide fitting examples of Brecht’s dialectic, employing imitation for the sake of exposing contrast. “As experiments in the organization of mimesis,” writes Astrid Oesmann, the learning plays secure “the performative incorporation of that which is already there... Imitation, then, is a fundamentally theatrical form of resistance that opens up the imitation’s opposite—alterity—which encompasses sameness.”⁶⁵ Of course, his theories and praxis changed with his shifting ideas on the epic theater in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The element of the unknown (“das Unbewußte”) and, by extension, the alternative and/or the possible, all play an important role in Brecht’s conceptions of mimesis. In other words, imitation is also a medium for change. Art should not be static, but should employ both mimetic and anti-mimetic techniques in order to bring about dialectic thinking and social change.

Brecht criticized Aristotle’s writings on history, poetics, and perhaps most important, the mimetic function of art as a point of departure for distinguishing his own project to revolutionize and re-function modern theater. He emphasized the differences in the epic form of theater vis-à-vis the classical Aristotelian dramatic theater of identification and catharsis, arguing for example for art that is not suggestive, but argumentative; one that is effective by rousing the spectator’s action through reason and distanced observation, not through the use of empathy, involvement, or identification with the story; and by using actors who show a disjointed narrative of human interactions

⁶⁵ Oesmann, *Staging History*, 43.

on stage that are historically contextualized. In chapter six of his *Poetics*, Aristotle writes of mimesis vaguely as the “reproduction of what already exists” and argues against the epic (narrative) forms in favor of art that cultivates the spectator’s sympathies.⁶⁶

Aristotle’s drama represented a world too static and embedded in its belief that art and history, or more precisely fate, define human beings. Brecht’s epic theater, on the other hand, sought to overturn this worldview, by showing how humans are the creators of reality and interpreters of a socially determined set of historical events.⁶⁷ Brecht’s figures are changeable humans who also signify agents of that change. He formulates the problem as follows:

Die Einfühlung ist ein Grundpfeiler der herrschenden [here: classical] Ästhetik. Schon in der großartigen *Poetik* des Aristoteles wird beschrieben, wie die Katharsis, d.h. die seelische Läuterung des Zuschauers, vermittels der *Mimesis* herbeigeführt wird. Der Schauspieler ahmt den Helden nach (den Oedipus oder den Prometheus), und er tut es mit solcher Suggestion und Verwandlungskraft, daß der Zuschauer ihn darin nachahmt und sich so in Besitz der Erlebnisse des Helden setzt.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ See Aristotle, *Poetik*, ed. Manfred Fuhrmann (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982), 20-21.

Aristotle continues: “Der wichtigste Teil [der Tragödie] ist die Zusammenfügung der Geschehnisse. Denn die Tragödie ist nicht die Nachahmung von Menschen, sondern von Handlung und von Lebenswirklichkeit.”

⁶⁷ See Brecht, *Arbeitsjournal* (Finland), BFA 26: 403-38. These journal entries are dated 2 and 3 August 1940.

⁶⁸ Brecht, “Über experimentelles Theater,” BFA 22.1: 551.

The task, therefore, was to replace the “sympathetic” with a “rational” understanding, and then develop a way to break the hypnosis of illusion by first interrupting the spectator’s gaze and attention, and in turn provoking the spectator’s capacity for critical thought.

In the German context, Brecht was certainly not the first to criticize the classical concept of mimesis, especially in the theater. In his *Hamburger Dramaturgie* (1766), Lessing argued for a rethinking of Aristotle’s notion of “cultivating sympathy” (“Mitleid erregen”), and even asserted that Aristotle’s definition of sympathy was incorrect.⁶⁹ As a critic, writer, and dramaturge, Lessing was not opposed to polemic. He viewed the theater in the late eighteenth century as a public good and means toward educating a rational citizenry in the great spirit of the Enlightenment. Lessing’s notion of the tragedy, however, called for the main characters to be models of virtue—although not too perfect!—insisting that the most pitiful character is the best character.⁷⁰ Here, the audience should learn to feel or laugh with the action on stage, through the representation of human nature based on “probability” (“Wahrscheinlichkeit”), not of “what already exists” as Aristotle recommended. Lessing also suggested that cultivating the spectator’s sympathy was not a goal per se of representation in theater; rather, empathy was a means, according to him, to amplify one’s ability to identify events and characters that were “probable.” Brecht could agree with Lessing’s hopes for a didactic theater. In his subsequent theoretical writings on the role of mass media photography, he also advanced Lessing’s “pregnant moment” described in the “Laokoon” essay on the limits of

⁶⁹ Lessing, “Briefwechsel,” *Deutsche Dramaturgie vom Barock bis zur Klassik*, ed. Benno von Wiese (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1967), 15.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

representation in painting and sculpture.⁷¹ However, Brecht's views diverged from Aristotle, Lessing, Friedrich Schiller, Georg Lukács, and others.⁷² Instead, he aligned his vision more with artists like Erwin Piscator or Frank Wedekind, rather than the Stanislavsky method acting of the 1920s and 30s.

First, unlike the prevalent techniques of the Naturalist stage, where characters were shown embedded in their social milieus within a specific time frame, Brecht's point of departure for representation was the historicization of the play's material. Brecht was against any notion of a "timeless" theater—one that could signify human history through the ages—in favor of one where the characters present how the contemporary concept of history and human interactions has evolved over time, and how actions and characters fit into and are made strange by specific historical circumstances. Although Brecht's approach was, to a certain degree, a development of the critical project initiated by Naturalism, he chose instead to employ interactive situations on stage, where epic actors are visibly detached from—not concretely embedded in—their surroundings and characters. In another degree of separation the epic actor is not static, but changeable. In this context, "causal network" and "dynamics of development" quoted above are defined as changeable and ephemeral, highlighting the mercurial character of history.

"Historicization" is indeed a hallmark of Brecht's epic theater, or what Brecht would later term "theater of the scientific age" or "dialectical theater."

⁷¹ Lessing, "Laokoon," 103. Brecht would also disagree with Lessing's notion of mimesis, also stated in the "Laokoon" essay: to make a second thing or process "similar."

⁷² See Brecht's quote on realistic art in "Volkstümlichkeit und Realismus," BFA 21.1: 409.

Criticism and crisis play important roles in this context. To criticize (“*kritisieren*”) is to throw something that already exists into crisis (from the Greek)—to begin from the root cause of an event or theory and reposition or even displace it into a productive space in which one can act and cause change.⁷³ Brecht’s definition of “Kritik” and “Krise” evolved but insisted on active engagement and interference in order to comprehend (“*Begreifen durch Eingreifen*”). For example, in an early note from 1920, he rails against the tendencies of Weimar critics who were not critical enough and pandered to the tastes of the bourgeois public, the “literarisch gemachten Spießer, der seine Genüsse immer aus dritter Hand nehmen muß.”⁷⁴ Further, he called for cultural criticism based on empiricism (as in the scientific method of experimentation and observation) and knowledge of history that did not focus solely on aesthetics but rather sociological and political standpoints.⁷⁵ This, in turn, would lead to the organization of criticism in the public sphere—not just among intellectuals and artists. Criticism and crisis is necessary for Brecht’s reappropriation of mimesis.

Next, Brecht sought to turn class and social relations into an everyday issue, in effect developing ways to practice and apply his Marxist worldview to the stage by transforming the common person from the *object* of history into the *subject* of inquiry.

⁷³ See Brecht, “Haltung des Probenleiters (bei induktivem Vorgehen),” BFA 22: 597.

“Throwing a work into crisis” is also the position Brecht takes in other essays regarding to the art of translation, cultural transfer, and dramatic adaptation.

⁷⁴ Brecht, [“Standpunkt unserer meisten Kritiker”], BFA 21: 51.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Brecht, [“Kritik der Kritik”] (1928), BFA 21: 232.

The *Verfremdungseffekt*⁷⁶—Brecht’s defamiliarization and estrangement technique in the epic theater—prompts the spectators to change perspective and think critically about their relation to reality. To do this, Brecht developed techniques built into the play’s language and acting, which present the spectator with shifts and shocks designed to distance or make something strange. Mostly accomplished by comments and/or a sequence of actions that explicitly disrupt the spectator’s attention, Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt* takes what is expected and produces surprise and curiosity out of that shock effect. In his 1988 monograph *Performance Theory*, Richard Schechner hypothesized: “Of all the experiments with theatrical structure over the past century, the [*Verfremdungseffekt*] is most likely to stick.”⁷⁷ In direct contrast to Aristotelian dramatic theater, Brecht actively pursued ways to alter the spectator’s expectations—from breaking the theater rituals of sympathy and identification to cultivating a position of critical observation and eventual participation. Brecht often looked to sociological models such as courtroom proceedings

⁷⁶ *Verfremdungseffekt* is a concept rather than a term and is somewhat difficult to translate from the German for various reasons. It is most often seen in English as “alienation effect” (see John Willett’s anthology *Brecht on Theatre*) or “distancing.” These translations, however, fail to accurately capture the meaning in Brecht’s intended effect. Derived from the root *fremd* (strange, alien, foreign, different), Brecht’s *verfremden* (process of uncovering or changing perspective through shock and/or sudden awareness of difference; making something strange) should be viewed in contrast to *befremden* (surprise, astonish, alienate) or *entfremden* (alienate or estrange, used specifically in Marx’s terminology separating labor and capital).

⁷⁷ Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 142.

or bystanders observing an accident on the street for inspiration in demonstrating on stage human patterns of behavior and their underlying historic motivations.⁷⁸ The *Verfremdungseffekt* becomes an essential part of the epic theater and its break with traditional forms of representation. It highlights human interactions often as something jarring, disjointed, or striking, a signal to the audience that something needs further explanation and is too natural.

To realize this re-functioning of the theater, Brecht transformed his actors into agents. Through language, song, costume, gesture, and stage position vis-à-vis others, actors insert their own “statement”—often produced through a *Verfremdungseffekt*—as a space that encouraged experimentation and interrogation.⁷⁹ The actor’s task is one that even Brecht admitted is a tall order,⁸⁰ for one must be able to present oneself multi-dimensionally: one actor showing two parts on display. First, the actors cannot hide their identity as actors on stage from the spectator; second, actors must show their characters as a role within the play’s narrative; and third, those same actors must also quote themselves: “Zeigt, daß ihr zeigt!” (“Show that you are showing!”) and “macht das

⁷⁸ See Brecht, “Die Strassenszene. Grundmodell einer Szene des epischen Theaters,” BFA 22.1: 370-81.

⁷⁹ See Tom Kuhn, “Brecht Reads Bruegel: *Verfremdung*, Gestic Realism and the Second Phase of Brechtian Theory,” *Monatshefte* 105:1 (Spring 2013): 110. Kuhn explains that during the mid-1930s Brecht was actively experimenting with his theories, especially the *Verfremdungseffekt*, and was uncertain what the word and concept meant even to him, “trying it out to see if it will fit, discovering its limits.”

⁸⁰ Brecht, “Volkstümlichkeit und Realismus,” BFA 22.1: 406 f.

sichtbar!” (“make it visible!”). In Brecht’s own words: “Dies ist die Übung: vor ihr zeigt, wie / Einer Verrat begeht, oder ihn Eifersucht faßt / Oder er einen Handel abschließt, blickt ihr / Auf den Zuschauer, so als wolltet ihr sagen: / Jetzt gib acht, jetzt verrät dieser Mensch, und so macht er es.”⁸¹ Taken further, the actors show an awareness that they are being observed and thereby must also observe their own actions.⁸² In this way, epic actors become a medium of communication, not simply part of the story. The role of the epic actor has consequences for the spectator as well; by observing the actor, the spectator acquires a sophisticated vocabulary to reinterpret the theater. This reeducation of the audience through acting techniques is precisely what happened to Brecht while observing the Chinese actor Mei Lan-Fang in a 1935 performance of the Beijing Opera in Moscow.⁸³

Transforming the actor into a means of communication leads to the *Gestus*—Brecht’s “response” to the problem of mimesis and representation—or the linguistically and socially coded gestures and/or speech acts of his theatrical work. Examples of theater production photographs in chapter three show that questioning representations of reality opens spaces for fruitful discussion on how to effectively stage human relations. The *Gestus* foregrounds the social implications in the representation of reality and human relations and is Brecht’s re-functioning in part of the classical notion of mimesis. In a 1938 essay, Brecht further explains his theory:

⁸¹ Brecht, “Das Zeigen muss gezeigt werden,” BFA 15: 166.

⁸² Brecht, “Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst,” BFA 21.1: 200-10.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, in particular see pages 204 and 206.

Unter Gestus soll nicht Gestikulieren verstanden sein [...] Es handelt sich um Gesamthaltungen. Gestisch ist eine Sprache, wenn sie auf dem Gestus beruht, bestimmte Haltungen des Sprechenden anzeigt, die dieser andern Menschen gegenüber einnimmt. Nicht jeder Gestus ist ein gesellschaftlicher Gestus. Die Abwehrhaltung gegen eine Fliege ist zunächst noch kein gesellschaftlicher Gestus, die Abwehrhaltung gegen einen Hund kann einer sein, wenn z. B. durch ihn der Kampf, den ein schlecht gekleideter Mensch gegen Wachthunde zu führen hat, zum Ausdruck kommt.⁸⁴

Brecht chose this word carefully; he uses “Gestus” (Lat.), not “Geste” (Germ. gesture). Like the concept of realism, the *Gestus* is not simply an aesthetic category, but rather a technique that combines language, movement, and social cues, where the actors participate in their roles by “taking a stance/position.” The actor’s stance (*Haltung*) is then observed and interpreted by the spectator within a set of culturally defined parameters. This has led critics such as Roland Barthes and Jim Carmody to define the epic theater as “semiotic,”⁸⁵ where actors are trained to quote cultural markers on stage and to manage the representational and socially coded signs of their art.⁸⁶ In a sense,

⁸⁴ Brecht, “Über gestische Musik,” BFA 22.1: 329-30.

⁸⁵ See for example, Roland Barthes, “Brecht and Discourse: A Contribution to the Study of Discursivity,” *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 212-22; and Jim Carmody, “Reading Scenic Writing: Barthes, Brecht, and Theatre Photography,” *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 5:1 (1990): 25-38.

⁸⁶ Schechner, *Performance Theory*, 210.

actors then become part of the epic theater's break with traditional forms of mimetic representation. "Studying" character for Brecht was not to mimic or create realistic imitations; rather, the actors must observe and analyze their characters, study the socio-historical implications/conditions of the character's actions, and then execute this on stage using techniques such as the *Gestus*.

The *Gestus* also plays a role in the epic theater's didactics by relying on illocutionary speech acts—ones that perform, e.g., to promise, threaten, implicate.⁸⁷ These socially determined cues cannot be verbalized and seem to resist verbal and written analysis.⁸⁸ They contribute to the multiple layers of communication between actors on stage. The *Gestus* articulates how one does/says something and sets that speech/action within a social and cultural context that the audience can recognize. More than just gestures or mimicry, the *Gestus* not only shows the spectator what humans do but also *why* they do it (for example, why the Chinese actor Mei Lan-Fang serves tea or fights an opponent—gesture, language, song, costume, blocking, and masks all play a role in the act of showing).

The main goal here is to develop a representational theater without illusion (or illusions that are intentionally broken) by using *Verfremdungseffekte*. In a note on Chinese acting from 1935 Brecht states: "Daß der junge Schauspieler zunächst gezwungen wird, den alten zu imitieren, besagt nicht, daß sein Spiel zeitlebens eine Imitation sein wird [...] Es war schwer, das Alte zu können, und er konnte es. Und er hat

⁸⁷ Discussion of speech acts and the *Gestus* will resurface in subsequent chapters.

⁸⁸ See the monograph by scientist Desmond Morris, *Gestures* (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), xi-xii. See also Morris's other studies: *Bodytalk* (1994) and *Bodywatching* (1985).

seine Neuerung aus dem Alten zu entwickeln.”⁸⁹ Such modes of representation must also imitate in order to defamiliarize. The *Verfremdungseffekt* therefore becomes an essential component of the *Gestus* by making something strange through the conscious and repeated effort to imitate what is familiar and common. This point of irritation or strangeness caused by the *Verfremdungseffekt* provides a space where the spectator can then begin to grasp the significance of the *Gestus*.⁹⁰ These are citations that carry meaning within a historically and socially recognizable set of patterns. Such practices reshaped, and in some cases denied fully, the spectator’s prior experience for understanding theatrical representation. By historicizing the play’s material, disrupting continuity for the spectator, and developing unconventional techniques for actors to show their craft, Brecht attempted to break traditional notions of how art relates to reality and to re-function it for the present.

Within the focus of this study, photography and photographs also have roles to play. As shown previously, Brecht was aware of the theories and debates surrounding photography and used them advantageously in his works to both critique and engage. He knew that, for instance, a photograph could only show what existed at a given moment, not how things function historically or how people relate to one another. This means that a photograph represents or shows what existed or happened, not what is possible. For his

⁸⁹ Brecht, “Die Beibehaltung der Gesten durch verschiedene Generationen,” BFA 22.1: 127-28.

⁹⁰ See Birgit Althans, “Befremdete Gesten. Von der Macht des Pädagogischen in politisch-medialen Inszenierungen,” *Die Geste in Erziehung, Bildung und Sozialisation*, eds. Christoph Wulf, Birgit Althans, et al. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2011), 270.

purposes, especially in the projects examined in this study, photographs were the material objects that could allow him to display details or analyze and narrate the particulars of history. In the model books of the Berliner Ensemble, the production photographs meticulously document the processes in staging epic theater, and in turn, invite closer scrutiny and draw attention to important visual turning points in the scenes. The image-text combinations in the *Arbeitsjournale* and *Kriegsfibel* challenge the reader's understanding of contemporary history and question the reader's concept and access to "knowledge" (what is known and unknown or asking "for whom?"). Including photographic images in these works is not an attempt to represent or imitate how to stage epic theater or the day-to-day realities of Brecht's life in exile, nor is it an attempt to produce a War World II photobook similar to others in this genre. If we follow Oesmann's assertion quoted above that representation—in the Brechtian sense—also provides space for alterity and difference, then we begin to realize why and how photographs attracted his critical eye and were a part of his overall concept of visual representation and perception of reality.

W. J. T. Mitchell suggests that we define mimesis in a different way than simply "representation." Taken a step further, his definition is more in line with what Brecht sought to accomplish in his break with the traditional forms of representation towards building a critical audience that poses questions and recognizes cause and effect. For Mitchell, mimesis and representation should be seen within a dialectical structure, "as relationship, as process, as the relay mechanism in exchanges of power, value, and publicity."⁹¹ Brecht was interested foremost in action and results, not so much in theories

⁹¹ Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 420.

and speculations. He proposed practicable ways in which society could change through an engagement with art that did not represent a mimetic view of the world. Other theater practitioners have followed, from Heiner Müller and Dea Loher in Germany, Caryl Churchill and Mark Ravenhill in the United Kingdom, to Tony Kushner and David Mamet in the United States. Within the context of Brecht's work, we cannot speak of one concrete definition or application, but rather "realisms" in the plural, where the spectator recognizes the political and historical questions of struggle, as well as the underlying social problems at play.⁹² Brecht's formulation "for whom?" not only speaks to the access to knowledge and history, but also to the questions of whose reality, who benefits, and why. Realism is a *Haltung*—engaging current events with an eye on history—not the creation of realistic atmosphere as seen in nineteenth-century bourgeois Realism. Representation in the epic theater is first exposing society, not just imitating it, then providing the audience transformative tools with which to break through the "subjective mirrors" of art.⁹³ Effective representation makes the spectator aware and able to distinguish differences. Of course, as with all frameworks, problems and contradictions exist. Some may remark that Brecht's is not theater anymore, but an education class. There may be some truth to this. Is the epic theater too sophisticated, too subtle, or does it expect too much from the average theater-goer? Was this theater for the working class as Brecht envisioned it? Does epic theater actually rehearse that which it attacks?⁹⁴

⁹² Marc Silberman, "The Politics of Representation: Brecht and the Media," *Theater Journal* 39:4 (December 1987): 452.

⁹³ See Brecht, "Kleines Organum für das Theater," BFA 23: 65-97.

⁹⁴ Roland Barthes's criticism, cited in Oesmann, *Staging History*, 45.

Ultimately, Brecht wished to bring about moments of insight. He was also aware that to overhaul the theater institutions of his time, he could not afford to lose sight of the reason why most attend plays—to be entertained! Therefore, Brecht’s experiments were attempts to fuse together entertainment and performance aspects with his worldview;⁹⁵ in other words, making the audience laugh while simultaneously teaching how to read against the grain and challenge comfort zones. Brecht’s techniques of the *Verfremdungseffekt* and the *Gestus* function as mediators of reality and position the spectator outside of that reality into the role of observer. Brecht did not want to imitate life so much as he wanted to present possible alternatives and “make visible” the contradictions underlying so-called truths.

⁹⁵ Brecht, “Über die Literarisierung der Bühne,” BFA 22.1: 265-66.

Chapter Three

Brecht, Epic Theater, and the Visual: The Model Books of the Berliner Ensemble

Upon first glance many theater practitioners, directors, dramaturges, actors, set designers, and theater scholars may view the theater production models produced at the Berliner Ensemble beginning in the late 1940s as fairly straightforward “how-to” manuals to deliver Brecht’s and others’ plays to the stage. This assumption is not completely incorrect—but it does not encompass the entire story either. After the founding of the Berliner Ensemble acting troupe in East Berlin in January 1949, which performed in Wolfgang Langhoff’s Deutsches Theater until 1954, when it moved permanently to the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, Brecht was keenly aware of the possibilities for a renewed postwar German “Theater des wissenschaftlichen Zeitalters.” To accomplish this, it would take a concerted effort to not only present the public with a different way to interpret plays, but also come up with new modes to exhibit the production problems and possible solutions for staging plays.

Therein lies the great significance of the *Modellbücher*. In essence, these are bimedial production records of what was done in the name of praxis and experiment as well as caution against what not to do—again, in terms of showing what has already been done. Brecht and others were not interested in producing a “bible” of sorts to solidify his hold on future productions of his plays; in fact, turning his plays into “museum pieces” was the very last thing he could have endorsed. Each model book is inherently a limited entity in terms of what it could produce. Brecht was aware of these shortcomings from the beginning, but instead of shying away from this, he used the *Modellbücher* to reflect

on problems and highlight innovations. It was not sufficient simply to show others how those at the Berliner Ensemble staged one particular production at a given point in time at a particular theater house under a certain set of conditions. In other words, it is important to recognize the multiple ways in which we can engage with and actively interpret the model books, to search for how one can stage plays differently and learn from that process. Although the production photographs and textual commentaries catalogue the rehearsals at the Berliner Ensemble, they encourage us to see visual turning points differently, ask questions, and find new ways of representing these significant moments on stage. Just as the epic actor turns to the audience and tells them to look at what happens on stage and to be aware that they are in the theater, the model books address the theater practitioners in a similar way: “See what we have done, and now do it differently.” To treat the model books as explicit instruction guides defeats the purpose especially regarding the visual materials: the photographs show how and to what extent the actors are hindered in their actions when dealing with others on stage.

The following chapter attempts to introduce the *Modellbücher* to a wider audience that may not be familiar with their inception and intended use. The first section reaches back to discuss the developments in the genre of theater photography during the turn of the century to examine why such practices not only became increasingly popular but also changed how plays were staged. The second section transitions to the links between Brecht’s interest in photographs and his collaborator Ruth Berlau’s occupation with photography, showing how this working relationship centered on photographs of Brecht’s plays. Section three provides a detailed anatomy of a model book using the example of the *Couragemodell* (1949). The final section, “Epic Theater and (Epic) Photography”

traces the connections and affinities shared between Brecht's conceptions of the epic theater with that of the theoretical underpinnings of the photographic medium, and argues, within the context of the model books, that epic theater may be best analyzed through photographic means.

I. Theater Photography as Emergent Genre

During the first decades of the twentieth century many theater companies in Germany experimented with photography in a wide array of tasks. Theater practitioners in the 1920s such as Max Reinhardt and Erwin Piscator not only approved of its use, but also actively pursued a course for its inclusion into the everyday workings of theater life. Parallel to the development of more advanced photographic technologies and equipment was the development of theater photography itself, discussed in many writings about photography as "Hilfsmittel der Theaterarbeit" due to its apparent ability to document stage productions and rehearsals and to record visual information for actors and directors.⁹⁶ Previously regarded mainly as one dramaturgical tool among many others, the burgeoning field quickly became its own subgenre of photography that proved indispensable to theater practitioners. Photographs of dramatic performances had the potential to create new and productive possibilities for the modern stage.

Some of the earliest scholarly work exclusively examining the subject of theater photography and its value for the modern theater dates to this time. In 1925 an article

⁹⁶ Anke Spötter, *Theaterfotografie der Zwanziger Jahre an Berliner Bühnen. Gestaltung und Gebrauch eines Mediums* (Berlin: Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte, 2003), 214.

published in the journal *Das Theater* was one of the first alluding to the new advantages to be gained from using theater photographs in the production process.

Der Schauspieler bekommt so Gelegenheit, zu sehen, wie er sich wirklich während des Spiels bewegt, welches sein Ausdruck, seine Stellung ist, er kann daraus lernen und an den Bildern studieren. Der Regisseur kann die Photos in sein Regiebuch einkleben und für spätere Wiederaufführungen das Bild der Vorstellung in allen wesentlichen Einzelheiten festhalten.⁹⁷

Theater scholar and critic Till differentiates between the use of candid theater photography for actors and directors (“ungestellte Theaterphotographie”⁹⁸) and photography which is posed, the latter a technique on which Brecht would later elaborate and which he would eventually utilize in the model books. Candid photography focuses on spontaneity rather than composition, on the immersion of a photographer within events rather than on setting up a staged situation or on lengthy preparations. This approach is unplanned, immediate, and unobtrusive, which contrasts with photography in such forms as carefully staged portrait photography, landscape photography, or object photography. In the case of theater photography, the candid shots serve different purposes depending on the needs of their users. Actors employ it as a tool for learning how to be self-critical; directors and dramaturges see it mainly as a visual memory aid for future stage productions, which may be unrelated to the director’s momentary work on the play.

⁹⁷ Till, “Momentphotographie im Theater,” *Das Theater* 1 (1925): 18.

⁹⁸ Language used by Spötter, taken from Till, and Hans Böhm. See Böhm, “Neue Wege der Photographie auf der Bühne,” *Photographische Korrespondenz* 62:4 (1926): 197-200.

Fritz Engel and Hans Böhm examine this significant difference between the actor's and director's treatment of candid theater photographs in their book *Berliner Theaterwinter* (1927). Ideally, candid theater photography is a more complete documentation of the stage production: "Photographiert man aber während des fortlaufenden Spiels, so kann man begreiflicherweise alle Szenen lückenlos auf die Platte bannen und damit ein geschlossenes Bild von seiner Entwicklung geben."⁹⁹ In his concluding essay, "Photographierte Theatergeschichte," Böhm highlights the use of theater photography for the production value of plays and makes a case for its importance to their analysis by linking modern theater history to the photographic medium and the staging process that lends itself to be photographed. The volume, which contains "eine reiche Ausbeute von wertvollstem Bildmaterial,"¹⁰⁰ introduces the photographs as part of a visual narrative. Theater photography, Böhm says, is a "Kommunikationsmedium" which acts as a vital means of communication between actor and director in their respective studies of the play:

Es sei hervorgehoben, daß so mancher Regisseur sich mit größtem Nutzen dieser Bilder bedient hat, um an Hand von ihnen bei einer Umbesetzung oder bei einer Einstudierung des gleichen Stücks am anderen Orte den neuen Darstellern ihre Aufgabe ungemein rasch und unmißverständlich begreiflich zu machen.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Hans Böhm, *Berliner Theaterwinter: 90 Bilder aus 55 Stücken*, eds. Fritz Engel and Hans Böhm (Berlin: Eigenbrödler, 1927), 90.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 90.

The authors showcase 55 plays from the contemporary Berlin theater season from 1926 through the spring of 1927, complete with photographs, commentary, and analysis of the plays. Not only was the sizeable Berlin theater scene during the 1920s lively and dynamic—“niemals steht die Mühle [des Theaterlebens] still”—but one can also readily sense the appetite with which many Berliners visited the numerous theater houses in the city, searching for life on the stage in its myriad forms, wanting to find the next “Reizung” and “freudige, erregende Überraschung” behind the stage curtain.¹⁰²

According to Engel, the public also needs an outlet that gives voice to its politics and community, one that if not found in a bowling alley, or on the radio, or even in the cinema, will exist in the “[...] Welt des wirklichen Wunders und der wundervollen Unwirklichkeit, Führerin für Auge und Ohr zu gemeinsamem Genuß und vollkommene Loslösung vom Roboter des Werkeltags: das Theater!”¹⁰³ The volume contains an abundance of photographs, 99 in all, representing not only stage performances, but also the diverse experiences of theater life highlighted in the volume, such as theater house façades, the drop-off and pick-up areas outside theater entranceways, the neon signage and advertising, customers in queue at theater box offices, and theater audiences during a performance. *Berliner Theaterwinter* also lists major names of the 1926-1927 season, complete with actors, directors, playwrights, popular plays, and theaters in Berlin producing those plays, such as: Theater am Nollendorfplatz, Volksbühne, Deutsches Theater, Staatstheater, Theater am Kurfürstendamm, Schillertheater, and the Staatsoper, among others.

¹⁰² Fritz Engel, *Berliner Theaterwinter*, 7.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 8.

During the first decades of the twentieth century the frequency of visually recording theater productions was increasing, sparking debate among those in theater circles about how to best use emergent visualization technology to its fullest potential. The polemics centered mostly on the introduction of new cameras and stage lighting in theater houses. Till reflects in his 1925 article “Momentphotographie” on the technical developments of modern cameras and their effects on the work habits of photographers.¹⁰⁴ Ultimately, this technical progress freed many photographers from the shackles of the “Fotoprobe” and so-called “Atelierfotografie,” or the lengthy studio process of creating the perfect conditions for a posed photograph. During the 1920s these developments in technology, such as more precise lenses, faster shutter speeds, and more durable internal camera parts, spawned new interest in theater photography from the illustrated press, eager to incorporate spontaneous, unrehearsed, and candid shots in their respective journals and publications.

Prior to these changes in the world of photography, however, there was already an often cumbersome process in place for theater photographers. To satisfy readers’ increasing demands to include production images as well as the photojournalist’s own need to showcase his work to the public, theaters began to open their doors either before or after formal opening nights, granting access for photo shoots. The play was presented often in its entirety, followed by a series of individual scenes arranged for the sole purpose of having them photographed (“Abfotografieren”). Neither the theater houses

¹⁰⁴ See Spötter for more on technical aspects of early cameras, especially the Ermanox, a German-made camera that utilized new lenses, faster shutter speeds, and better internal parts, making “available light” photography a real possibility.

producing the plays nor the press or photographers shooting these scenes truly benefited from this situation, because it resulted in a stark restriction of theater access for some and a limited selection of motifs for those photographers who were able to take shots under these conditions.

A photographer who was unfortunate enough not to receive the privilege of an exclusive invitation from a theater to shoot at a premiere had to deal with the added disadvantage of competition from other photographers during his shoot. Due to the congestion of photographers crowding the stage, it was exceedingly difficult for any number of reasons: for any one photographer to single out and correctly apply lighting to any single moment, to engage with the blocking constellations as they occurred on stage, or to be able to position one's apparatus freely without sacrificing the shot's integrity. Much of the artistic work was achieved in the darkroom in the post-production development process—light exposure, retouching, selection or cropping of negatives, etc.—done after the event took place.

Within this context Till reiterates his arguments that the technical progress of cameras in the 1920s (especially the Ermanox since 1924) is to be understood as advancing the artistic and professional freedom of theater photographers, whose way of working and work schedule became more flexible and truer to the production process:

Bislang war es notwendig, [...] nach der Generalprobe oder einer Abendaufführung die Schauspieler zu einer separaten Versammlung auf der Bühne mühsam zusammenzutrommeln, eine mehr oder weniger gelungene Gruppe zu konstruieren und dann, wenn alle Beteiligten schon recht überdrüssig und schlecht gelaunt waren, unter Zuhilfenahme des

feuerwehrbewachten Blitzlichtes oder einiger vom technischen Personal gegen Geld und gute Worte herbeigeschleppter Scheinwerfer das sogenannte Szenenbild auf die Platte zu bannen.¹⁰⁵

The Ermanox, and later the Leica camera, were considered very handy and manageable compared to the earlier plate cameras (“Plattenkamera” mentioned above), used for example by August Sander, which Till wittily calls bulky and unproductive; for many, the “Plattenkamera” was an impediment during the photographing process. Aside from needing the “assistance of firefighters” with the lighting apparatus, or bribing technical experts, photographers using older cameras also had to deal with disgusted, crabby actors, and theater personnel. All this could lead to disaster for the photographer, who had no guarantee of producing anything worth printing. The newer cameras afforded photographers more mobility and speed by being lighter and smaller, and due to the better, quieter shutters they were able to capture shots during the performances without disturbing actors, the audience, or theater crews. Photographers had newfound artistic freedom to choose their shots more carefully, allowing for greater control and better-quality photographs. The development of camera technology directly impacted the way in which theater photographers conceived of their craft, providing stage photographs with the ability to capture visual spontaneity and acting, not just caricature or actor portraits.

Although Till extols the virtues of the new technological advances in photography mainly because of the freedom in positioning the camera apparatus, he also alludes to the disadvantages brought about by these very developments. Despite the greater light sensitivity of the new lenses, most modern cameras, including the Ermanox and Leica,

¹⁰⁵ Till, “Momentphotographie im Theater,” 17.

were still not advanced enough to fully capture the true lighting conditions on contemporary theater stages. As a result, most photographs had to be taken during run-throughs of the play when the stage was brightly lit, which presented various other problems that had nothing to do with lighting. With color-filtered stage lighting, the black and white filmstock in the cameras required longer exposure times to get enough available light for a properly legible photograph. These images with longer exposure times were sometimes overexposed or led to blurry (“unscharf”) or harsh (“verzeichnet”) photographs.¹⁰⁶

Approximately one year after Till published his theses regarding the merits and advances in the genre of theater photography, critics and photographers such as Hans Böhm and Maximilian Karnitschnigg were once again interested in examining the artistic divergence between candid and posed theater photography. Their theoretical dispute was chronicled and played out in the *Photographische Korrespondenz*, a publication that dealt with issues pertaining to photography from its birth through its contemporary incarnations. Among other topics, Böhm and Karnitschnigg discussed the aesthetics of candid and posed shots and their apparent differences in visual content. This was a thematic thread that runs through most of the literature on early theater photography in Germany and would be later reexamined during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s with questions about the aesthetic and practical use values of photography in general.

Karnitschnigg offers two contributions in the 1926 *Photographische Korrespondenz*. His essay, “Über Bühnen- und Szenenphotographie,” argues for the technique of posed theater photography and emphasizes the necessity of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 18.

“photographische Bildgestaltung” over the importance of a photograph’s visual content, focusing mainly on images of individual scenes.¹⁰⁷ In the second of two articles, “Zur Frage der Bühnen- und Szenenphotographie,” he strengthens his critique of candid theater photography and its technique of photographing central moments of action on stage.¹⁰⁸ Karnitschnigg references the technical deficits of candid photography first mentioned by Till—that candid photos can only be used with bright lighting and possess no “Tiefenschärfe” or depth of focus. To artificially compensate for the depth of focus when shooting candid photos, the shot axis is extended by positioning the camera at an oblique angle from the side of the stage from one fixed camera standpoint. This action leads to distortions, according to Karnitschnigg. Image composition that is purposefully coordinated by the photographer is essential, one that does not exclude the photographer’s intervention in the scene on stage.¹⁰⁹ This, according to Karnitschnigg, represents the way of working for the posed theater photographer, one who places his subjects in predetermined, fixed situations and operates within the parameters of standard theater lighting as needed.

For both candid and posed theater photographs an essential compositional characteristic is the distribution of lighting on stage (“Lichtführung”). Karnitschnigg rejects outright the artificially bright lighting apparatuses normally required by

¹⁰⁷ Maximilian Karnitschnigg, “Über Bühnen- und Szenenphotographie,”

Photographische Korrespondenz 62:4 (1926): 88.

¹⁰⁸ Karnitschnigg, “Zur Frage der Bühnen- und Szenenphotographie,” *Photographische Korrespondenz* 62:4 (1926): 200-02.

¹⁰⁹ Karnitschnigg, “Über Bühnen- und Szenenphotographie,” 89.

photographers shooting candidly as well as those using flash photography, which can produce a flat or washed out photograph of the scene.¹¹⁰ In contrast, he argues for reproducing the lighting as seen on stage with posed theater photographs, which often requires manipulation after the fact: “Die Farbe und Art werden hierbei zumeist ganz wesentlich von der Beleuchtung der betreffenden Szene bei der Vorstellung selbst abweichen müssen, um im photographischen Sinne den gleichen Eindruck hervorrufen zu können.”¹¹¹ Posed theater photographs therefore rely on greater license to manipulate the original conditions during the development process. Although Karnitschnigg accepts the manipulation of original lighting in posed photographs, he does not understand a photographer’s work as a form of “selbstschöpferisches Kunstschaffen.” Acceptable artistic interventions aim to reproduce the atmosphere on the stage and can be achieved by manipulating theater lighting and stage setting. To that effect, Karnitschnigg also rejects theater photography that concentrates solely on actors or just the stage setting.

The notion that one must manipulate lighting to document the stage provoked Hans Böhm’s response in the 1926 *Photographische Korrespondenz*. His essay, “Neue Wege der Photographie auf der Bühne,” directly confronts Karnitschnigg’s arguments for posed theater photography and provides the counterarguments for the impossibility of Karnitschnigg’s methods in the photographer’s everyday professional life.¹¹² Böhm grounds his reproach in the theater directors’ lack of respect and general disinterest in the theater photographer’s work, who was never allowed the time needed to photograph

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Hans Böhm, “Neue Wege der Photographie auf der Bühne,” 197-200.

according to Karnitschnigg's standards. Candid theater photography provided practitioners and theorists like Böhm (and Till before him) a greater degree of freedom with their art. His goal was, first, to be able to determine on his own which scenes to photograph, and second, to avoid the practices of post-editing negatives and fixing lighting issues after the fact in the darkroom, thereby bringing the visual content—the action and setting actually seen on stage—to the fore and minimizing the more formal, compositional aspects of posed photography. To accomplish this, Böhm expended a lot of time and effort in selecting his photographs from the many negatives of a photo shoot.

Moreover, instead of the lengthy post-production process involved with retouching posed theater photographs, candid photographers spent much of their effort in the pre-planning stages before the photo shoot. Böhm details this process as follows: first, the photographer gets to know the stage production and makes notes on various photographable moments in the play; second, the photographer takes more photographs than needed of a particular scene upon another visit to the production. The large number of photographs provides a wide selection of negatives from which to choose, since not all of the images are acceptable due to poor lighting conditions or technical problems. Böhm then purposefully chooses the best scenic moment based on his own artistic criteria.

Although Böhm was an ardent advocate and practitioner of candid theater photography, he did not rule out the occasional post-shoot manipulation in the darkroom, conducting experiments with chemicals and film or enlarging aspects of the material he gained from shooting. Böhm ignores the fact that choosing the best moments of the stage production or the camera perspective to suit his own photographic principles could be seen as an overreaching, artistic intrusion on the part of the photographer.

The fragmentary characteristics of candid photographs—which according to Karnitschnigg are unable to reproduce the actual theater setting—correspond to the ways in which the audience perceives the play and have a documentary function. Every well-planned photograph that records the essential action of a scene is for Böhm akin to creating a new perspective on the scene, an alternate reality which is not the exact reproduction of the scene per se: “Bringt aber der Photograph nach der Methode Karnitschnigg eigene künstlerische Werte zur Geltung, so ist es nicht mehr die Wiedergabe des betreffenden Szenenbildes, sondern eine Paraphrase desselben.”¹¹³ For the candid theater photographer, the goal is not to compose the fine minutia of each photograph; rather, the photographer must envision a broader concept for the visual impact of the image, combining “das Abbild von Realität” with essential moments of the scene.¹¹⁴ In this vein, candid theater photographs have a higher degree of authenticity. In his decision to pursue candid photographs, Böhm positions the use of theater photography above his own work as an artist and photographer without denying his work any artistic character.

One final divergence between Böhm (candid) and Karnitschnigg (posed) is the aspect of visual perception. How does one understand the visual elements in the photograph, and why are these important for understanding the play? Böhm identifies the actor as the primary focus of candid theater photography; the stage setting itself and the photograph’s composition is secondary. The “Abbild des Spiels” or the reproduction of the play—didactic for the actor, illustrative or documentary in nature for theater visual historiography—must come first.

¹¹³ Böhm, “Neue Wege der Photographie auf der Bühne,” 199.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Der Künstler will sich deutlich erkennen, sein Mienenspiel beurteilen können, weil er ja aus den Bildern, wenn sie wirklich während des Spiels aufgenommen sind, sehr viel lernen kann, weil sie gewissermaßen der Spiegel des Schauspielers sind. Aber darüber hinaus will vor allem die Theatergeschichte klare, alle Einzelheiten in voller Realistik zeigende Bilder [...] Stimmung kommt, wenn sie vom Regisseur hineingelegt worden ist, auch im Bild zur Geltung.¹¹⁵

Thus far, the use of photographs in the institution of the theater to accurately record essential scenic moments, to visually promote and publicize contemporary theater productions, and to aid dramaturges and actors in staging the plays was not necessarily connected. Many considered these to be separate enterprises with different standards and methods, beholden to the realm of photography but not the theater. Only in the 1940s, with the development and publication of the *Modellbücher*, did the emergent genre of theater photography become so intimately linked to the productions themselves, to the point where “die Kunst des Photographierens Teilnehmerin der Theaterwissenschaft [wird].”¹¹⁶

II. *The Necessity of the Image: Brecht’s Photographer Ruth Berlau*

“Ich habe keine Schüler, ich habe Angestellte.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Fritz Engel, *Berliner Theaterwinter*, 9.

¹¹⁷ Brecht, cited in Grischa Meyer, *Fotografin an Brechts Seite* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 2003), 23. Because Ruth Berlau left behind the quote, it is not found in the BFA.

The *Modellbücher* were joint efforts for stage productions on the part of theater practitioners at the Berliner Ensemble.¹¹⁸ They consist mainly of book-length photo-documentaries assembled by Brecht's long-time Danish colleague and collaborator Ruth Berlau (1906-1974) in combination with commentary and captions by Brecht. Professional photographer and writer Grischa Meyer was one of the first to research these production models. Meyer connects the production and inception of the theater photographs with Brecht's interest in photography; as this engagement grew between the 1930s and 1950s, he became increasingly impressed with photography's capability to store information in the form of images, "die den Probenprozess und die Umstände der Produktion [der Aufführungen] abbildeten."¹¹⁹ Each sequence of theater photographs is intended to guide directors and dramaturges of Brecht's plays in their own productions.

Meyer cites the source as BBA 2166/52, a folder with the transcription of conversations between Hans Bunge and Berlau. The quote contains two parts; above is Brecht's response to Berlau's perceptions of how he dealt with his collaborators at the Berliner Ensemble toward the end of his life. Her initial criticism, which prompted Brecht's response was: "Du bist nicht mehr der weise Lehrer, der Du warst. Du bist grob zu den Leuten und hast gegen den und den Antipathien ohne Grund."

¹¹⁸ See Figures 1 and 2 for a listing of the Brecht Archive's model book holdings, both in complete and manuscript (fragmentary) form.

¹¹⁹ Grischa Meyer, "Berlau fotografiert bei Brecht. Eine Zusammenarbeit (mehr oder weniger)," *Brecht Yearbook* 30 (2005): 189.

The photographs document the highlights in the details and notes of Brecht's own production process.¹²⁰

Theories and methods from early theater photographers and writers such as Hans Böhm and Till—proponents of candid theater photography as constitutive elements of staging, publicizing, and analyzing contemporary drama—were adapted and implemented by the Berliner Ensemble under the direction of Brecht and Helene Weigel. There is no record of Brecht crossing paths with them, although they all would have frequented many of the same theaters and plays in Berlin during the 1920s and early 1930s. There is mention of Fritz Engel—co-author of *Berliner Theaterwinter*—in *Das Wedekindbuch*, a 1914 anthology about Frank Wedekind's plays that Brecht had on his shelves and that remains today in his *Nachlassbibliothek*.¹²¹

Brecht pursued the very goals espoused by Till, Engel, and Böhm decades earlier as he developed his concept of the model book. On one hand, he made use of the photographs contained in the model books to (re-)examine his own work as a director and dramaturg. On the other hand, it was his intention to show other theater companies—those potentially wanting to engage with his plays—his own staging processes through

¹²⁰ These comments are found in Brecht's lengthy collection of "Anmerkungen zu den Stücken" in BFA Volume 24, as well as the published model books in BFA Volume 25.

¹²¹ See Joachim Friedenthal, *Das Wedekindbuch*. This volume can be found at the BBA among others in Brecht's personal library [BBA call number: N 02/027], and contains contributions from Brecht's contemporaries such as Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Stefan Zweig, and Hermann Bahr.

the visual medium of photography.¹²² Brecht understood that an image could (and most often did) produce any number of possible interpretations and/or captions. His goal was not to hinder this productive interaction with the user of the model books, but rather to harness and benefit from the documentary powers of photography. The careful selection of images showing essential moments on stage allows Brecht to guide future dramaturges on what to look for and how to further develop the epic theater. To that end, the notes and photographs offer practical suggestions for the potential problems of staging Brecht's plays. However, the model books do not exist solely to provide solutions to staging problems, as Brecht states: "Bei dem Studium [der Modelle], einer Anzahl von Erörterungen und Erfindungen beim Proben des Stücks, sollte man angesichts gewisser Lösungen von Problemen hauptsächlich der Probleme ansichtig werden."¹²³ More important for Brecht is the fact that problems plainly exist and need to be addressed.

Using the methods called for by Böhm and Till before him, Brecht's model books connect candid theater photography methods in action with the concept of functional authenticity, which to an extent factored out the artistic impulses of the photographer to capture the essential moments on stage. To ensure this photographic documentation, Brecht employed his long-time companion and amateur photographer Ruth Berlau to visually record the production process of his plays. As this practice of photographing the production process took hold at the Berliner Ensemble, it was understood that Berlau, under Brecht's tutelage, was the company's unofficial photographer. Brecht gave instructions on what to shoot and had strict specifications that Berlau not "insert" herself

¹²² Spötter, *Theaterfotografie der Zwanziger Jahre an Berliner Bühnen*, 215.

¹²³ Brecht, *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 172.

into the photographs. Berlau, for her part, made attempts to capture only what Brecht wanted to see, remaining at a distance from the dramatic material she was photographing: “I photograph with a listening aid that I can turn off when *logos* (word, teaching) assails *psyche* (the soul).”¹²⁴ The professional practice of refraining from changing elements to be documented photographically—for example, she was forbidden to alter lighting or to alter the basic arrangements of the scene—was one not taken lightly, and it worked in theory. She writes in the introductory notes to the *Antigonemodell 1948*: “Eine Verbesserung des Beleuchtungsapparats ist daher für das zeitgemäße Theater unbedingt notwendig,” and “die [photographischen] Aufnahmen konnten unter den gegebenen Umständen nicht viel mehr tun, als die Gruppenführung und einzelne Haltungen zu zeigen.”¹²⁵ Brecht sought to visually document the epic theater and used Ruth Berlau as his camera eye for that purpose.

The oftentimes less than adequate lighting sources in the theater houses forced Brecht and Berlau to confront problematic situations directly related to lighting. Specifically, these issues led to compositional and technical after-effects from inadequate depth of focus or sloppy-looking photographs due to quick camera and/or lighting movements:

Die Fotos [...] sind, wie die meisten während einer Aufführung
genommenen Fotos, in einem Punkt täuschend: die Hintergründe

¹²⁴ Berlau, *Living for Brecht: The Memoirs of Ruth Berlau*, ed. Hans Bunge, trans.

Geoffrey Skelton (New York: Fromm, 1987), 233-34. [*Brechts Lai-Tu*, ed. Hans Bunge. (Köln: Luchterhand, 1985)].

¹²⁵ Berlau, *Antigonemodell*, BFA 25: 82-83.

erscheinen dunkel, während sie in Wirklichkeit hell und klar waren. [...] Der Beleuchtungsapparat des Deutschen Theaters ist jedoch zu schwach, in der Fotografie das matte, goldene Licht zu zeigen, das die ganze Bühne badete.¹²⁶

Brecht's critique of the photographic end-product here has less to do with what is visible (actors, stage setting, gestures, etc.), centering instead on what is not visible (the apparently brightly lit stage) due to poor lighting and technological difficulties involved with light sensitivity of the photographic film itself. He does not call the photograph's visual content into question; instead, he mentions the means of production surrounding the photographs as "deceptive points." Berlau echoes Brecht's concerns quoted above, stating in a footnote to an essay she authored on theater photography: "Allerdings zeigen die Bilder [theater photographs]—da der Beleuchtungsapparat dafür nicht ausreicht—dann nicht Hintergrundprojektionen und daß die gesamte Bühne des Berliner Ensembles immer hell ist!"¹²⁷ In another note Berlau states this dialectically: "Besonders viel sagt

¹²⁶ Brecht, *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 172. In this quote, Brecht specifically mentions the lighting apparatus at the Deutsches Theater of Max Reinhardt and later Wolfgang Langhoff. Brecht and the Berliner Ensemble were rehearsing *Mutter Courage* here because the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm (later theatrical home to the BE) was not yet ready in 1949.

¹²⁷ Berlau, "Theaterfotografie," BFA 25: 533. This essay was published originally in Berlau, Brecht, and Palitzsch, et al., *Theaterarbeit. 6 Aufführungen des Berliner Ensembles*, ed. Helene Weigel (Berlin: Henschel, 1961), 345.

die Fotografie über die Beleuchtung aus,“¹²⁸ especially when it comes to the ways in which the abundance or lack of lighting on stage can affect the quality of the photograph. Brecht, however, was less disposed to discarding or discounting such blurry photographs based on the photographic film’s inability to properly record adequate levels of light.

To employ “Unschärfe,” or blurriness, as an aesthetic effect for the representation of movement on stage, as was the case in early dance photography during the 1920s, had been criticized by theater critics and photographers as a defect or a flaw.¹²⁹ Contrary to the negative statements made before him by Till, and Hans Böhm,¹³⁰ Brecht regarded the blurriness, or seeming imprecision, of action shots not as a technical defect, but rather as one of the various visual aspects emphasized by the photographs that is often missed by the human eye in real-time events on stage, one that actually aided the very act of accurately documenting his plays’ production process. According to Berlau, the “blurriness” of live action shots was not a characteristic for which candid theater photographers should strive. “Unschärfe” is simply an after-effect of capturing moving subjects in a confined space with controlled lighting. While it is not a necessary component of candid theater photographs, the blurry results in many of Berlau’s

¹²⁸ Berlau, “Theaterfotografie,” BFA 25: 532.

¹²⁹ Till, “Momentphotographie im Theater,” 17.

¹³⁰ Böhm also argues that the technological advancements made with newer (1920s) camera lenses had been able to offset many of the difficulties associated with theater lighting, in Engel/Böhm, *Berliner Theaterwinter: 90 Bilder aus 55 Stücken*, 89.

photographs do not actually hinder the main point: to show real human relations on stage.¹³¹

Brecht accepted the supposed lesser “quality” of theater photographs—here candid, live action shots—as a necessary component of the model books because they serve a specific purpose. In fact, according to Berlau, the model books were not made to show a flawlessly composed, sharp photographic set of images that convey unambiguous messages; these black-and-white photographs were not meant to show the epic theater as something merely “black and white.” Rather, they were meant to represent the most dynamic moments of the scene.¹³² The action photographs reproduced in the model books capture a wide array of examples: an actor’s entry to and exit from stage, an actor’s placement and movement during the scene, as well as scenery changes, and, most crucially, the gestures and interactions between the characters. These interactions are important for Brecht’s purposes, as they are the actions on stage that carry social meaning. The model books were never intended to be a step-by-step record of the production; rather, Brecht and Berlau proceeded discerningly, carefully selecting photographs that visually documented specific “*Drehpunkte*,” or turning points, as well as specific details in the scene.¹³³

¹³¹ Berlau, “Theaterfotografie,” BFA 25: 532-33.

¹³² Berlau states plainly: “So scheint *Schärfe* der Bilder nicht immer erstrebenswert.”

From Berlau, “Theaterfotografie,” BFA 25: 532.

¹³³ The “Drehpunkt” concept is further explored in the third section of this chapter on the *Couragemodell*.

Ruth Berlau may have been Brecht's close collaborator on most projects to photograph productions at the Berliner Ensemble, but she was not the only theater photographer to visually document Brecht's plays. Willi Saeger, who had been the "house photographer" of Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater and had worked at the Berliner Theater of Georg Kaiser, was a well-known theater photographer in Berlin during the Weimar years and into the postwar period in East Germany.¹³⁴ Brecht's preference for candid shots showing human interactions on stage can be seen in Saeger's candid shots from Brecht's productions. Unlike Berlau, whose proximity to Brecht was more about artistic collaboration than business transaction, Saeger's work with Brecht is exemplary for commercial reasons and highlights Brecht's use of production photographs prior to Berlau's later work on the model books at the Berliner Ensemble.

Saeger's experiences demonstrate his keen awareness of German theater throughout his lifetime career, and particularly in this case, his familiarity with Brecht's staging process. As early as 1928 Saeger was present at the rehearsals for the production of the *Dreigroschenoper* at Schiffbauerdamm. In 1931 he photographed the 16 August premiere of *Mann ist Mann*, directed by Brecht, Ernst Legal, and Caspar Neher at the Staatliches Schauspielhaus in Berlin. In that production, Peter Lorre was cast as Galy Gay, Paul Bildt as Fairchild, and Wolfgang Heinz, Theo Lingen, and Alexander Granach

¹³⁴ See Andreas Roßmann's assessment of Saeger's résumé and "Theaterbessesenheit": "Es gibt seit [Herbert] Jherings Tod (1977) sicher niemanden in [Berlin], der so viele Aufführungen gesehen hat wie Saeger." In Roßmann, "'Das Tollste bei Brecht war immer das Licht.' Ein Berliner Theaterleben. Der Fotograf (und Grenzgänger) Willi Saeger im Gespräch," *Theater heute* 10 (1981): 17.

as soldiers. In describing his experiences, Saeger relies on the facial expressions and stage arrangement of the actors in his production photos to explain how Brecht “verfremdete die Figuren radikal [und] machte Kriegsmonster aus den Soldaten,” presenting the misshapen soldiers on stage walking around on stilts—“damals eine Sensation!”¹³⁵ In 1961, after Brecht’s death, Saeger photographed *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* in Dresden—the GDR premiere. He also released his photographic work in various publications from the East German Henschel Verlag, the same publishing house that packaged and produced the *Theaterarbeit* volume from the Berliner Ensemble, as well as the model books from *Galileo* and *Mutter Courage* (1956 and 1958 respectively). Saeger’s photographs from Brecht’s plays and/or adaptations, mostly from stages in Berlin, also appear in *Theaterarbeit*.¹³⁶

In 1948/49, Saeger was present to photograph at the Deutsches Theater as Brecht, Helene Weigel, and guest director Erich Engel staged *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*. Various iconic photographs still remain from that shoot, including photographs of the play’s final scene in which Weigel, as Mother Courage, pulls the wagon around the stage. Saeger recalls the situation as follows:

Das Tollste bei Brecht war immer das Licht. Seine Proben waren beinahe eine Erholung, ein wahres Fressen für die Kamera, so daß sich nachher gestellte Großaufnahmen tatsächlich erübrigten. Brecht hatte sie [posed shots] auch nicht gern, schon vor 1933 nicht; auf den Versuch, die Figuren

¹³⁵ Saeger, cited in Roßmann, “‘Das Tollste bei Brecht war immer das Licht’,” 17.

¹³⁶ See *Theaterarbeit*, with Saeger’s photographs on page 60 (*Die Mutter*); 68, 73 (*Der Hofmeister*); and 195, 214 (*Biberpelz und roter Hahn*).

um den Planwagen der *Courage* zu arrangieren, reagierte er widerspenstig und rief: “Drücken Sie auf Ihren Auslöser!” Er liebte Bilder mit verwischten Bewegungen, auf Schwung und Dynamik legte er mehr Wert als auf Schärfe. Nur auf der Probe zur *Courage*, als er selbst den Wagen zog, konnte ich ihn nicht aufnehmen, weil es nur Arbeitslicht gab. Doch es gab noch keine empfindlichen Filme.¹³⁷

Saeger’s anecdote not only underscores the way in which Brecht operated as director and visual artist, but also details how Brecht helped revolutionize the techniques of theater photography; Saeger alludes to this later in his interview. This particular example demonstrates the extent to which Brecht preferred “dynamic” candid shots that captured movement or process over those with precision and technical focus. In this case, he insisted that Saeger snap the photograph at that very instant when his actors were gathering around Mother Courage’s wagon, turning what was supposed to be a posed photo shoot with characters into an experimental, candid moment, and thereby preserving as well as highlighting the spontaneity of the situation at hand. Could one see an underlying contradiction in the above interaction? Was this truly “spontaneous”? Was this photo shoot ever meant to be “posed”? The example demonstrates Brecht’s directorial process in actually planning, or at least anticipating the need, for candid photographic moments. Instead of understanding this as a contradiction in terms, Brecht sought to create and use these events advantageously, as teachable moments for his actors and collaborators—in a similar vein to the *Übungsstücke für Schauspieler*.¹³⁸ The

¹³⁷ Willi Saeger, in Roßmann, “Das Tollste bei Brecht war immer das Licht’,” 25.

¹³⁸ See Brecht’s other “practice pieces” in the *Messingkauf* fragments, BFA 22.2.

production photographs allow the reader to see how moments in the arduous staging process could be exploited for their didactic potential. Here, Brecht transforms the posed shoot into a practice piece for both actors and the photographer, a theatrical situation of human interaction on stage.

As the house photographer for many of Brecht's plays, Ruth Berlau accompanied him and her colleagues during the staging process, usually present for the entire rehearsal process.¹³⁹ Serving in that capacity allowed Berlau direct access to Brecht in and out of the theater, as well as the opportunity to document his staging theories being put into practice. She was given specific instructions by Brecht on what to shoot and why to shoot it. This professional (and personal) intimacy afforded her a complex understanding of his experimental ideas for the epic theater. Brecht had Berlau's ear and in most cases vice versa.¹⁴⁰ That is not to say that others surrounding him did not have a close understanding of his work; Helene Weigel helped conceptualize *Mother Courage*; Charles Laughton's collaboration on the Galileo character was so integral to the play's staging during Brecht's exile in California that Laughton's profile image opens the Galileo model book;¹⁴¹ Erich Engel, Carl Weber¹⁴² and others knew Brecht's epic theater through production experience.

¹³⁹ Berlau, "Theaterfotografie," BFA 25: 531-32.

¹⁴⁰ See Berlau's memoir, *Living for Brecht*, which details the many exchanges, both personal and professional, ranging from telephone conversations, letters, diary entries, and poems, etc.

¹⁴¹ See the *Galileo* model book, BFA 25: 7-69. Incidentally, the title for this model book bespeaks Laughton's importance for the role: *Aufbau einer Rolle. Laughtons Galilei*.

Berlau's primary tasks as Brecht's photographer were to capture and collect scenic images for closer scrutiny, thereby making his vision visible in the model books. Ancillary to this, she also functioned as his editorial "advisor" regarding the material photographs of the productions and in matters of photographic and visual theory. Brecht of course made the final decisions concerning what and how to photograph (Berlau fully accepted and encouraged this power dynamic), but often deferred to Berlau's technical experience for help and ideas. Surveying his many works dealing with photography, a larger pattern emerges: Brecht, taking the lead on defining its content, wrote most of the material, selected which images to include, etc.; Berlau, in her role as "Angestellte" and collaborator, photographed the rehearsals, productions, and scenes, chronicled this process, and occasionally provided explanations as to why or how things were carried out according to instructions. It also became customary for Brecht to include Berlau's notes in the final, published material of many works, i.e.: *Kriegsfiibel*, various model books, in professional correspondence pertaining to photographs taken for Berliner Ensemble productions that Berlau sent to Brecht (he mentions some of these exchanges in his letters¹⁴³), and for photographs in the *Theaterarbeit* volume. As Brecht's engagement and

¹⁴² See Carl Weber, "Brecht as Director," *TDR. Tulane Drama Review* 12:1 (Autumn 1967): 101-07. This *TDR* was a special issue devoted exclusively to Brecht. See also Carl Weber, "Brecht and the Berliner Ensemble – The Making of a Model," *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 175-92.

¹⁴³ For example, see various correspondences between Brecht and Berlau regarding the photographs from the American production of *Galileo*, *The Private Life of the Master*

interest in photography grew, so did the frequency with which Berlau's name was associated with the works mentioned above. She authored numerous primers and essays for his work with photography; that he would include her comments underscores his respect for and even his reliance on Berlau as his photographer, and on occasion even cajoled her into accepting her share of the credit and royalties (sometimes against her will!).¹⁴⁴

These collaborations help to explain aspects of their complicated relationship, both intimate and professional, and show that Berlau was very much hands-on during the decision-making, planning, and artistic process. Berlau demanded that Brecht compose

Race, or *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, detailed in letters from 1945-1947 found in BFA Volume 29. These include, but are not limited to, letter numbers 1185-86 (BFA 29: 360-61), 1195 (29: 367), 1264-65 (29: 432-33), 1273 (29: 437), 1275-77 (29: 438-89), 1449 (29: 567), and 1459 (29: 572-73).

¹⁴⁴ Berlau, *Living for Brecht*, 227. Many transcripts of Brecht and Berlau's telephone conversations are included in Berlau's memoir. Among those, one conversation from 3 November 1954 about royalties from publishing the *Antigonemodell 1948* illustrates this point well. Brecht says, "This is how I've done it: I take five percent, since it includes the play, you get five, and that leaves five to cover the photographic costs and the fees." Berlau replies, "I think that's wrong. The publishers [Henschelverlag] should pay the photo costs. You always take too little for yourself." See also Berlau, "Theaterfotografie," BFA 25: 532, where she states the need for higher honoraria for theater photographers.

“bridging verses” for a certain number of her photographs.¹⁴⁵ Others have deftly traced the tenuous working relationship between Brecht and Berlau (Sabine Kebir, Hans Bunge, Grischa Meyer). Much remains speculative about the origin of ideas surrounding Brecht’s work or who actually followed whom around the rehearsals at the Berliner Ensemble. One thing is clear, however: no name other than Berlau’s can be associated in such a fundamental and integral way with Brecht’s engagement with photography. Berlau is second only to Brecht himself among the collaborators at the Berliner Ensemble contributing textual materials and analyses in this area. Readers may find her words—sanctioned and undoubtedly redacted by Brecht—in the published *Modellbücher*, all of which specifically theorize from and use Berlau’s own photographs. She supplied short notes and lengthier essays in both the *Couragemodell* and *Antigonemodell* and contributed essays to *Theaterarbeit*, which she co-edited with others from the Berliner Ensemble.

Among those are two influential essays outlining the development and usefulness of the theater photographs found in Brecht’s oeuvre, especially in the model books. The first is “Modelle des Berliner Ensembles,” a short but definitive sketch of the creation and value of such a model book, drawing on her experiences photographing productions in Los Angeles (*Galileo*) and at the Berliner Ensemble; the second, “Theaterfotografie,” provides guidelines on how readers might use the essentials of Brecht’s model books,

¹⁴⁵ Berlau, *Living for Brecht*, 235. Berlau states: “The poet [Brecht] himself wrote the ‘bridging verses’ to my wretched photographs in the *Antigonemodell 1948*. I demanded them from him.”

detailed in a substantive four-part essay.¹⁴⁶ They both argue for the necessity of theater photography—specifically in the representation and analysis of epic theater—and connect the two visual media of theater and photography by means of a viable and practicable model of epic performance.¹⁴⁷

The “Modelle” essay is narrated in the first person plural. Although authored by Berlau as a representative of the Berliner Ensemble, it is in typical alignment with the collectivist thinking of Brecht’s theater writing and praxis (Brecht often wrote “wir” and “unser Theater,” as well as the “BE.”¹⁴⁸). For some, this aspect of promoting collective collaboration through studying individual examples is the most constructive benefit of the Ensemble’s model books.¹⁴⁹ It opens with matter-of-fact statements on the basic

¹⁴⁶ Berlau’s essay “Theaterfotografie” will also be used in a subsequent section of this chapter, touching upon theories of epic theater and the intersections of photography.

¹⁴⁷ Both of Berlau’s essays can be found in *Theaterarbeit*, and are also included in the BFA commentary to the *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 535-37 and 531-33, respectively.

¹⁴⁸ See Brecht’s many comments regarding the “kollektiver Schöpfungsprozess” in the prefaces of both the *Antigonemodell* (BFA 25: 76 f.) and the *Couragemodell*. See also Brecht, “Anhang zum Couragemodell: Die Benutzung des Modells,” BFA 25: 386-98.

¹⁴⁹ Welf Kienast, *Kriegsfibelmodell. Autorschaft und “kollektiver Schöpfungsprozess” in Brechts Kriegsfibel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2001). Kienast makes this “collectivist” argument for understanding both Brecht’s modus operandi for staging epic theater and his theoretical framework for interpreting Brecht’s works: “Die Modelle sind als modellhaft also vor allem dafür anzusehen, wie Brecht nach dem Krieg versucht, sein

composition of theater model books: their contents, how they were initially put together, and how to use them. Complementary notes, explanations of scenes, actors' experiences on stage, and accounts of discussions while "studying" and experimenting with the play also accompanied these photographs. First, Berlau lists the model book's architecture. Foremost for her, it consists of approximately 450-600 (sometimes more) photographic images of the stage settings. As photographer of many of the Berliner Ensemble productions she advocated for her interests, insuring that her photographs played a prominent role in the overall structure of the model books; this was, after all, her main contribution and her link to Brecht's work.¹⁵⁰ Not only did the Berliner Ensemble view the compilation of *Modellbücher* in principle as "überhaupt für empfehlenswert," but also as a didactic tool to be lent out to other theaters for practice and study of particular plays. Berlau then details step-by-step her work methods to obtain such an abundant quantity of photographs (usually numbering in the hundreds, even thousands!):¹⁵¹

durch das Exil zur zwangsweisen Individualität verurteiltes Schaffen systematisch am Kollektiv zu überprüfen," in Kienast, *Kriegsfiabelmodell*, 289.

¹⁵⁰ Berlau ruminates on her life's work: she never became a "cold-blooded, professional photographer," but instead lauded the artistic merits of the profession itself for "at least making efforts to present the truth. The photographer's profession is an important one. [...] All that is needed is for it to be properly appreciated, respected, and above all supported." See Berlau, *Living for Brecht*, 231-35.

¹⁵¹ See Brecht's short note "Fotografie" in the *Couragemodell*: "Aus mehreren tausend Fotos, samt und sonders während der Aufführungen genommen, existiert eine Auswahl

“Die Vorstellung kann mit zwei Leicas [brand of camera] an zwei Abenden durchfotografiert werden. Die Apparate müssen auf Stativen angebracht und mit Kabelauslösern versehen sein, damit man schnell und doch sicher viele Bilder erhält. Die Szenen müssen von ein und demselben Blickpunkt aus aufgenommen werden, da sonst die Modellbenutzer sich in den Positionen der Figuren nicht zurechtfinden.”¹⁵²

This textual description of the process of “Durchfotografieren” is further elucidated by a series of Berlau’s photographs taken during the staging of *Mutter Courage* (found in the *Theaterarbeit* edition, pages 294-95). The *Couragemodell* is replete with such scenic “Sequenzen” that are meant to visually recall important action sequences using an almost filmic technique, using multiple successive images and thereby making the stage setting visually “erzählbar.” In practice, the director determines which moments during the course of the play are most significant, retaining authoritative influence on what is ultimately photographed. In yet another limitation on the photographer’s scope for designing the shoot, the photographer should position both camera apparatuses in the same static location from a heightened, fixed podium laterally offset towards the middle of the auditorium. (If the theater house does not have some type of balcony or heightened level, a raised platform would then need to be built to accommodate the “Durchfotografieren.”) In contrast to the typical manner of taking theater photographs in the 1920s—still utilizing the “Plattenkamera”—technological efficiencies in lenses and

von etwa 800, die vom Archiv des Berliner Ensembles an Theatern ausgeliehen wird.”

BFA 25: 172.

¹⁵² Berlau, “Modelle des Berliner Ensembles,” BFA 25: 536.

chemical advances in the film material itself enabled the use of rolls of film, which not only significantly reduced the time required to change film, but also increased the sheer number of photographs.¹⁵³ The result led to fewer missed moments and more usable photographs. Dual cameras made it possible for the photographer to capture continuous shots on one fixed camera while an assistant attended to the other camera, loading more film for the next scene.

The height and positional requirements assure the photographer a series of consistent, candid shots for each scene to be recorded so that the model book user has a consistent orientation to the actors on stage. With this method the images can record depth of focus, and the stage arrangements can unfold plastically and graphically. The model books are also meant to engage the theater audience. Photographs taken from the elevated, fixed standpoint seen in the model books can assist the viewing audience with scenic images they might have incidentally missed while in the auditorium: “Die Modellbücher zeigen, wieviel dem Zuschauer in Theatern entgeht, deren Sitze nicht über dem Niveau der Bühne aufgestellt sind.”¹⁵⁴ One may be able to read a critical undertone to Berlau’s comment: taken word for word, are the audience members seated closest to the stage (here: “nicht über dem Niveau der Bühne”) unable to see the events because their physical proximity to the stage obstructs their view? Or does Berlau believe that those in the audience with the means to be able to sit in the front rows are actually “nicht

¹⁵³ Berlau explains the mathematics of her photo shoots: “An einem Abend werden 20 Filme genommen; jeder Film hat 36 Aufnahmen. Zwei Abende ergeben etwa 1500 Bilder.” See Berlau, “Modelle des Berliner Ensembles,” BFA 25: 536.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

über dem Niveau der Bühne,” or quite literally not able to fully grasp what happens to the characters on stage, perhaps without the aid of the photographs in the model books?

Brecht echoes Berlau’s general observation:

Das [Modellbuch] soll [...] auch dazu dienen, dem breiteren Publikum eine bessere Kennerschaft des Theaters in allgemeinen zu verschaffen und seine Genußfähigkeit zusammen mit seiner Kritikfähigkeit zu vertiefen. Um der Durchsicht des [Modellbuches] einiges von dem Reiz zu verleihen, den eine Theateraufführung verschaffen kann, sind die Fotografien von einer fortlaufenden Verszählung begleitet, welche den Inhalt des Stückes wiedergibt. Auch der Lektüre des Stückes selbst wird vermutlich durch die Bilder geholfen, da der Leser von Stücken für gewöhnlich sich die Vorgänge nur so vorstellen vermag, wie es ihm die Theatervorstellungen ermöglichen, die er gesehen hat und die nicht immer sehr gut waren.¹⁵⁵

For Brecht, the model book presents possibilities for teaching the theater spectator about the play, as well as the potential for estrangement of the familiar dramatic text for the reader, all thanks to the image-text combinations found therein.

After the initial stages of taking the photographs, the process begins of sifting through and selecting the best out of the hundreds from the shoot. Berlau explicitly labels

¹⁵⁵ Brecht, BFA 25: 507-08. This short textual excerpt was intended for the notes in the *Antigonemodell 1948*, but ultimately not included in the published version. The editorial commentary in the BFA suggests that Brecht composed it to characterize the model books for a publishing house.

this selection process “*Feinarbeit*.” Among those photographs that the director and photographer particularly want to use are those showing various actors’ entries, exits, and positional changes on stage. For the actors and director, this visual information can be useful for correction or experimenting during later stage settings and rehearsals. Action photographs that represent movements and characteristic gestures are also of great interest to the director—these reference the crucial “*Drehpunkte*,” or the key visual turning points of the scene. Most important, these action photographs are used to study and determine whether the plot is properly and fully narrated by the images. Ultimately, it is the photographs’ task to make visible the story to the user of the model book: “Die Fabel muß sichtbar sein.”¹⁵⁶

Next, the director works with the photographer and in part with the director’s assistants to assemble photographs of the remaining points in the scene to be highlighted. To do this, the photographs are matched to “Stichwörter”—key words or prompts—and/or stage notes for every scene. These were composed before the photographs were taken, either by the director himself (here: Brecht) or the director’s assistants:

Zur Herstellung der Modelle machen die Regieassistenten bei den Proben Anmerkungen: Über das Choreographische, über die Betonungen, die Vorschläge des Regisseurs, Bemerkungen des Stückeschreibers, die Drehpunkte, die sozialkritischen Punkte, über komische, tragische und poetische Momente. Die Notizen werden in der Dramaturgie verarbeitet und gehören zu den Modellbüchern, damit man zusammen mit den

¹⁵⁶ Berlau, “Modelle des Berliner Ensembles,” BFA 25: 536.

Bildern die Begründungen für die oder jene Stellung, die Gruppierungen, den Abstand, usw. hat.¹⁵⁷

The elements of the model books so far—the fixed camera standpoint, the raised position of the photographer, and the widely composed detailed shots—combine to form a systematic means of production for documenting the epic theater. These elements aid the director and the model book user during the process of selecting and comparing the images and help to facilitate the study of the different character constellations on stage. In addition, the director and his assistants composed what in effect amounts to captions, or “Bildunterschriften,” which accompany the photographs in the model books. Some contain excerpts from actual dialog in the play, some consist simply of the above-mentioned notes on various movements, blocking of actors, textual and gestural emphasis, suggestions from the director, or pivotal turning points in the scene.

The next steps in the model book production fine-tune the actual “Feinarbeit” based on the previous process of selecting and sifting through the hundreds of stage photographs. As outlined already, the director and photographer choose photographs that best match the captions prescribed by the director and his assistants. From these photographs they proceed to shoot another set of live action shots that Berlau calls “Schönheits-Aufnahmen.” This stage of development has nothing to do with the actual pulchritude of the actors or stage settings, nor does it revolve around the camera’s technical aspects or taking the photograph. Instead, these “Schönheits-Aufnahmen,” or “touch-up” shots (*not* “beauty shots”), allow the director and photographer to focus at a deeper level on specific details of the scene. The Berliner Ensemble needed as many

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

visuals as possible to pair with the “Bildunterschriften” written by both Brecht and his assistants. As discussed in greater depth in the next section of this chapter, the model books contained a wealth of short, sometimes one- or two-sentence notes that Brecht labeled simply “Detail.” These notes and matching stage photographs often arose directly from situations and/or staging problems during rehearsals. The “Details” are like mental notes recorded by the director’s assistants of how the director-actor negotiations and experiments were worked through and resolved, the communicative result of decisions made and alternatives tested; the photographs visually represent this back-and-forth effort. Berlau’s “Modelle” essay emphasizes the dialogue between the director and photographer with questions: “Von welcher Seite soll diese Szene fotografiert werden? Wie nah kann man mit der Kamera herangehen? Das heißt, wieviel muß auf dem Bild sein, damit es nicht nur schön ist, sondern auch den Vorgang erzählt? Wo lohnt es sich, ‘Bewegungsbilder’ aufzunehmen?”¹⁵⁸ Such photographs are taken after these “touch-up” questions are posed, mostly regarding the *Gestus* showing both the character of the actor and, especially, the contradictions of that character. The photographer and director can probe the efficacy of both the textual dialogue and the photographs in tandem toward solving big-picture questions like: How can we photograph such moments in order to better complement and reference the scene? Do the photographs have the capacity to produce the intended effect for the model book reader, i.e., do the photographs narrate the action? Are the gestures quotable? Is the story visible?

The development of *Modellbücher* serves multiple purposes and functions on different levels. For each of these purposes, according to Berlau and put into practice by

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Brecht, the outcome is intended to be a learning experience for all involved—director, photographer, actors, and the user. The photograph-text combinations found in the model books present the theater not as a static institution, but as a living entity, one that changes and has the capacity to cause change. He writes in the introduction to the *Couragemodell*: “Wenn in unseren Ruinenstädten nach dem großen Krieg das Leben weitergeht, so ist es ein anderes Leben. [...] Was das Theater betrifft, werfen wir in den Bruch hinein die Modelle.”¹⁵⁹ In a poem called “Suche nach dem Neuen und Alten” from the *Messingkauf* fragments, Brecht implores his actors to explore and experiment with the old and the new:

Wenn ihr eure Rollen lest: Forschend, bereit zu staunen: Sucht nach dem
Neuen und Alten, denn unsere Zeit: Und die Zeit unserer Kinder ist die
Zeit der Kämpfe: Des Neuen mit dem Alten. [...] Lesend eure Rollen:
Forschend, bereit zu staunen: Erfreut euch des Neuen, schämt euch des
Alten!¹⁶⁰

The epic theater as a genre and theatrical form is not a mirror held up to society; this was never Brecht’s project from the beginning. Rather, Brecht sought to take “das gute Alte” with which people were so familiar and probe the conditions for societal and artistic transformation, forcing them to rethink how we see human interactions within the capitalist system. For those artists directly involved in the theater and/or the making of model books, Brecht wished to leave his mark for future generations, so that they inherit a usable, new course of action.

¹⁵⁹ Brecht, *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 171.

¹⁶⁰ Brecht, *Gedichte aus dem Messingkauf*, BFA 12: 327-28.

Ruth Berlau also wished to leave a lasting contribution by supporting changes in the theater itself and contributing to the ways in which the theater was documented—through the use of theater photography. Brecht chose to include Berlau’s four-part essay “Theaterfotografie” in the first edition (in 1952) of the Berliner Ensemble’s *Theaterarbeit*. The model books that were seen at the Berliner Ensemble as “highly recommended” or even as a necessary component in understanding and documenting Brecht’s plays provoked new and innovative theatrical forms and brought creative experiments face to face with convention. “[Modelle] sind nicht gemacht, das Denken zu ersparen, sondern es anzuregen; nicht gemacht, das künstlerische Schaffen zu ersetzen, sondern es zu erzwingen.”¹⁶¹ In the first part of her “Theaterfotografie” essay titled “Arbeitsbedingungen,” Berlau speaks directly to the *work* associated with staging epic plays; this is the “Arbeit” in the Brechtian sense of “Be-arbeit-ung” (or in a wider sense: “Umfunktionieren”), in the *Theater-arbeit* volume from the Berliner Ensemble, and the means of production and experiment for the epic theater itself. Synchronizing the director’s and photographer’s ideas is most important: “Die Regisseure [...] sollten [die Aufführung] mit den Fotografen sorgfältig durchsprechen” to get at the moments that matter most.¹⁶² Specific to the model books, this addresses the all-important ability for its user to visualize the work of *producing* epic theater (Brelau’s emphasis is on process): basic arrangements (*Grundarrangements*) of the scene, consultation between actors and directorial personnel, scenery, actors’ movements and gestures, and so on.

¹⁶¹ Brecht, *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 171.

¹⁶² Berlau, “Theaterfotografie,” BFA 25: 532.

To that end, Berlau argues unequivocally for the necessity of photographs in understanding modern plays. She brands photography a constitutive element of theater, especially the epic theater: “Jedes Theater sollte ein Fotoarchiv mit Abbildungen seiner guten und seiner schlechten Aufführungen einrichten: für die Kritik, für die Darsteller, für die Bühnenbauer, für den Nachwuchs.”¹⁶³ Again, the didactic legacy for future theater companies is at stake. The model books fulfill the need for visual documentation in creating, preserving, and changing theater praxis. Fritz Engel, the early, devoted advocate of candid theater photography and Berlau’s predecessor from the 1920s, characterized photography as the “Archivin für die Zukunft.”¹⁶⁴ In Brecht’s case, photography was not the sole “archivist” for his theater productions; the “Archivin” was also personified in Ruth Berlau.¹⁶⁵ By the early 1950s, the idea that the model books were a necessary component of the work at the Berliner Ensemble had taken hold. In one journal entry from 4 June 1951 Brecht writes: “Die Arbeit an Ruths Modellbuch [*Couragemodell*] ist Fleißarbeit; sie muß aber gemacht werden, und wenn nur, damit man sieht, wieviel

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Engel, *Berliner Theaterwinter*, 9.

¹⁶⁵ See Berlau, *Living for Brecht*, 231 f. Berlau calls herself a “chronicler” rather than an author. She “took to heart” Brecht’s maxim in his Danish workroom: “THE TRUTH IS CONCRETE.” She explains: “What I write down is what I have seen and heard, but often enough it is believed only when I can produce concrete proof of what I have written—in the form of pictures.” See also the “Klappentext” to Brecht’s *Kriegsfibel*, which Berlau authored and which uses this same “maxim.”

Betrachtungen nötig sind für eine Inszenierung.”¹⁶⁶ Or in another longer journal entry from later that same month dated 30 June 1951: “Beschäftigt mit dem “Courage”-Modellbuch Ruths. Diese Modelle und die Neueinstudierungen, die sie erweitern und säubern, sind so nötig, weil die Künste auf Grund des kulturellen Ausverkaufs des Spätkapitalismus und trotz der emphatischen Aufnahme der Künste durch die neue Klasse, zumindest zeitweise vom schnellen Verfall bedroht scheinen.”¹⁶⁷ The Berliner Ensemble has incidentally taken Brecht’s and Berlau’s words to heart; there exists today a wealth of photographs, notebooks, and production books archived from throughout the remainder of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century at the Brecht Archive in Berlin.¹⁶⁸

If Berlau sought to leave a particular personal legacy in the development of the theater photography genre, it was a decidedly practical one, brought about both by her intimate and professional relations with Brecht on the one hand, and by her conviction of artistic principles on the other. She (as Brecht) was a steadfast supporter and practitioner of the candid photography method. She was convinced of its use value and function within the context of theater photography at the Berliner Ensemble. Berlau describes her preference for candid shots *ex negativo*—by criticizing its opposite, posed theater photography, as something not to exercise. As discussed previously, theater

¹⁶⁶ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale* (Berlin), BFA 27: 321.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ The Brecht Archive houses numerous *Modellbücher*, both in complete (approximately 27) and in fragmentary form (7 model book manuscripts available with “E-Signaturen,” or “E” call numbers). See Appendices A and B.

photographers in the nascent days of the profession would be invited to theater houses before or after performances (or even during the pauses in the dress rehearsals!) to take contrived photographs of actors in fixed positions on stage. These “Standaufnahmen” (or “publicity stills”) were mainly commissioned for the external purposes of advertising and publicity for plays. However, the actors were forced into these posed positions, which in many cases never actually occurred during the scene on stage. Hence the criticism from Berlau:

Die Darsteller bemühen sich für diese “gestellten” [posed] Bilder, mit übertriebener Mimik einen Ersatz für das fehlende lebendige Spiel herzustellen. Standaufnahmen bedeuten, daß der Gegenstand zum Zweck der Aufnahme getötet wurde. Nur während der Aufführung gemachte Aufnahmen vermitteln wahre Eindrücke.¹⁶⁹

For these “posed” shots (“Standaufnahmen”) the visual content loses its potent effect on the reader, according to Berlau. Instead, it becomes an image incapable of transmitting any meaningful visual information. The shots staged during “pauses” in rehearsals are not seen as remaining true to the production. Berlau identifies them as “Ersatz,” or compensatory photographs which cannot substitute for candid action shots. Posed photographs, she admits, can serve other purposes, i.e., documenting “behind the scenes,” costumes, background projections, actors’ faces, and props, but these are the only examples indicated by Berlau and others at the Berliner Ensemble.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Berlau, “Theaterfotografie,” BFA 25: 531.

¹⁷⁰ Berlau, “Modelle des Berliner Ensembles,” BFA 25: 537.

Brecht and Berlau placed great emphasis on candid theater photographs. Because of the multiplicity of “Szenenaufnahmen” or sequences, it is impractical to read these action images in the model books individually. True, the photographs individually highlight one particular moment of interaction in the scene; taken as part of a larger series of shots, however, the candid moments have the potential to convey greater meaning for the actors and directors. These serial shots serve as documentation for the course of the play and fit together in a coherent and interrelated succession of photographs. However, the other images representing props or actors’ faces could each be read within a singular frame. The images’ function differs in that they exist mainly either to publicize the play (where the use value is often external to the theater practitioners themselves) or to supplement other candid photographs in the model books.¹⁷¹ In her memoir Berlau structures the difference between her own candid and posed photographs in terms of the efficacy of each method, maintaining that candid shots are those that truly represent the epic stage:

Is it in fact possible to recapture a drama, a play, in photographs?

Direction, acting, decorations, costumes—certainly. But a drama? Yes, it can be done. It is possible, I maintain, if one photographs the action

directly, particularly if one is dealing with epic plays, epic stage direction,

¹⁷¹ See the section titled “Handwerkliches” in *Theaterarbeit*, 348-86, where 27 actors in the Berliner Ensemble are visually indexed with one photograph for each role they play. See also a short note from 1928 titled “Fotografie,” BFA 21: 265, where Brecht already expresses interest in building an archival index of heads and faces for study in the theater.

and epic acting. If the takes are posed, the pictures that emerge may be very sharply focused, but they are unrealistic, counterfeit.¹⁷²

Although it has not been fully investigated in the secondary literature in relation to Brecht, the Berliner Ensemble, or the photographs by Ruth Berlau, there is a strict boundary between internal and external applications of theater photography. Brecht was indeed aware of the use values for both “theaterinterne Fotografien” (of the type mentioned in this chapter in the model books, mostly candid shots documenting the course of action in the play) and “theaterexterne Fotografien” (those for theater publicity).¹⁷³ The Berliner Ensemble also scheduled appointments and visits for photographers whose images were partially incorporated into the various model books, but mainly were used for publicity or journalistic purposes external to the theater productions (e.g., Willi Saeger).

Many of the model books produced at the Berliner Ensemble are composed of Ruth Berlau’s photographs, which, unlike those theater images from the 1920s, are not only for the present theater director’s staging but were supposed to aid future directors in staging Brecht’s plays. Brecht, aware of the temptation of other theater directors to become “fixated” on his techniques and methods, warned against this very practice. *Modellbücher* were not to be understood as a Brechtian bible for staging epic theater. He wrote against prescriptive norms when using the model books and called for other users to handle the textual and visual materials critically: “Das Modell ist wahrhaftig nicht

¹⁷² Berlau, *Living for Brecht*, 232.

¹⁷³ For example, see the many publicity posters from Berliner Ensemble productions, some of which can be seen in *Theaterarbeit*.

aufgestellt, die Aufführungsweise zu fixieren [...]. Das Modell [...] ist von vornherein als unfertig zu betrachten, gerade daß seine Mängel nach Verbesserung schreien, sollte die Theater einladen, es zu benutzen.”¹⁷⁴ Brecht issues a challenge to those staging his plays to make them even better, which resonates with many of his other writings on art that is “nachhaltig,” enduring but also durable for later times. The glossary of “Fach- und Fremdwörter” in the appendix to *Theaterarbeit* lists the term “fixieren” with special attention to Brecht’s interpretation as follows: “Bei Brecht: festlegen, was auf der Probe ausprobiert worden ist.”¹⁷⁵ For the model book reader, this points to the assessment of what has been tried (as presented in the model books) but also untried; what has worked, and what has not; and the advantages and the deficits of the model book. For Brecht, the very act of publishing the model books suggests the need for more theater work to be done. Gradual changes eventually lead to turning points—“*Drehpunkte*”—both in the theater itself and in the lives of the working public, for whom Brecht made his art.

Ultimately, the emergent genre of theater photography as seen in the model books was, according to Berlau, the appropriate artistic vehicle to record, preserve, and transmit the possibilities for present and future generations of theater practitioners and theater audiences. In this way, Brecht and Berlau were able to leave their mark on the genre, and their contributions should be seen as helping to both popularize and normalize the idea of combining theater and photography. The model books produced at the Berliner Ensemble are the culmination in a line of groundbreaking, experimental work altering the ways in which we visualize and analyze theater. Beginning in 1925, Till viewed candid theater

¹⁷⁴ Brecht, *Antigonemodell 1948*, BFA 25: 77.

¹⁷⁵ See glossary of theater terms as they relate to the epic theater in *Theaterarbeit*, 454.

photographs for actors as a learning tool, whereas for directors it was more of a documentary one. Two years later in 1927, Hans Böhm considered candid photography a potential “Kommunikationsmedium” between actor and director, due to the new technical possibilities of hand-held cameras and the availability of better, more accurate lenses. With the development of the Berliner Ensemble’s model books and their emphasis on live action photographs, Brecht and Berlau advanced the theories and practice of candid theater photography argued for by Till and Böhm, first through self-critical reflection on the staging process, then also by inviting others to actively engage and adapt new ways of thinking about staging epic theater.

In the concluding subsection of her “Theaterfotografie” essay—titled “Theaterfotografie, eine neue Möglichkeit”—Brelau summarizes her case for photography’s promise and necessity in the theater:

Das Theater würde viel gewinnen, wenn es damit rechnen könnte und müßte, daß seine Darbietungen im Bild festgehalten werden. Die Schauspieler würden neuen Spaß an wahrheitsgetreuen und bedeutenden Gestaltungen gewinnen, wissend, daß spätere Zeiten von ihrem Wissen und Wirken erfahren würden.¹⁷⁶

III. Couragemodell: *Detail and Arrangement of a Model Book*

What exactly is a “model book”? Described literally, it is a play text amplified by explanatory and illustrative materials—especially production notes and hundreds of production photographs—that interpret and particularize the play’s actions, characters,

¹⁷⁶ Berlau, “Theaterfotografie,” BFA 25: 533.

stage settings, and ideas. The *Couragemodell 1949*, the published model book for Brecht's staging of *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*, is less a "book" per se than an amalgamation or package of elements that fit together. The original publication consists of three separate, paperbound volumes: play script, photographs of the Berlin (November 1948-January 1949, with Helene Weigel as Courage) and Munich production (October 1950, with Therese Giehse as Courage), and notes.¹⁷⁷ The script is not a special version of *Mutter Courage* but the published text of the play in the version found in the "Versuche."¹⁷⁸ The photography volume begins with 106 pages meticulously depicting the play's action scene by scene. The first set of photographs is comprised of "live shots" from each scene, combined with "Bildlegenden"¹⁷⁹ or short captions. Next come photographs of the figure of Mother Courage, 55 photos of "Sequenzen," 14 photos labeled "Gestisches," three on "Beschäftigungen," five of "Bewegte Vorgänge," and a final 40 or so variant photos of the Berlin and Munich productions of *Mutter Courage*.

¹⁷⁷ Subsequent editions and publications of the *Couragemodell* also included production photographs from other performances. The final constellation of photographic images included in the *Couragemodell* dates to 1956 along with textual revisions. The complete "Modellbuchmappe" appeared posthumously in 1958 from Henschelverlag (GDR).

¹⁷⁸ The text ("Versuch" number 20) was included in the first printing of the ninth volume of "Versuche," textual and sociological "experiments" from Brecht's plays.

Accompanying the *Courage* play text in this volume was Brecht's seminal essay "Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit." See Brecht, *Versuche 20/21*, Vol. 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1948).

¹⁷⁹ See editorial commentary in BFA 25: 533.

The volume of notes is arranged by scene, which usually begins with dissecting the basics followed by a few lines detailing problems or issues pertaining to the scene in question. Taken together, the books in the *Couragemodell* demonstrate how and why *Mutter Courage* might be comprehensibly and artistically staged.

A model book is by nature explicitly intended for other theaters' copying use, something Brecht not only encourages with his *Couragemodell* but also personally practiced during his career. In a fabricated "exchange" with Erich Winds, theater manager of the Städtische Bühnen Wuppertal about the dangers of such practices for the theater as a whole, Brecht muses:

Man muß sich frei machen von der landläufigen Verachtung des Kopierens. Es ist nicht das "Leichtere." Es ist nicht eine Schande, sondern eine Kunst. Das heißt, es muß zur Kunst entwickelt werden, und zwar dazu, daß keine Schablonisierung und Erstarrung eintritt.¹⁸⁰

Brecht's stance on copying is that it is not something criminal per se, but rather to be cultivated; copying for purposes of reactivating a theater piece, when done correctly, can be an art form unto itself. The act of re-appropriating a text, dramaturgical conception, or performance can be seen as a productive step towards expanding the original in the same vein of his "Bearbeitungen" taking into account Brecht's many stage adaptations or his use of Chinese philosophy, etc.

Brecht also repeatedly warned against the persuasiveness of model books. They are to serve as a starting point and guide for rehearsals, not as a blueprint for a definitive production. The director should not use the *Couragemodell* to excess: "Man muß das

¹⁸⁰ Brecht, *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 388.

Modell nicht so sehr pressen.”¹⁸¹ Brecht argued for “practical copying,” or following the exemplary, towards creating innovative theater, saying: One has to start somewhere, and it might as well be with something that has been well thought out. The model books offer clues and photographic examples of how he intended to stage his plays; however, they were not intended to substitute or replace the requisite thought processes and creativity of a director’s vision. Defending the model books against those even within the Berliner Ensemble who criticized them as “Diktatur auf dem Theater,” Brecht offered this brief letter titled “Über die Arbeit der Dramaturgen, Regisseure, Assistenten und Schüler des Berliner Ensemble”:

Sogar die schon selbstständigen Regisseure studieren die Modellbücher nicht und zeigen wenig Kenntnis und Schätzung des Neuen und Guten. Niemand scheint verstanden zu haben, daß die Herstellung der Modellbücher eine außerordentliche Gelegenheit eröffnet, das Regieführen und Kritisieren zu erlernen.¹⁸²

Brecht was never one to shy away from polemic. His riposte was hung on the bulletin board at the Berliner Ensemble in 1952 for all to see, which led to much debate among his colleagues and actors. The model’s value is mainly pedagogical. Using it, the theater practitioner is invited to focus directly on *problems* with theater production rather than the solutions and/or suggestions presented in the model book.¹⁸³ This is the dialectical

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 172.

¹⁸² Brecht, “Über die Arbeit der Dramaturgen, Regisseure, Assistenten und Schüler des Berliner Ensemble” (1952), BFA 23: 221.

¹⁸³ Brecht, *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 172.

modus operandi inherent in much of Brecht's work:¹⁸⁴ examination of different perspectives leading to conscious, deliberate decisions; to present what has come before in another way; and to instruct in the ability to “work backwards” in a sense, beginning with the representations in the model book which one then traces back to its root cause, how to stage such a scene or event.

Model books were a response to theatrical disputes about the epic theater and also conformed to Brecht's collectivist vision of art in general:

Wo bleibt, werden [andere] fragen, bei Modellbenutzung das Schöpferische? Die Antwort ist, daß die moderne Arbeitsteilung auf vielen wichtigen Gebieten das Schöpferische umgeformt hat. Der Schöpfungsakt ist ein kollektiver Schöpfungsprozeß, ein Kontinuum dialektischer Art, so daß die isolierte ursprüngliche Erfindung an Bedeutung verloren hat.¹⁸⁵

In many ways, Brecht's model books seek to engage these very questions: how do we find meaning in art in our technologically advancing world? His answer, at least within the specific context of the model books, is to find meaning in contextualizing details—specifically in details that simultaneously show the exemplary and the unique, and seek to redefine how we interpret, look at, and interact with theater.

The epic theater presents one thing after another. This characterization comes to the fore in the *Couragemodell* and was exactly how Brecht directed his plays, carefully

¹⁸⁴ Notice the related motivation of the Lehrstücke such as *Jasager/Neinsager* or *Die Maßnahme*, which involve working through an episode from the same starting point but considering different outcomes.

¹⁸⁵ Brecht, *Antigonemodell*, BFA 25: 76.

taking up one detail “eins nach dem andern,”¹⁸⁶ as if performing an autopsy. Of the 103 notes in the *Couragemodell*, more than ten percent are titled “Detail” or some variant thereof. Many of these details are miniscule (some just one sentence long!),¹⁸⁷ but integral nonetheless in shaping the scene and its message. Directing in detail means insisting that small elements are important enough to warrant detailed attention and emphasis. Brecht makes this point clear in Scene I of the *Couragemodell*: “Das Detail, auch das kleinste, muß natürlich bei der strahlend hell erleuchteten Bühne voll ausgespielt werden. Besonders gilt das für Vorgänge, die auf unserer Bühne nahezu grundsätzlich übergangen werden, wie das Bezahlen bei einem Handel.”¹⁸⁸ A central principle of such an approach to directing is to avoid carelessness with regard to seemingly minor matters on stage. Without explicit direction, actors might hurry through significant actions which should last long enough to mean something to the scene, e.g., how actors exit the stage, how long one shows his/her finger, making sure that when Mother Courage’s leather purse shuts the audience can hear the click, etc. Brecht’s approach is demonstrative and incremental rather than psychological or emotional; he comments on how the particulars of such directing by necessity serve to slow the process: “Das Tempo bei den Proben sei langsam, schon der Herausarbeitung des Details wegen; das Tempo der Aufführung zu bestimmen, ist ein eigener, späterer Prozeß.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Brecht, *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 186.

¹⁸⁷ See Brecht, *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 233.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 186.

The *Couragemodell* shows Brecht's thought process and attention to detail. The notes and accompanying production photographs demonstrate both textually and visually that his plays were not finished even when on stage because some thing, action, or event could always be different and could mean more. Especially when approaching a character, Brecht sought to analyze the problematic details. For example, the *Couragemodell*'s single longest note, "Das Alter spielen," relays how Brecht taught a young, relatively inexperienced actress how to play the Peasant Woman in Scene 11. This note describes a common problem in the theater: how a younger actress playing an older woman on stage might try to generalize her display of the character's age, using unrealistic posturing. In this case Brecht employed a different approach. He made the peasant woman not just "old" but "zumindest vierzigjährig[], wohl aber ihrer Klasse entsprechend früh gealtert[]."¹⁹⁰ The age was created by the actor who practiced playing the role, working out from the text "Tonfall um Tonfall und Haltung um Haltung," or one detail after another, until in the end the image of a prematurely aged forty-year-old woman emerged by virtue of this inductive approach. When the actress had to kneel and whine, she did not kneel and whine simultaneously, but knelt and then whined. Detailed parsing of actions shows how they were part of a deliberate, well-rehearsed sequence. In this scene the woman leads Katrin in prayer, and by doing so, she must show the gestural act of teaching by demonstrating how "die Bäuerin lehrt die Fremde das Beten": first the kneeling, then folding one's hands at the stomach, finding the right cadence and sound for one's chanting, etc. The act of teaching Katrin how to pray contributes to the "aging" effect of the woman. Brecht adds: "[G]egen Ende des Gebets schien sie [Katrin] in

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 233.

‘echtes’ Beten hineinzukommen: Sie wurde durch das Beten sozusagen frömmer.”¹⁹¹

From beginning to end, these issues were framed as specifically as possible.

This instance provides an example of the approach that informed Brecht’s ideas of gestic (or gestural) acting. “Was ist die Haltung?” is indicative of Brecht’s perspectives on truth and class relations, for which he sought to provide a physical response while acting. How could actors make a detailed point regarding human behavior so that it would become apparent or visible on stage? Brecht’s basic intention becomes clear when we see how actors display their character’s attitude toward another, especially one that is socially significant, by developing and making visible the characters’ physical relations. Such gestures are often complicated and usually contradictory; they are not attitudes describable in one single word, but rather through a constellation of images.

As previously stated, the model book’s notes to the individual scenes are organized into two main parts: *Grundarrangements* and *Details*. The beginning of every scene in the *Couragemodell* contains these foundational remarks, coinciding with the 106 “Szenenfotos” of the adjoining picture volume that were meant to be read/viewed together. One should also note that this textual “arrangement” was illustrative of how Brecht operated: first the fundamentals, then the particulars; first isolation, then elaboration. The *Grundarrangements* lay the groundwork for the visual division of the actions, whereas the detailed notes that follow problematize and seek to develop the slight movements on stage. *Grundarrangements* is a polysemous term. As in English, the German word *Grund* has both a material/physical meaning (earth, foundation, ground) as well as an analytical sense (reason, basis, cause). Brecht used *Arrangements* to convey

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 234.

duality, in terms of character positioning as well as examination of the textual sequencing itself. These “basic arrangements” are crucial to the director because they serve as a foundation to all articulations in the play, e.g., rhythm, tempo, character.¹⁹²

The *Grundarrangements* in the *Couragemodell*, like the published version of *Mutter Courage* and the scenes on stage, begin with titles. The titles in the *Couragemodell* are pithier and often condensed, reducing the scene’s content to the simplest statement possible. They are all thematically consistent and reduce each scene describing Mother Courage in relation to three main points: war, business, and family. After the titles come italicized sentences that parse a scene into constitutive elements. Following the titles and parsing comes the actual *Grundarrangements* where Brecht subsequently restates the italicized sentences and expands each with commentary. Most frequently the stress is on the visual. In the expanded commentary for Scene 3, for example, Brecht describes this image of the attack on the camp where Mother Courage is stationed: “*Der Überfall*. Der feste Punkt in dem Gelaufe und Gerufe ist der Feldprediger, der allen im Weg stehend nicht vom Platze weicht. Das übrige Arrangement ergibt sich aus dem Buch.”¹⁹³ Here we get a glimpse of how the action on stage revolves around a single stationary vantage point in the figure of the preacher, who serves also as point of contrast to the chaos around him. Brecht visually situates the scene’s layout and arrangement in another note to Scene 3: “Der Planwagen [der Courage] steht während der ganzen Szene links, mit dem Deichselende gegen den

¹⁹² Brecht scholars and translators John Willett and Ralph Manheim called these *Grundarrangements* “overall arrangements.”

¹⁹³ Brecht, *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 195.

Zuschauer, so daß die links von ihm Stehenden von denen rechts nicht gesehen werden.”¹⁹⁴

With these *Grundarrangements* Brecht indicates the play’s *Drehpunkte*, places where the scene’s dynamic or structure shifts or is redirected by some type of discovery or motivational change. One such pivotal point is found early in the play in the second scene’s arrangement, in an exchange between the Cook and Mother Courage: “Die Szene hat ihre Bewegung am Drehpunkt (‘Sehen Sie, was ich mach?’). Der Koch beendet sein Rübchenschälen, fischt aus der Kehrichttonne das verfaulte Fischstück und trägt es zum Hackblock. Die Erpressung der Courage ist mißlungen.”¹⁹⁵ Here, as the commentary points out, the extortion has failed. These *Drehpunkte* often seem coincidental but have thematic importance. In Scene 1 of the play, Mother Courage asks the Feldwebel and the Werber whether one could use a “nice pistol or a belt buckle,” seeking to turn an unfortunate encounter with two representatives of military power into a business opportunity. The Feldwebel answers provocatively: “I need something else” and motions to her eldest son, the sturdy but unsuspecting Eilif. With this exchange Brecht introduces the audience to a central thematic issue in the play, the needs of business in contrast to the needs of war. Later in Scene 1, other pivotal moments echo this one, resulting in the successful sale of the buckle. However, Courage discovers that her commercial transaction has cost her one of her sons.

The following briefly suggests other practical examples of how the production photographs in Brecht’s *Couragemodell* relate to the epic theater. In Scene 10 in *Mutter*

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 194.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 189.

Courage, Mother Courage and Kattrin pull their wagon on a road past a farmhouse when they hear a voice singing the song “Das Lied von der Bleibe.” The words they hear are directly juxtaposed with their own situation: wandering Europe for years following in the footsteps of the Thirty Years’ War and its destruction. In contrast, the voice from the farmhouse sings the virtues of the rose in the garden, the farmer working his land, and the comfort and protection of a permanent roof over one’s head. Brecht’s short note detailing Scene 10 in the *Couragemodell*, titled “Ausdruck unerwünscht,” reads as follows: “Die beiden Frauen kommen, den Wagen ziehend. Sie hören die Stimme aus dem Bauernhaus, bleiben stehen, horchen, setzen sich mit ihrem Wagen wieder in Bewegung. Was in ihnen vorgeht, soll nicht gezeigt werden; das Publikum kann es sich denken” (see Figure 3).¹⁹⁶ This note reveals a rather unique moment for Brecht, who usually insists that epic actors show not only their relation to others, both in the form of *Menschenverhalten* and *Schauspielerverhalten*, but also the act of showing itself (“1 Zeigende, 2 Gezeigte”).¹⁹⁷ For instance, the actor does not need to cry on stage; instead, the actor should show *how* one cries and perhaps that his/her sleeve is wet afterward.¹⁹⁸ In the above example the

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 228.

¹⁹⁷ Brecht, “Über das Theater der Chinesen,” BFA 22.1: 126.

¹⁹⁸ See the conversation between Herbert Jhering and Marcel Marceau in a book found in Brecht’s *Nachlassbibliothek* [BBA call number A 10/27]: *Die Weltkunst der Pantomime* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1956), 15 ff. Here, Marceau echoes this sentiment of making something invisible visible to the spectator: “Der Wind ist zum Beispiel unsichtbar. Wir müssen ihn sichtbar machen.” Here, the actor places importance on body movements (“das mimische Theater”) that carry meaning, not in actually reproducing real-life actions.

inner contradiction when Mother Courage realizes her plight yet again (even for just a moment) should not be signaled to the audience. The actors show that they have stopped to listen, but not that they realize the consequences of their actions during the war. This comprises the entirety of Scene 10 on stage: entrance of wagon, the song, and then the exit of the wagon.

The audience is not meant to see Mother Courage and Katrin outwardly express this realization, but with the aid of the production photograph we can study the situation on stage in detail. The photograph from Scene 10 included in the *Couragemodell* isolates this moment of realization for the reader and simultaneously allows each individual element in the scene to be scrutinized for analysis.¹⁹⁹ This photograph becomes the visual representation of another *Drehpunkt* in the play: we see how Mother Courage and Katrin have been visually detached from the scene and exposed on stage. In this case, simply viewing the actors' pause while the scene continues is enough for Brecht, to the extent that showing nothing else but their internalization also carries meaning.²⁰⁰ Mother Courage and Katrin stand physically in opposition to the progression of the scene.

IV. Epic Theater and (Epic) Photography

¹⁹⁹ See *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 290.

²⁰⁰ This instance from Scene 10 is only one example; one could find any number throughout the play. At this point the audience has been prepared by prior examples of this contradictory behavior on Courage's part to "read" or "see" the consequences on their own.

“Die Theaterfotografie steht am Anfang. Sie wird ihre eigenen Gesetze entwickeln.”²⁰¹ Brecht’s larger œuvre is deeply invested in the power of photography.²⁰² Epic theater and the technique of photography share characteristics represented in the various production model books: for example, the isolation of human behavior(s); the distancing effect; or the creation of independent scenic moments that oppose totality. For Roland Barthes, the photo production models become “stage pictures” that come to signify the moments of epic theater.²⁰³ The model books’ form realizes elements of epic theater, which, while present on stage, are perhaps not wholly perceptible to theater practitioners without the aid of a photograph. Paradoxically, we see aspects of epic theater that do not reside exclusively on stage but are teased out in the photographs themselves. These ideas will be explored further in this section. First, we must investigate the affinities between the artistic media of theater and photography, with emphasis on why the epic theater is well suited to be photographically recorded. Why in particular is this type of theater able to be adapted and translated into series of photographic tableaux?

It is true that “theatre photography has played its part in our education about the theatre,”²⁰⁴ starting from its earliest inceptions to its contemporary incarnations. Some historians and artists alike have been suspicious of the relationship between photography and theater. Barbara Hodgdon contends that the inherent qualities of the photographic

²⁰¹ Berlau, “Theaterfotografie,” BFA 25: 532.

²⁰² Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 36 f.

²⁰³ Barthes, “Seven Photo Models of Mother Courage,” 44. See also the short section on Brecht and photography, in Sean Carney, *Brecht and Critical Theory*, 89-90.

²⁰⁴ Jim Carmody, “Reading Scenic Writing,” 32.

medium are a direct threat to the live-action of a theater production. She draws a distinct separation between photography and theater, arguing that theater “stills” the live theater experience.²⁰⁵ For others, photography’s role in defining and analyzing theatrical productions has become so embedded that directors, critics, scholars, and perhaps even the wider public may now regard theatrical performance, at least in part, and as developed in Brecht’s model books, as the succession of potential photographs. Rebecca Schneider argues that the photographic still, “whether stagily posed or seemingly accidental as in a snapshot, is something photography shares with the medium of theatre, or with theatricality, in a forgotten interrelation that may now be newly available for analysis.”²⁰⁶ As noted previously, proponents of theater photography at the beginning of the twentieth century praised the emerging genre as an art form, as a “product of its time,” and a precursor to the future of theater productions. For Fritz Engel and Hans Böhm, theater photography was the “archivist for the future” and signaled the arrival of a proliferation and shift in theater technology that could record and visually display images of pivotal moments in the theater.²⁰⁷ The advent of photography has indeed altered the

²⁰⁵ Barbara Hodgdon, “Photography, Theatre, Mnemonics; or, Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Still,” *Theorizing Practice: Redefining Theatre History*, eds. W.B. Worthen and Peter Holland (London: Palgrave, 2003), 89. She argues for a hierarchy where photography is subservient to live performance and, therefore, “severs” itself from its original context requiring “anecdote” and “narrative” supplements.

²⁰⁶ Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 165.

²⁰⁷ Engel, *Berliner Theaterwinter*, 9.

way in which we perceive the theatrical production, from rehearsal and arrangement to character development and scenery. The introduction of a camera to the theatrical production process has brought with it a wide range of new technological issues that were previously foreign to the theater: “The [photographic] print introduces a new angle of vision at the same time as it creates a new visual composition. In short, the photographic [image] enters the theatre as a new technology of perception.”²⁰⁸ The photograph has developed into an analytical tool for theater criticism, both internally to aid in the production process and externally to examine individual scenic moments and interactions for adaptation and improvement. While they are not intended to define it wholly, production photographs of the epic theater facilitate critical readings and mediate discussion and debate of the performance aspects of the plays.

But what makes the epic theater an almost natural ally to the photographic image, or vice versa? Ruth Berlau proceeds to answer this question by invoking a fitting contrast to the epic theater’s photographability with the “naturalistic” and “highly authentic” theater of the Naturalist stage. Here the audience saw characters embedded in their static environments in an attempt to recreate the impression of reality. Although Brecht’s approach was, to a certain degree, a development of the critical project initiated by Naturalism, he chose instead to juxtapose his actors against realistic, interactive situations on stage, where actors are visibly detached—not concretely embedded—from their surroundings. In another degree of separation the epic actor is not static, but changeable. Brecht criticizes Naturalism as follows:

²⁰⁸ Carmody, “Reading Scenic Writing,” 30-31.

In der ersten, stärksten Zeit des Naturalismus kopierte man die Wirklichkeit so komplett, daß jedes stilistische Element als unnatürlich empfunden worden wäre. Als der Naturalismus schwächer wurde, schloß er vielfache Kompromisse, und heute hat man es auch in realistischen Stücken mit einer eigentümlichen Mischung von Saloppheit und Deklamation zu tun.²⁰⁹

In contrast, the epic theater sought to puncture these stylized illusions on the surface of reality to reach the real forces that determine it beneath its appearance. In his audience Brecht attempted to cultivate detached consideration of the realities and the underlying, contradictory issues the play confronts. In his criticism he accuses Naturalistic theater of being so “realistic” that it comes across as fake caricature on stage.²¹⁰ In other words, Naturalism can be seen as a “document” of social history, whereas Brecht’s (Marxist) approach sought to criticize that very document.

Furthermore Berlau offers ideas as to why the epic theater in particular is so camera-friendly. In her “Theaterfotografie” essay, she builds the case for such a partnership:

²⁰⁹ Brecht, “Anmerkungen zum Volksstück,” BFA 24: 293-99. See also Brecht, “Über experimentelles Theater,” BFA 22.1: 546.

²¹⁰ For more on Brecht’s thoughts and writings on the “Unterschied zwischen Realismus und Naturalismus,” which he claimed even as late as 1947 was not yet settled (“noch nicht geklärt”), see the entry in the *Arbeitsjournale* dated 30 March 1947 (America), BFA 27: 244. Ultimately, Brecht asserts that Naturalism is “Realismus-Ersatz.”

Naturalistische und stark stilisierte Aufführungen sind kaum zu fotografieren. Die Bilder zeigen da Überstopftheit oder Leere. Der Grundvorgang kommt nicht heraus, wenn Unordnung oder Willkür herrschen. [...] Auf [unseren] Bildern kann nicht das Wort oder der Schwung über die Dürftigkeit des Anblicks hinwegtäuschen. Weder des Schauspielers Spiel noch die Spannung auf den Fortgang der Handlung machen den Betrachter der Bilder die Einzelheiten übersehen: die hingeschlammte kleine Szene in Hintergrund, den lieblos gemachten, nichtssagenden Stuhl.²¹¹

The section heading for the portion of her essay with the above words is titled “Fotografierbarkeit als Kriterium.” Already with this title Berlau argues in favor of linking together photography and the epic theater and suggests that its very ability to be photographed serves as an important condition for its existence. Berlau sees not only the need to be successfully photographed, she also declares the standard with which the epic theater should be evaluated. Can this production be photographed well? Is the production such that a photographer can capture the most integral scenic moments on stage in order to create a visual narrative of the play text (Brelau: “Die Fabel muß sichtbar sein”)? Naturalist, as well as the highly stylized Expressionist, theater is directly opposed to the epic theater, where the task of isolating gestures for scrutiny is a priority. According to Berlau, the overfilled (“überstopft”) characteristic of the Naturalist stage is a consequence of its over-reliance on a fixed social system and its pedantic attempts to recreate the

²¹¹ Berlau, “Theaterfotografie,” BFA 25: 532.

impression of reality.²¹² Therefore Naturalism can only be true to the likeness of reality, not to the representation of actual human relations on stage. For Berlau, it is the epic theater's focus on detailed scenic moments and fragmentary narrative structure that lends itself to the framing capabilities of the photographic still.

Yet the greatest commonality of photography and epic theater may be at the meta-level. The production photographs, such as those seen in the Berliner Ensemble's model books, have contributed new approaches to how theater practitioners produce plays as well as how we perceive human relations (in the sense of both "seeing" what is presented on stage and "understanding" or making connections to real-life situations). A photograph is not simply the material object of artistic technique and the machinery of the camera (although at base level it is a product of light and chemicals on paper). The epic theater is not only a series of scenic tableaux proceeding in fits and starts (although it is that on some level). By analyzing Brecht's *Modellbücher* we find tangible and practical examples of the symbiotic relationship between photography and epic theater. This relationship is based on two common features: referentiality and isolation.

²¹² See also Brecht's reflections on how photography can be employed to combat Naturalism on the stage/screen in a journal entry dated 14 October 1949, BFA 27: 307: "Nachgedacht über den 'Couragefilm.' Man müßte das Naturalistische ausschalten. Zunächst Versuche technischer Art: kann (durch Überbelichtung und Unterentwicklung usw.) eine daguerreotypenhafte Fotografie erreicht werden? Beim Arrangement müßte man das Prinzip der zufälligen Gruppierung aufgeben. Auf der Leinwand dürfte an 'Dekoration' nur erscheinen, was mitspielt."

First, in general terms, a photograph is a visual record of some event that took place. In that sense it always points the spectator towards some thing, action, person, etc. The spectator can then see the history or evolution of the subject. Second, in the photograph the spectator realizes the function of the subject, that is: what he/she/it does, not necessarily what that subject “is.”²¹³ Third, the photograph refers to the relationship between subject and object. With this information the spectator can contextualize and determine differences between things. The photograph points to both reality and to art. The epic theater can also be examined through the lens of referentiality and isolation. From the stage the audience experiences a series of conceptualized, fragmentary elements that are meant to move the audience from moment to moment. The scenes are de-contextualized and re-contextualized by sudden shifts in mode, style, rhythm, perspective, or time—brought about by Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt*. This defamiliarization works so that at the moment of the shock effect, when an emotional scene is abruptly halted, or a scene becomes moving, the director or actor can “insert her or his own statement, an ironic or telling comment that encourages the spectator to think about what has been said.”²¹⁴ This connects the author to the audience and opens a space for the spectators to rethink and reassess their own reference to the everyday social conditions of life. By combining production photographs and textual comments, the *Modellbücher* offer a powerful, visual conditioning tool for actors, directors,

²¹³ Brecht was particularly interested in this functional aspect of photographs. See Brecht, “Über Fotografie,” BFA 21: 264. This idea will be explored further in the chapter on Brecht’s *Kriegsfiel*.

²¹⁴ Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, 142.

photographers, and audiences to perceive “Brechtian” scenography (or a Brechtian “look”). But how exactly do the photographs in the *Modellbücher* isolate and point to Brecht’s ideas of the epic theater?

In her seminal 1977 essay collection, *On Photography*, Susan Sontag develops the argument that photography has revealed a dual nature; in a sense, photographs have been both a medium of notation and a medium of construction.²¹⁵ In its notational mode, photography offers an almost endless possibility for the detailed study of the physical world. The camera records what the human eye oftentimes cannot “see” by virtue of its ability to isolate and freeze real-time action and magnify the scale of the object under examination. These “notations” of previously invisible actions cause the spectator to see things differently. They make it possible for us to construct new ideas about the way things actually are—this constructive mode provides opportunities for the subjective construction of reality. These two modes are difficult to separate because they operate together: the majority of photographs—including theater photographs—are both notations and constructions of reality.

Theater photography, as noted previously by Berlau and others, had a largely notational role employed as visual evidence. When examining production and rehearsal

²¹⁵ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973). Sontag explicates her theories of notation and construction in the first two essays in her book. Roland Barthes, French literary critic and semiotician, has theorized along those same lines in his essay: “Rhetoric of the Image,” *Image—Music—Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 32-51. Barthes names these concepts “denotation” and “connotation.”

photographs of the Berliner Ensemble, for example, Brecht and Berlau applied them as an informational source for elements of a production that would be either too difficult or tedious to describe in writing—hence the relatively short captions and notes in the model books as compared to the longer, more detailed visual sequences of photographs. Such photographs serve to disseminate visual ideas and at the same time promote the discourse of the theater photography genre itself. In addition to these informational functions, photography isolates details for further study that would most likely remain unnoticed in the course of stage action—for example, details of gesture, blocking, etc. Brecht valued photographs during rehearsals for this purpose, setting an example to encourage other theater practitioners to do the same for staging his plays. For her part, Berlau, who took many of the photographs that we associate with Brecht’s life and work, continued to make the case for photography’s efficacy in the epic theater and its continued necessity for theater in general:

What really happens on stage can be checked only with the help of photographs. A picture can be examined at length in quiet morning hours far from the director’s desk. Once the curtain goes up, it is already too late. And it is not without reason that the Berliner Ensemble possesses a larger photographic laboratory and archive than any other theater in the world. In none of the countries in which we have worked has there been a photo lab devoted to the needs of stage direction and dramaturgy. [...]

From photographs of postures, gestures, walks, and groupings we take what we need to achieve truth on the stage, bad postures as well as good postures: the bad ones in order to change them, the good to make them

worth copying. We must show [our audiences] that we are at least making efforts to present the truth.²¹⁶

In this excerpt from an unpublished note for the *Antigonemodell*, written in 1955, Berlau clearly references the notational uses of production model photographs. She points to the capacity of the photograph to “carry” or “save” information.²¹⁷ Her comments emphasize the photograph’s ability to disseminate ideas, information, and characteristics that can be associated with the notational mode. They also touch on the constructive mode of these theater photographs. In their “efforts to present the truth,” the Ensemble presented the audience with different perspectives and an alternative narrative to history and human relations. The Ensemble’s production model books represent the physical manifestation of that collaborative work in progress.

Brecht, Berlau, and others at the Berliner Ensemble used photography as an aid to refine the process of staging epic theater. As Berlau states above, both “good” and “bad” production photographs have information to show to the reader. Yet Brecht also recognized the potential power of the constructive mode of photography, i.e., its creative, associative, and didactic features for the spectator. Apart from exploiting photographs for and in his staging processes, he made them a constitutive element in the model books—to purposefully encourage its application for future theater adaptations. At the fundamental level the model books do not “model” the play text or even Brecht’s supplemental

²¹⁶ Berlau, *Living for Brecht*, 234-35. See also Berlau’s forward to Brecht’s *Kriegsfibel*.

²¹⁷ Berlau alludes to Brecht working on productions outside of Berlin at his country home in Buckow, and to Brecht following the staging of his plays during his exile years. Both involved his work with photographs of the production process.

commentaries and notes; instead, they were intended to amplify the visual characteristics of epic theater before, during, and after the staging and performance process. The photographs included in the model books function not as a supplement to the written commentary that accompanies both the images and the play script. Rather, his commentaries served to supplement the evidence of the photographs. They visually document Brecht's realization of his text in performance, creating a photographic notation of the play's scenic text. The purpose for this was to have a record to suggest possible ways of staging his plays. At the same time the photographs propagate Brecht's epic theater. On the level of notation they provide information about the visual characteristics of his plays. On the level of construction they teach the spectator how to see and evaluate the epic theater (in the way Brecht himself might have done). With their emphasis on thinking through one's work, the photographs condition actors, directors, photographers, designers, and the audience to look for Brechtian gestures, arrangements, emphasis, etc., and to apply them in their own work. What made Brecht's visual style so easy to disseminate was photography's constructive capabilities; or put in another way, because his plays and production process emphasized active, constructive analysis of details, they were for the most part photographable.

Take, for example, the final two photographs in the *Couragemodell* in the section labeled "Varianten." The reader sees production photographs 177 (Berlin 1949) and 178 (Munich 1950) juxtaposing the figure of Mother Courage as she exits the stage in the play's final scene 12, pulling her wagon behind her.²¹⁸ The Berlin variant shows a

²¹⁸ See *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 384-85. These photographs were included in the *Couragemodell 1949* published in 1956, and can be found in the variants.

hunched-over Helene Weigel as Courage, gripping the yoke in an almost animal-like gesture, eyes closed, mouth wide open with exhaustion. The image is somewhat blurred, which suggests this was an action shot, taken while the Janus-faced Courage portrays the grieving mother responsible for her own demise due to her crafty business ventures. The caption for this photograph reads: “Courage, als zuletzt gesehen.” A dark void fills in the image’s background where the only visible element is the covered wagon. Adjacent to Weigel’s Courage is that of Therese Giehse. This Munich variant of the production’s final moments provides a contrast to the Berlin production, showing the reader how the actors’ interpretation of Courage affects the stage setting. Giehse does not point her head down and close her eyes, nor does her Courage appear as an appendage to the yoke like a horse (Brecht: “tierische Abgestumpftheit”²¹⁹). Rather, she stares, eyes wide open, towards a point external to the stage, mouth clenched and lips pursed, and holds the yoke under her arm as if she were carrying a bag of goods—now her sole possession after the death of her children. The Giehse photograph is not blurred, taken instead while her Courage pauses on stage.

Brecht saw these final moments on stage for Courage as an opportune moment of “irritation” for the audience.²²⁰ What the photographs cannot show is the long, drawn-out circling of Courage with her wagon around the stage. The repetitive action, according to Brecht, should cause the spectator to think: “this has gone on long enough,” and facilitate thoughts about social, political, and economic problems in postwar Germany. Brecht and the Berliner Ensemble may have chosen these specific photographs of Weigel and Giehse

²¹⁹ Ibid., 238.

²²⁰ Ibid., 240.

for their exemplary notational and constructional potential: they are images not only of Mother Courage as seen by Brecht, but also portraits of Weigel and Giehse as epic actors in action, showing how they “mark” themselves as such. With Weigel the reader sees a woman who looks “80 years old [...] and understands nothing” of her plight.²²¹ She is marked by labor and hardship, both because of and for the business of war. In contrast Giehse’s Courage does not dwell on herself as victim to which the production photograph can visually attest, and Brecht himself comments: “Und bevor sie [Giehse/Courage] mit dem Ziehen des Planwagens begann, blickte sie, eine andere schöne Variante, in die Ferne, sich zu orientieren, wohin sie gehen mußte, schneuzte sich, bevor sie loszog, mit dem Zeigefinger.²²² Giehse improvises in the scene, adding two gestures to her Courage. The added outward stare that intrigued Brecht in Giehse’s Courage is the exact moment captured in the production photograph. Not shown is Giehse’s brutish gesture of blowing her nose (“sich schneuzen”) with her index finger. These actions amplify the sense that “Mutter Courage lernt nichts.” Instead of tears she shows the brutal reality of her situation by wiping her nose, and instead of her head pointed down, she looks out in order to keep moving.

Both photographs represent the final images that the respective audience sees at the play’s end. They also represent visually that a production of *Mutter Courage* “das Handeltreiben, Schnitt-machen-Wollen, Zum-Risiko-Bereitsein der Courage als eine ganz natürliche, ‘ewig menschliche’ Verhaltensweise dargestellt haben [muß], so daß

²²¹ Ibid., 241.

²²² Ibid., 239.

eben kein Ausweg mehr blieb.”²²³ The photographs record (in photography’s notational mode) Weigel’s and Giehse’s acting in their final moments on stage. They also facilitate in helping the model book reader to construct meaning, both in terms of mediating the play’s critical messages and the visible details of the actors’ acting techniques. The reader must then reconcile what is seen with what Brecht suggests that the actors show: that the little man is a pawn in the game of war business; that the business of war not only kills human beings, but also human dignity and virtue; or that war creates only losers, not winners.²²⁴ The Weigel and Giehse photographs of the final scene succeed because aspects of the epic theater practiced at the Berliner Ensemble are at once recognizable and debatable: the gestures are “quotable” and the story is “visible.”

As with any theoretical framework, however, there are inevitably certain aspects that do not fit perfectly within the boundaries ascribed to them, or do not translate well from theory to practice on the stage. Is the epic theater too abstract or too presumptive of its audience to succeed when set into motion? Or can it be said that Brecht’s dramatic theories seldom coincided with his theatrical practice? These questions have some degree of truth, but would be difficult to argue for them because many of Brecht’s dramatic theories, play texts, and socio-political positions evolved over time (and geographic spaces during his exile). There are also problems with the inherent interpretation of photographs: the spectator, not the photograph, supplies “meaning” and reference from what is visible. The photograph can suggest and represent but not “mean” any one thing. For example, a production photo can record details of gesture and blocking or what part

²²³ Ibid., 241.

²²⁴ Ibid., 177.

of the stage looked like (from a single position) at a given moment. What it cannot accomplish by itself is to actually show the significance of the moment or gesture; this must come from the spectator. It is apparent, however, that the model books from the Berliner Ensemble challenge the dominance of the dramatic text, placing emphasis on the visual aspects and semiotics of epic theater. They are tangible evidence showing that the epic actor is not simply a medium to deliver lines on stage, but rather able to insert statements into gestures, positioning, and speech to execute so-called “theatrical thoughts.”²²⁵

Scholars and theater practitioners must also realize the intrinsic constraints inherent in the model books themselves. The photograph-text collections that Brecht and the Ensemble chose to publish as comprehensive, edited packages are offered to us via a controlled, distinct context: Brecht himself. The photographic discourse supplemented and was supplemented by the dramatic discourse of his play text and commentaries. Separated from the Ensemble’s model books, however, and/or reinserted into another context, the production photographs of Brecht’s plays can inspire different meaning.²²⁶

²²⁵ See Patrick Primavesi, “The Performance of Translation: Benjamin and Brecht on the Loss of Small Details,” *TDR* 43:4 (Winter 1999): 53-55 f. Primavesi labels the *Gestus* as “theatrical thoughts.”

²²⁶ Several photographs from the production models are reproduced in Barthes’s essay “Seven Photo Models of Mother Courage” and juxtaposed with Barthes’s own commentary and interpretation. Here, the photos lose their original, intended effect to instruct the model book user on how to stage Brecht’s plays; rather, in the context of Barthes’s work and his critical interest in Brecht and the epic theater, the photos are open

By treating the *Modellbücher* as primary “works” by Brecht, Berlau, and other collaborators at the Berliner Ensemble rather than mere supplemental resources to Brecht’s plays, we are better able to frame the critical study of his theories and theatrical practices.

Brecht did not want to imitate life so much as he wanted to present possible alternatives and expose the contradictions underlying so-called truths. Learning how to recognize these Brechtian elements by attending the theater was not the theater critics’, practitioners’, or the public’s only task. The project of the epic theater sought to transform the “illusionist” institution of modern theater to consciously affect the public’s social and political views outside the theater houses, even well after the audience had gone home.²²⁷

to other applications. This allows Barthes to re-read the photographs in terms of Brecht’s style or Brecht the person, not for the story of *Mother Courage*.

²²⁷ See, for example, a short explanatory note about the *Programmheft* for the Berliner Ensemble’s 1951 production of *Biberpelz und roter Hahn* (director: Egon Monk), where the Ensemble explains its motives: “Das Programmheft [...] vermeidet, wie alle unsere Programme, literarische Reflexion über das Theater. Es beschäftigt sich vielmehr mit geschichtlichen Realitäten. [...] Der Zuschauer soll veranlasst werden, das Programm aufzubewahren. Von ihm unterstützt soll er sich an die Aussage des Stücks später in Ruhe erinnern können. Er soll es gern weitergeben wollen. Wir halten es übrigens für zweckmäßig, Programmhefte schon beim Kartenvorverkauf abzugeben.” Reproduced in Berlau et al., *Theaterarbeit*, 225.

Chapter Four

Brecht and the *Arbeitsjournale*: Author, Subject, Image

A first encounter with Brecht's *Arbeitsjournale* may likely be confusing, and perhaps rightfully so. This prodigious (and incomplete) body of collected writings numbers in the hundreds of pages—over 800 including the critical apparatus—occupying two entire volumes of the BFA edition of his literary oeuvre. Most blocks of entries are printed chronologically, but often jump around. For example, why do writings labeled “autobiographical notes” written through 1941 appear before the entries labeled “journal” in Volume 26? These “notes” resume again in Volume 27, but only after the conclusion of the “journals” dating from 1955, and begin anew in the year 1942. Thematic interests on Brecht's mind may or may not coincide with actual historical events, and the inclusion of numerous images, mostly appropriated press photographs, interrupt the sense of order and serve to break the entries' continuity; this, for reasons explored later in this chapter, did not exist in the journals. In addition to this the reader encounters different categories of Brecht's self-referential writings imposed by the volume editors, labeled “Autobiographische Notizen” (autobiographical notes or sketches), “Tagebuch” (diary), and “Journal” accordingly.²²⁸ Even the seasoned researcher may have difficulties in deciphering Brecht's cryptic, esoteric style in his notes. Search procedures and

²²⁸ The editors of Volumes 26 and 27 in the BFA are Werner Hecht and Marianne Conrad, with a credit to Herta Ramthun (“Mitarbeit”). The single-volume, English-language edition of Brecht's *Arbeitsjournale* was edited by John Willett and translated by Hugh Rorrison.

terminology used at the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv (BBA) in Berlin can also complicate matters; in their user-accessible database, one must enter “Tagebuch” to find and view the BBA identification call numbers specifically referencing work for the “*Journale*,” directly conflicts with the edition’s categorization schemes. These entries do not fall under the purview of “diary” in the BFA or in the extant secondary literature. Any attempts to collapse these entries into one rubric only further lessen the value of generic terms. Other scholars, including those who helped craft the current version of the BFA volumes, have also criticized the efficacy of certain editorial decisions in the *Arbeitsjournale*.²²⁹ They highlight the inconsistencies (i.e., exclusionary vs. inclusive) in the editorial decision-making process: which texts (both previously published and not) to select, how and where to “normalize” (i.e., to standardize font, capitalization, formatting, etc.), and how to treat issues pertaining to permission of Brecht’s texts. As the forthcoming critical editions of Brecht’s “Notizbücher” (“notebooks” from Suhrkamp Verlag) are eventually included in this constellation of “Tagebuch,” “Autobiographische Notizen,” and “*Journale*,” the reader will be left with an assemblage of generic titles and more questions.

²²⁹ See, for example: Erdmut Wizisla, “Über die Einhaltung von Prinzipien. Zur Berliner und Frankfurt am Main Ausgabe der Werke Bertolt Brechts,” *editio* 13 (1999): 157-72; Jan Knopf, “Popanz: *Arbeitsjournale*,” *Dreigroschenheft* 2 (2001): 18-20; or Marcel Reich-Ranicki, “Brecht war kein Brechtianer. Zu seinem *Arbeitsjournal 1938-1955*,” *Die Zeit*, 16 May 1973, 24. Reich-Ranicki’s article refers to the earlier edition of the *Arbeitsjournale*, edited by Hertha Ramthun (1973).

Learning about “Brecht” and his life is not the only benefit of reading and analyzing the work journals, although biographical aspects do appear in numerous examples. A detailed guide to his development is not (and was never really) the main function of the journals. Rather, the reader gains substantial insight into how he operated as an artist: his particular way of dialectical thinking, his ability to observe and historicize contemporary events, and his drive to analyze what he saw from an unfixed perspective as the outsider looking in. The journals present glimpses of Brecht the person, snapshots of Brecht the artist, and fragments of Brecht’s aesthetics and collaborations regarding his work. The *Arbeitsjournale*, examined under the same lens as his other literary works, offer an exercise in retraining his readers on how to think, to read closely and selectively, and to identify truths. Above all the reader sees the processes and decisions in which Brecht participated, and perhaps more importantly, how Brecht’s worldview and his artistic praxis developed.

If the reader is to believe Brecht—that art should not “mirror,” but rather “hold a mirror to” society—then the *Arbeitsjournale* prove to be a fitting example, indeed as appropriate as many of Brecht’s plays.²³⁰ For when art simply mimics the world, it is unable to alter it, in effect perpetuating falsities or half-truths. On the other hand, holding a mirror to society represents an aesthetic that holds society before itself, exposing the historical circumstances of society’s inner workings. This creates spaces for the literal and metaphorical “reflection” to take place between the artist, the artwork, and the public.

²³⁰ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 418. In this entry dated 24 August 1940 (Finland), Brecht refers to the difference between “widerspiegeln” and “den Spiegel vorhalten” regarding criteria for the effectiveness of art.

Going a step further, Brecht's work journals, like much of his work in the theater, also allow space for the reader to reflect on and probe multiple ways to ponder his work. For as he ruminates in an entry from the American journals dated 27 December 1941: "Der Erfolg eines Autors bedeutet den Durchfall eines Publikums."²³¹ The writer's "success" according to Brecht directly coincides with and has a direct effect on how the masses perceive art; in other words, society's tribulations (e.g., world war, genocide, global economic instabilities, etc.) become the material fodder for stories about the way we live and interact. Here he criticizes the fact that the world must suffer so much in order for artists like him to produce (and profit from) such penetrating and timely works about that suffering. However, his dialectical thinking also imagines the potential positives coming from the negatives, seeing possibilities in the "hardships" to collectively alter the world through artistic production. The result is a symbiotic relationship between the artist and the public sphere in which Brecht challenges the reader to take an active role in his/her relationship with art, history, politics, and in the case of his work journals, Bertolt Brecht himself.

What follows in this chapter is an attempt to examine these "autobiographical writings," focusing on Brecht both as the author of the text and the subject in the text, and how numerous photographs in the *Arbeitsjournale* complicate and complement those readings. The labels "autobiography" and "writing" are highlighted here for good reason. As mentioned above, the notes, diaries, and journal entries are not simply self-reflective texts concerning the author's life and experiences, but rather encompass a wider range of

²³¹ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 39. Brecht may have used play on words with this comment, as "Durchfall" can be translated as both "failure" and "diarrhea."

issues from literary theory and social history to Brecht's approach to his craft and the readers' relation to all of these aspects. First, this chapter briefly traces the often contentious history of the genre itself and compares how Brecht's autobiographical work intersects with other contemporaries' writings; the second section introduces and delineates the various text-sets found in the BFA Volumes 26 and 27 pertaining to self-writing; the third section reconsiders the *Arbeitsjournale* through a framework that allows the reader to locate "Brecht" as both author and subject in this work; the fourth and final section reevaluates the journals' structure and form, shifting perspective to an approach that emphasizes the weight of the photographs and how these may introduce alternate strategies of reading the image-text constellations.

I. Writing the Self: Autobiography in Flux

Before examining the *Arbeitsjournale* and how they pertain to Brecht's literary and autobiographical work, first we must make a brief excursion into the fluctuating history of the genre itself, particularly in the German literary context in the twentieth century. In this way we can situate his journals within a literary tradition and, subsequently in section two of this chapter, investigate how his *Arbeitsjournale* represent a break from more familiar forms of self-writing. How can the reader identify the journals for what they are? What kinds of classification strategies reveal themselves to be productive for the reader? Are the *Arbeitsjournale* secondary reference materials, primary literary works, elaborate diaries of exile, or political memoirs? Or has Brecht established something distinctive by combining multiple texts, sources, and images with these various forms, playing the role of both the "author-editor" who purposefully crafts and appropriates, and "subject" who

is referenced throughout and is the substantive point of departure for the journals? There are no clear answers to these questions, except to say that Brecht's literary experiments in autobiographical writing exhibit many of these aforementioned characteristics, serving to expand and perhaps reassign meaning to the definition of autobiographical writing as we know it.

The genre of life writing has consistently struggled to define and distinguish itself from other text types. It is also a genre that appropriates features from other generic forms. Scholars in their criticism and writers in their work have sought to navigate the fuzzy boundaries between subjective representation and the author's adherence to events from history and personal experience. Perhaps these difficulties in determining the etiquette of life writing, especially by authors, has stemmed from the fact that the autobiography is inherently a hybrid form of writing. In its strictest sense the autobiography is a genre of non-fictional narration of historical events in the life of an author.²³² The autobiographer records detailed accounts of his/her internal, personal thoughts—also relevant to historiography. But questions remain: How can the reader determine the veracity of the author's claims? What are the author's motives and what do they intend to achieve? How can we distinguish between representations of fact (*Wirklichkeitsdarstellung*) and fiction? These questions are relevant to the analysis and criticism of fictional and historical texts as well. The boundaries of fact and fiction, objective reality and poetic license are not at all clear—both for the reader at the point of contact with the text and for the author during the process of writing the text. However,

²³² Jürgen Lehmann, "Autobiographie," *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft*.

Vol. 1, ed. Klaus Weimar, et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 169.

the tensions between fact and fiction do not necessarily preclude a constructive exchange between the reader and the text; in fact, they can open a productive space for readers, one where we see the author per se, the historical events described, and our view of both from a fresh perspective.

The autobiographer operates in a hybrid genre that must bridge and incorporate both the elements of fictional storytelling and non-fictional aspects of historiography. Autobiographical texts have developed into sub-genres through their history, including self-confessionals such as Augustine's 13-volume *Confessiones* (397-398 AD), reports of religious mysticism by Hildegard von Bingen, or the Renaissance tendencies of self-dramatization by the author in Petrarch's *De secreto* (1342)—self-dramatization or self-staging (“Selbstinszenierung”) will become a prominent feature in Brecht's *Arbeitsjournale*. Toward the second half of the eighteenth century, Enlightenment writers developed an increasing self-awareness and employed societal critique in both fictional and non-fictional texts in the marriage of subjectivism and historicization. Eminent in the genre developments for the German-language literary context was the model of Rousseau's *Les Confessions* (1790). His texts introduced the connections between the author's conspicuous self-exposure, the right to self-criticism, and narration of life experiences.²³³ German authors soon followed with similar autobiographical texts, such as Karl Phillip Moritz's four-part, autobiographical-psychological novel *Anton Reiser* (1785-1790) as an example of an “Entwicklungsgeschichte.” Goethe's *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811-1833) represents the apex of this type of narrative

²³³ Lehmann, “Autobiographie,” 170.

autobiography. Jürgen Lehmann characterizes the developments in the autobiography genre as such:

Zu einer in der deutschen Autobiographik einmaligen Verbindung von historischem und fiktionalem Erzählen wird [bei Goethe] die Geschichte eines Individuums als ein dynamisches, sich ständig veränderndes Wechselverhältnis zwischen Ich und Welt künstlerisch gestaltet. [...] In der [...] Verschmelzung von Kunstwerk und Historiographie erfüllt die Autobiographie insbesondere drei Aufgaben: Sie vervollständigt ein Autorenleben, gestaltet die Vielfalt der eigenen Arbeiten als eine historisch gewachsene Einheit und präsentiert diese Einheit als repräsentativ für menschliches Handeln und Erleben.²³⁴

Other autobiographical texts from the latter half of the nineteenth century tended toward the journalistic stylizing of the “Bericht” or documentary, mostly in the form of socio-political writings by historians, politicians (e.g., Otto von Bismarck), and increasingly from the lives of the working class.

Autobiographies at the turn of the twentieth century exhibited another shift. The difficulties in producing content and negotiating the variety of representative forms intensified with the programmatic “Verbindlichkeitsverlust traditioneller Normen und Vorbilder in der beginnenden Moderne.”²³⁵ This problematic became visible already in

²³⁴ Lehmann, “Autobiographie,” 171.

²³⁵ Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Autobiographie* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2005), 187. See also the recent anthology *German Life Writing in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Birgit Dahlke, Dennis Tate, and Roger Woods (Rochester: Camden House, 2010).

texts in the second-half of the nineteenth century. The breakdown of the prevailing class and economic systems, political instability, and the steady industrialization of Europe were leading causes of a collapsing bourgeois identity, where life's continual, linear progression dissolved into the fragmentary and episodic. The fragment and the ephemeral—seen first in new media such as photography, photomontage, or film—reference both the “Unverbindlichwerden” of conventional paradigms that were oriented toward the notion of totality and cohesion in depicting life, as well as the author's declaratory self-awareness of the process of writing one's own story.²³⁶

Hugo von Hofmannsthal's “Chandos-Brief” (1902), a fictional letter addressed to the scientist and philosopher Sir Francis Bacon, signaled an identity crisis where the author no longer could rely on language to fully comprehend reality and therefore carefully communicate historical and/or fictional narratives. That words—basic components of language—disintegrated in Lord Chandos's mouth (read: Hofmannsthal's pen) “wie modrige Pilze” suggests how closely the crises of identity and language are intertwined and affect the author as much as the subject (literary or otherwise) about whom he/she writes. Here, Hofmannsthal employed a fictional protagonist through whom to represent his own inability to communicate, drawing on linguistic elements in order to critique an ineffectual language. Auto-fictional narratives such as this are symptomatic of the contemporary debates about the efficacy of language in the twentieth century. In essence many artistic movements during this time sought to render the inability to express oneself in various ways. New communicative modes were needed that could capture the feeling of fragmented, unorganized existence. These modes experimented

²³⁶ Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Autobiographie*, 187.

with and utilized progressively multi-mediated representations that both visually and linguistically estranged humans from one another and themselves.

Walter Benjamin's *Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert* (1932-1938) is a fitting example of the modernist's penchant for experiment, hybridity, and montage. The collection describing childhood memories of people, experiences, places, and material objects consists of 41 short, allegorical vignettes "that interweave general confessional recollections with theoretically charged material to form a kind of montage of self-portraiture."²³⁷ Reading the autobiographical miniatures against the backdrop of the Weimar Republic's decline, they describe historical disasters and social politics by way of highly personal reflections. If Benjamin writes the autobiographical history of his Berlin youth both for the reader and for himself, the tone and style impart his underlying sense of absence from these adolescent memories and of transience during forced exile. Taken together the texts are literary enactments that identify the self within the collective history of society.

Berliner Kindheit incorporates two aspects that also appear in Brecht's *Arbeitsjournale*: first, the purposeful self-reference and representation of memory as process through writing; second, the adjoining of this writing process not only with the mediality of language—where the self perceives reality as influenced by media to which one is exposed—but also by observing new technological capabilities and their effects on culture and society after the turn of the century. "New" media and technologies play a considerable role in the texts, revealing their magnetic effect on the masses and their

²³⁷ Gerhard Richter, *Walter Benjamin and the Corpus of Autobiography* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 33.

ability to alter functions like human perception or how we interact or remember. Fascination with a machine as commonplace by today's standards as the telephone points to both its novelty and its increasing presence in Germany's bourgeois households at the time. Benjamin describes the ringing in particular as an external force that invades the sanctity of the home's inner living spaces. Most notable in the short text titled "Das Telefon" is the direct comparison between memory and the medium of the telephone: "Es mag am Bau der Apparate oder der Erinnerung liegen, gewiß ist, daß im Nachhall die Geräusche der ersten Telefongespräche mir sehr anders in den Ohren liegen als die heutigen."²³⁸ For Benjamin it is indistinguishable whether the mental mark that remains with him during the writing process can be traced back to the "Bau" of the telephone or his own memory, which is also described in terms of an apparatus. Through syntactic ambivalence in the placement of the word "Nachhall" ("reverberation" or "echo") Benjamin points to himself both as the young child remembering the sounds for the first time and as the autobiographer now removed from that life event.

Photography is another medium appearing in the critical reflections of *Berliner Kindheit*, a medium with which Brecht closely engages as well. In one instance Benjamin describes a visit to a photographer who surrounds the child with all the props ("Requisiten") he has in his studio, as most photographers do in order to distract children during a photo shoot. The author, however, describes this experience as though he were in danger of disappearing, standing amidst the clutter of props and equipment: "Ich bin entstellt vor Ähnlichkeit mit allem, was hier um mich ist."²³⁹ This "Entstellung"

²³⁸ Walter Benjamin, *Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert 1932-1938*, BGS 4: 242.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 261.

(“distortion” or “disfigurement”) is meant to be a distortion in the writing process through the medium of memory and photography. At the end of *Berliner Kindheit* the reader discovers why Benjamin compares the sequence of 41 textual tableaux to the technique used in the cinematograph of its predecessors. His comparison refers to the optical illusion produced by “flip books,” a series of bound drawings that are animated by thumbing through them quickly. All representation—whether in photographic images or texts—is inevitably subjective, therefore in some ways biased and distorted. However, as Benjamin notes in the final words of *Berliner Kindheit*:

Ich denke mir, daß jenes “ganze Leben” von dem man sich erzählt, daß es vorm Blick der Sterbenden vorbeizieht, aus solchen Bildern sich zusammensetzt [...]. Sie flitzen rasch vorbei wie jene Blätter der straff gebundenen Büchlein, die einmal Vorläufer unserer Kinomatographen waren. Mit leisem Druck bewegte sich der Daumen an ihrer Schnittfläche entlang; dann wurden sekundenweise Bilder sichtbar, die sich von einander fast nicht unterschieden.²⁴⁰

Without the representational distortion of memory through the writing process or taking a photograph there can be no act of memory work. Benjamin’s text, and this quote in particular, affirms the impermanence of memory and history, compounded by the added degree of separation when represented through other media. Can the author trust his/her recollections if so alienated from the self? Does one remember what is real or merely its representation?

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 304.

We see reverberations (“Nachhalleffekte”) and echoes of Benjamin’s message in Brecht’s autobiographical experiments. For Brecht the reader must learn to read between the lines and question conventional wisdom. To do this he exposed the contradictions at play in the mediated representations of history and culture, engaging with images and texts that produce a change in perspective for the reader. In the *Arbeitsjournale* the reader engages with Brecht and his work process as such: “[...] wenn man einen Blick auf sich gerichtet fühlt, auch im Rücken, erwidert man ihn.”²⁴¹ By holding the mirror toward society, Brecht’s work continues to be useful in the present day.

II. “*Grenzen einhalten, Grenzen überschreiten*”: Brecht’s *Unsettled Autobiography*

Brecht constructed his work journals as outlined above, drawing on traditions and genre conventions from the past while also exhibiting interest in something new. Describing the evolution of his attitudes and his art, Brecht called himself “ein Neurer” who began his

²⁴¹ Benjamin, attributed by Brecht in the journal entry dated 25 August 1938 (BFA 26: 315). Here, Brecht describes Benjamin’s visit where the two discuss, among other things, Benjamin’s theory of the artwork’s “Aura” in an age of technical reproducibility. The quote above ends with an exclamation mark like so: “(!)” by Brecht. The editorial commentary in the BFA suggests that Brecht was “durch Benjamins Überlegungen angeregt” (see BFA 26: 610). Brecht continues: “Die Erwartung, daß, was man anblickt, einen selber anblickt, verschafft die Aura. Diese soll in letzter Zeit im Zerfall sein [...]. Benjamin hat das bei der Analyse des Films entdeckt [...] durch die Reproduzierbarkeit von Kunstwerken.” However, he was generally skeptical about Benjamin’s theory: “Es ist ziemlich grauenhaft.”

career “[b]einahe auf jedem Feld [...] konventionell.”²⁴² He followed a course of studying “older” genres and media forms from various times in history such as lyric poetry, music, drama, and storytelling, gleaning what he could from that which seemed to him to be productive for his present work. The rest, he says, would be left aside, “wenn sie dem, was ich sagen wollte, im Weg standen.”²⁴³ This statement could be read as opportunism; indeed, Brecht was aware of his contemporaries’ criticisms, for example, that he at times exhibited “formalist” tendencies.

Brecht experimented with novel modes of communication, creating along the way hybrid forms (photograph-text combinations, textual and visual reappropriations, drawings, etc.) to express self-critical reflections and document socio-historical observations. As outlined above he extracted from past forms such as the self-dramatization and social critique that explore the relationship between artist and dominant culture. All this led Brecht toward an evolving, programmatic aesthetic in his worldview and theory where the reader learns to refocus attention on his/her own identity via the cultural and historical context. Unlike Goethe’s “Einheit” (unity) of culture and author, Brecht’s short vignettes in the *Arbeitsjournale* were closer in many ways to

²⁴² Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 315-16. This entry, dated 3 August 1938, is one of the first in the context of the work journals (apart from the diaries or “autobiographical notes”) in which he discusses the developments in his artistic career.

²⁴³ Ibid. Brecht continues, specifically referring to the “Song” and to “Massenlieder”: “Ich ging aus von [konventionellen Formen] und durchbrach sie später.” This reflexive statement, which appears in the very first month of the Danish work journals, sets the self-critical tone for much of the rest of his work.

Benjamin's project. They thematize history and art by combining turning points of historical significance with visual snapshots that adapt (here in the sense of "bearbeiten" or literally "working on") older traditions to newer ones, and change the reader's perspective on history and cultural production ("umfunktionieren").

Turning attention toward navigating the terrain of diverse writings found in the BFA volumes, it is necessary to distinguish between the three groups of autobiographical text-sets: the "Tagebuch," "Autobiographische Notizen," and "*Journale*" respectively. All three textual groupings penned by Brecht represent reflections from various stages in his life, from youth to before his death, and cover an almost overwhelming array of thoughts and literary work. Generally, scholars view the "Autobiographische Notizen" and the "Tagebuch" sets as his more intimate, personal writings during his life and career.

Brecht's "Notizen" span most of his life from 1913 during his school years until 1955 before his death. Herta Ramthun, librarian at the BBA, first arranged and published these writings (along with the "Tagebücher") in 1975 and labeled them "Aufzeichnungen," retaining the sense of their intentional sketch-like character. These entries, found in the BFA "*Journale*" volumes, are comprised of traditional, autobiographical notes of a personal diary, but also shorter, sometimes one-line reflections and questions that resemble fleeting thoughts or aphorisms. Other examples include, but are not limited to: a "protocol"-style transcript of interview preparations; a list of prose works Brecht had completed to-date; sample (auto)biographical sketches of his life (in first and third person); simple lists of things to learn and plans to accomplish; or inventories of his material possessions.

Many entries have no connection to neighboring “Notizen,” arranged in the BFA chronologically and kept in close proximity to the same dates corresponding to the diaries and work journals (although the latter writings are separate entities and for the most part exclusive regarding content). The various texts were individual papers scattered among folders from Brecht’s literary estate at the BBA, with others found in various notebook volumes. BFA Volume 26 contains “Notizen” from 1919-1920 and then again from 1921-1938; Volume 27 encompasses years 1942-1955. Not every year is represented within those time frames. For example, no entry exists for 1935, and the years between 1939-1941 are also not present. “Notizen” for the years 1944, 1946-1948, 1951, and 1953 are not included in Volume 27. The “Notizen” entries are nevertheless notable because, even though they are sporadic and pithy, they span the longest period of Brecht’s life (approximately 42 years).

Because of their intermittent nature the “Notizen” do not supply the reader with adequate information on Brecht’s life traceable throughout those 42 years. There are undocumented years and many voids that preclude the “Autobiographische Notizen” from being consistently helpful to scholars. Many years during Brecht’s youth, his periods of great artistic production and collaboration in exile, and his return to Europe after World War II are simply missing or unsustainable. To be sure, the notes do contain references to Brecht’s life and work. It seems that the model of approximately one entry per year afforded Brecht the opportunity to record and summarize his curriculum vitae, for example from the “Notizen” entry for 1934: “Ich bin jetzt 36 Jahre alt und habe diese

Jahre nicht müßig verbracht [...]”²⁴⁴ Or writing in third person from 1940: “Brecht ist Arier, sein Bruder [Walter Brecht] ist heute noch Universitätsprofessor in Deutschland. Brechts Frau [...] dagegen ist Jüdin.”²⁴⁵ Many entries begin in this same way and proceed to chronicle his artistic accomplishments thus far, with short commentary (or none at all). Yet these references are too random and amorphous to allow us to draw meaningful conclusions. Instead the “Notizen” offer the reader short glimpses—an unsystematic year-by-year overview—into Brecht’s idea of himself, something he expands in multiple directions in the *Arbeitsjournale*.

If one can judge the “Autobiographische Notizen” as having less to do with Brecht’s artistic production per se compared to the *Arbeitsjournale* or the “Tagebuch,” then the “Tagebuch” can be located somewhere between those other two groups of autobiographical text sets. The diaries contain personal entries of the events in his early life, as well as his attempts to come to terms with his own evolving artistic identity within the turbulent social and historical contexts from the twilight years of the Kaiserreich, through World War I, and into the formation of the short-lived democratic experiment of the Weimar Republic. He kept diaries primarily during his time in Augsburg (as Gymnasiast “Eugen Brecht”), as a university student in Munich, and in his early days in Berlin between 1921 and 1922. Overall the diaries cover the period from 1913-1922 in

²⁴⁴ Brecht, “Autobiographische Notizen: 1934,” BFA 26: 302. Also noteworthy in this 1934 note is his confession: “Dies alles erwähne ich nur, um dem einigen Nachdruck zu geben, daß ich sage: ich kenne mich im Leben nicht aus.”

²⁴⁵ Brecht, “Autobiographische Notizen: 1940,” BFA 26: 367.

circa 270 pages of the BFA editions (Volume 26). The manuscripts originated from diverse sources in bound, hardcover folders housed at the BBA.²⁴⁶

The “Tagebücher” read like Brecht’s personal calendar of daily life and work schedule. The entries are ordered as found in the manuscripts according to Brecht and labeled in various ways: first, with day/date headings (e.g., “Sonntag, 19.”) from notebooks labeled with the month bound together; second, with a non-specific date marker (e.g., “Ende Juni”) found also within notebooks titled with the year; or simply with ordinal numbers corresponding to the date in a specific month which appears on the manuscript notebook (e.g., “1.” through “31.” in a notebook labeled “Oktober 1921”).²⁴⁷ Unlike the sporadic threads of the “Autobiographische Notizen” spread out over numerous years, the diary entries represent a more complete picture of Brecht and his biography and endeavors between 1913 and 1922 without the abrupt temporal gaps.

The texts reveal an ongoing interest in integrating biographical documentation with critical reflections on his developing aesthetics. The young Brecht does this with increasing awareness of societal and cultural shifts in Germany, using (both negative and constructive) critical observations about himself to comment on Germany as a whole. The diaries display his fragmented, often contradictory self-image, one that vacillates

²⁴⁶ Hanne Hiob, Brecht’s daughter from his first marriage to opera singer Marianne Zoff, contributed a smaller collection of diary texts from early 1921 mostly dealing with Brecht’s reflections concerning Marianne.

²⁴⁷ For example, see the diary for “Oktober 1921,” in “Tagebuch 1921-1922,” BFA 26: 245-58. The corpus of texts included in BFA Volume 26 contains numerous examples of this type of ordering system.

from undisciplined and puerile to worldly and astute. The reader can see the young Brecht's struggle with language, searching for his voice; the writing shifts between being brutal, dark, and imprecise to the lyrical. Sometimes he shifts his attention within a single entry, first covering intimate thoughts, then moving to a critique of the Expressionist stage.

For example, an item from 17 June 1921 begins with a highly self-critical reflection of how others perceive Brecht and how he in turn perceives himself. It ends with charged opprobrium aimed at a production of Georg Kaiser's *Von morgen bis mitternachts* at the Neue Bühne (a worker-owned theater house in Munich founded in 1919). Brecht writes: "Als ich heut vor dem Spiegel Kirschen fraß, sah ich mein idiotisches Gesicht."²⁴⁸ The subordinate clause that opens this line has the deeply self-reflective, epic character seen in his later poetry, whereas the main clause finishes with a youthful crassness. The choice of raw language—an "idiotic face"—is indicative of Brecht in the "Tagebuch." Yet such self-criticism speaks to his willingness to write openly of his identity. As he begins to shift his attention toward the theater production in this same entry, his authorial tone changes too: "Ich beobachte, daß ich anfangs, ein Klassiker zu werden."²⁴⁹ Here, he wears the hat of a theater critic who evaluates a play by first turning the judgment upon himself. (23 years old at the time, he went on to call the play "ein[e] scheußlich[e] Offenbarung von Menschlichkeit"!.) The brazen comments, coupled with his remarks about his face, demonstrate an early example of his method: to hold the mirror to reality in order to see one's own mediated, yet unadulterated

²⁴⁸ Brecht, "Tagebuch," BFA 26: 229.

²⁴⁹ Brecht, "Tagebuch," BFA 26: 230.

reflection.²⁵⁰ Brecht criticizes his contemporaries' tendencies to discredit any discussion of artistic form, and in doing so, ironically aligns himself against those (Kaiser, Gerhart Hauptmann) who engage with unacceptable social messages on stage (or none at all).²⁵¹ In this diary entry the reader recognizes a rift: a youthful, insecure writer who has not yet found his place, a growing skeptic of his social and cultural surroundings; yet, conversely, he is also a twenty-something playwright who exudes confidence and is able to mobilize his talents in a brazen but effective manner.

The "Tagebuch" collection contains other stylistic generic modes ranging from poems and essays, theater and literary criticism and to-do lists, to critical book reviews. Found within these pages is the development of Brecht's personal and nascent artistic identity. The "Tagebuch" is and will continue to be a starting point for research into Brecht's early plays and poetry. It chronicles a gradual shift in his aesthetics from the anti-Expressionist traits of *Baal*, whose protagonist represents an anti-hero who rejects bourgeois society, to the critical, anti-mimetic realism that would eventually lead to theater for the sake of social change. The reader also discovers contradictions in his theoretical thinking over time, e.g.: "Man muß loskommen von der großen Geste des Hinschmeißens einer Idee, des 'Noch-nicht-Fertigen,' und sollte hinkommen zu dem

²⁵⁰ See the *Brecht-Handbuch*'s section for the "Tagebücher," where Jan Knopf alludes to early critical reception of Brecht's "cheeky" ("frech") remark about himself. Literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki had interpreted this line to mean that Brecht, who was only 23 years old at the time and could only count a few works to his repertoire, had the audacity to consider himself a German "literary classic."

²⁵¹ See also the diary entry from 16 November 1921, in *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 260.

Hinschmeißen des Kunstwerks, der gestalteten Idee, der größeren Geste des ‘Mehr-als-Fertigen.’”²⁵² In his criticism of Kaiser’s theater aesthetics Brecht suggests that the theater should not be averse to realizing its own form where a specific detail becomes a moment of awareness for the audience. However, his apparent rejection of the authorial *Gestus* of a work “Not-yet-finished” would reappear later as a central tenet of collective artistic creation and revision in his theater production models (*Modellbücher*), albeit with slight variations.²⁵³ Most important for his autobiographical writings was the fact that Brecht was aware of the self-reflections in the diary entries, evidenced by both his changes in language and perspective.

A review of Brecht’s autobiographical corpus, especially in the “Autobiographische Notizen” and the “Tagebuch,” reveals that these texts cannot be conjoined into one simple category. Rather, they served different purposes both for the author in the creative process and in his biography. These collected writings are puzzle pieces without a definitive whole; they vary in frequency, tone, and most of all in content. Readers can identify phases in these autobiographical texts, the “Notizen” as sketch-like notes referring to Brecht’s life, and the diary entries of 1913-1922 as flashes into his future ideas and life experiences also serving as indispensable resources for the early plays. The *Arbeitsjournale*, however, contain a different sort of textual and visual material:

²⁵² Brecht, diary entry from 17 June 1921, in *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 230.

²⁵³ See, for example, the “Vorwort” in the *Antigonemodell 1948* (BFA 25: 77) and the *Couragemodell 1949* (BFA 25: 172).

So finden sich neben Kommentaren zu zeitgeschichtlichen Ereignissen, Berichten über Gespräche und Kontakte mit Freunden, Intellektuellen, Schriftstellern, neben Reflexionen über Kunst und (natur-) wissenschaftliche Theoreme auch Beschreibungen über die (wechselnden) Umgebungen und Landschaften, über die Schwierigkeit mit und Zweifel an der eigenen Arbeit und ihren Ergebnissen sowie über familiäre Vorgänge.²⁵⁴

The journals are not wholly “autobiographical” in the sense that they do not all pertain exclusively to Brecht’s life; in fact, Brecht’s authorial agency in some entries is minimal (or even borrowed) at best. Along with the biographical elements the journals represent a parallel development (alongside Brecht’s epic theater) of a literary aesthetic that produces and is itself a product of Brecht’s experiments with a new form of historiography.

The single biggest textual grouping in the various autobiographical writings located in BFA Volumes 26 and 27 consists of Brecht’s *Journale*. These “working” journals present Brecht and his positions in a multifaceted way, from author and playwright to father and essayist, as a friend and collaborator to provocateur and avid collector of art and material objects. Typical of his project of dialectical writing, they also uncover the mundane banalities underlying the very core of the Janus-faced nature of war, which devolves into polarization, conflict, and disavowal of social truths. The journals display a greater tendency toward experiment than the *Kriegsfibel*, as discussed in chapter five, regarding the juxtaposed/montage form of images (mostly photographs)

²⁵⁴ Roland Jost, “Journale,” *Brecht-Handbuch*, Vol. 4, ed. Jan Knopf (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), 430.

and narrative. The former's heterogeneous qualities help to expose characteristics in Brecht's work such as a "historischer Blick" and the "änderbare Natur des Menschen."

Brecht meticulously collected and prepared a wealth of materials in a total of 13 notebooks during some of his most artistically productive years, beginning around 1938 in Danish exile until 1955 just before his death in postwar East Berlin, capital of the German Democratic Republic. In contrast to the "Autobiographische Notizen" (also referred to as the "Aufzeichnungen") and the "Tagebücher," the texts found in the work journals remained unpublished during Brecht's lifetime. He had given the materials the title "Journale," further substantiating the claim that the journals were separate from the other autobiographical texts. His wife, Helene Weigel, had posthumously suggested that the name of these collected journals should speak directly to the "work" aspect contained within them; thus she added "Arbeit" to the title. This addition, according to some, had misled scholars and readers into focusing purely on the aspects pertaining to the origins of Brecht's other primary works, i.e., the plays, dramaturgical theories, etc.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵ Jost, "Journale," 430. See also Wizisla, "Über die Einhaltung von Prinzipien," 100f; and Wizisla, "Private or Public? The Bertolt Brecht Archive as an Object of Desire," *Brecht in the GDR. Politics, Culture, Prosperity*, eds. Laura Bradley and Karen Leeder (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), 107. According to Wieland Herzfelde, Brecht had also rejected the title of "Werke" for his series of literary and theatrical experiments during the 1930s, which were eventually titled the way Brecht had wanted: "Versuche." The Malik Verlag had warned against this label as being too esoteric for the average reader ("nur für Fachleute"). One wonders whether Brecht would have consented to the title for his 30-volume critical edition (BFA): *Werke*?

Nevertheless, Weigel's titular addendum supports his penchant for the evolution of his works through collaborative ideas and constant revision, as well as his rejection of artistic works that do not fight against stasis. In a letter to Peter Suhrkamp (his long-time friend and publisher), Brecht writes:

Fünf Jahre hielten wir uns in Dänemark auf, ein Jahr in Schweden, ein Jahr in Finnland, wartend auf Visa, und wir sind jetzt an vier Jahre in den USA, in Kalifornien. Natürlich schrieb ich eine Menge und ich hoffe, wir können einiges davon zusammen durchnehmen. (Nebenbei: sagen Sie, wo immer Sie das können, daß ich dringend bitte, keine größere Arbeit von mir, alt oder neu, aufzuführen, ohne daß ich dazu Stellung nehmen kann. Alles braucht Änderungen.)²⁵⁶

This letter highlights the years during his exile from Germany and mirrors the same period in his artistic production of the work journals in which he “wrote a great deal.” He admits, both to Suhrkamp and to himself, that everything “needs changes”—a necessary evil of the publishing world. Brecht also realized early on in his career that the artist had little control of his own work once in the public sphere.

Nonetheless, Weigel cannot be held in contempt for “mislabeling” the journals in such a way; in fact, Weigel's label may have promoted Brecht's original intent by highlighting the “work” or production aspect of the *Arbeits-journale*. First, the “work” journal designation distinguishes them from the more private “Tagebücher” and “Notizen” (whose naming Brecht had most likely initiated) by stressing the contrasting tone in the journals. Second, the “work” designation marks the journals' element of

²⁵⁶ Brecht, BFA 29: 365-66. This letter (number 1194) is dated October 1945.

productive engagement as a prominent feature for the reader—here, the actual process of thinking and working, not necessarily the origins of the work. Productivity for Brecht was a challenge for the artist who could successfully adapt (historicize) what had come before and then render the material relevant for today. One could then regard the *Arbeitsjournale*, both as Weigel and perhaps Brecht envisioned, as a model of study for Brecht’s life and “productive action.” The reader uncovers the “Entwurf eines Menschen,” whose penchant for critical thought becomes visible (Brecht’s “sichtbar machen”) amidst the image-text combinations.²⁵⁷ These glimpses of Brecht are not meant to be definitive. Just as the Berliner Ensemble conceived the *Modellbücher* for stage productions to provide suggestive, adaptable, and fluid representations (or: a working iconography) of how Brecht’s theater pieces might be staged through a specific “Brechtian” lens, the hybrid form of the *Arbeitsjournal* can also be a model for identifying the author as creative originator, and anchoring him within the various events of contemporary history. They are models for a “historisch-materialistisches Denken” aimed at teaching other authors and Brecht’s readership about “das Nachdenken über die Möglichkeit des Schreibens von Stücken überhaupt.”²⁵⁸ The reader identifies Brecht’s interest in himself as much as his attention to showing others his approach to staging

²⁵⁷ Fritz Joachim Raddatz, “Brechts Privat-Zeitung. *Arbeitsjournal 1938-1955*—Immer noch keine Antwort auf die Frage nach der privaten Person,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10 März 1973. Raddatz also states how the *Arbeitsjournale* show Brecht’s anti-“Abfertigungsgesten.” The subtitle to Raddatz’s article is also appropriate within this context of the work of art as something not yet finished.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

plays and historiography.²⁵⁹ The entries found in the work journals read like a “private newspaper,” and have both qualities: a type of “Zeit-Dokument” of contemporary historical events, personal accounts of his contacts and collaborations with friends and intellectuals, interfaced with reflections about art and technology, descriptions of his ever-changing home address, and the frustrations and results of his own work.

Over the course of those 20 years Brecht’s engagement with other forms of media matured, stemming partly from the absence of any physical stage on which to produce his German-language plays during exile. During those years he documented the parallels between his experiences and frustrations as well as the increasing body of dramatic work he produced, visually crafting his and others’ observations into a chronicle of history. The sheer amount of sources and material speaks to the project’s importance for Brecht, which he gathered, (re-)assembled, and stored in “Mappen” or folders along with his other work. These papers, clippings, photographs, drawings, etc., accompanied Brecht and his family at each station during their European and North American exile.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ In addition to carefully protecting and transporting his work through each geographic point during his exile, Brecht apparently thought very much of himself, especially his face, as seen in numerous photographs from the *Arbeitsjournale*. Promotional shots (e.g., with the boxer Paul Samson-Körner in the 1920s) exist by photographer Konrad Reßler, featured in Michael Koetzle, ed., *Brecht beim Photographen. Porträtstudien von Konrad Reßler* (München: Affholderbach & Strohmann, 1987); or consider the busts of himself (and Helene Weigel) he kept in his workroom.

²⁶⁰ The material included in the *Arbeitsjournale* was collected not only during Brecht’s exile years. On the contrary, he had already begun to collect writings and visual elements

The *Arbeitsjournale* contain materials labeled from Denmark (20 July 1938–15 March 1939), Sweden (23 April 1939–10 February 1940), Finland (17 April 1940–13 May 1941), America (21 July 1941–5 November 1947), Switzerland (16 December 1947–20 October 1948), and finally Berlin (22 October 1948–18 July 1955).²⁶¹ The “Journal Amerika” comprises the single largest series of image-text documentation, attesting to Brecht’s intensive work with the journals. During this time, he often made daily contributions (sometimes several entries per day) referring to, for example: his thoughts on the loss of his collaborator and lover Margarete Steffin who died in Moscow in 1941 on their way to America, the increasing hostilities at the Eastern front in World War II, and the American military presence in Europe and the Pacific. While most years between 1938 and 1955 are well chronicled, the *Arbeitsjournale*, like the “Notizen” and “Tagebuch,” contain temporal lacunae. Some of these represent larger gaps in Brecht’s biography. For example, the journal entries toward the end of Brecht’s American work journals become sparse; the time between 5 January 1946 and 20 February 1947 (over one year) goes completely unremarked.²⁶² Documentation of his final years of life between 1953-1955 is very sporadic (just 17 entries over a two-year period) and devoted almost exclusively to production and staging issues of his plays in Berlin.

from diverse sources starting in the 1920s and throughout the 1930s for future use in his plays, journals, and the *Kriegsfibel*, among others.

²⁶¹ See Figure 4 for a listing of each journal grouping with corresponding BBA identification call numbers.

²⁶² See Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 239.

Brecht's inclusion of photographs conspicuously traced the escalations in World War II, making these images some of the most visually striking in the *Arbeitsjournale*, beginning already before the outbreak of the war in 1938.²⁶³ The Danish journal contains 23 pages of texts, including three photographs (all private photos showing Brecht and his family); the Swedish journal comprises 27 pages total, with eight photographs and clippings; the "Journal Finland" sees a dramatic spike in the ratio between textual entries by Brecht and appropriated photographs, with 53 images on 117 pages in the collection; the American journal contains the highest image-to-text ratio with 119 images on 244 pages (approximately 49 percent of entries have at least one image, some have multiple or a series of images); the Swiss journal has three photos (two of which are personal) in 21 pages; lastly, the Berlin (GDR) journals contain 17 photographs (many of which feature Brecht in production photos from *Mutter Courage* and *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe*) in 72 pages. The trajectory begins in Denmark with mostly personal images, becomes increasingly less private during the seven years in Finland and the USA, and returns from America and post-World War II to more personal photographs from Switzerland and Berlin.

Overall Brecht seems to privilege photography over other image formats in the *Arbeitsjournale*. He had numerous photographs taken of himself, some at home, some at work, with family, with friends, many of them featuring what would become a common trademark of his self-portraits: the cigar. Numerous photographs of Brecht and his family, positioned between images of World War II, facilitate a reading of a self-referencing

²⁶³ This particular photo-text constellation between 16 and 18 August 1938 from the Danish journals (BFA 26: 319-20) will be discussed below.

Gestus at work in the *Arbeitsjournale*. In the same vein of the “Versuche,” his experiments with literary and pictorial forms display his penchant for innovation, experiment, and “Bearbeitung.” Implicitly we might read this trans-medial work in its entirety as a suggestion that photographs further elicit Brecht’s ideas and trigger new approaches to art, whether to illustrate his thoughts on the status of World War II, or simply to add an element of visuality to his reflections on life, art, class struggle, and exile. He includes photographs from various sources to present the reader with the manifold contradictions that are at the crux of his exile situation. In the journals we read his thoughts on the origins and execution of a war defined as a struggle against fascism and class inequality, where a political dissident like Brecht remains effectively powerless to stop the atrocities. Despite this, he employs the photographs as a means to archive daily events; in particular the journals show how those events both coincide with his life in exile and the effects of those interactions and experiences. The spectrum of the war combines with photographic images and journal entries, both to be read in various ways.

III. *Locating the Self: “Autography” in the Arbeitsjournale*

It is unavoidable that the reader of Brecht’s *Arbeitsjournale*—even one who is searching for information not directly related to his biography—will interact with materials pertaining to the author’s life and personal experiences. He did not always separate personal and social history from one another when crafting the work journals; he continuously had his eyes fixed on his audience, even when referring to himself. Readers may also have difficulties in distilling the difference between the various “roles” which Brecht occupies. Does he present himself as the exiled author who laments the lack of a

theater and posits the idea of art for social change? Or is he a director leading a theatrical existence in exile? Where can the reader locate this duality and what effect does this have? This section focuses on the textual experiments in the *Arbeitsjournale* and apparent tensions between Brecht the writer and Brecht the subject in his own writing, while offering examples of how the photograph-text combinations encourage the reader to (re)consider the idea of Brecht the author and Brecht subject.

The *Arbeitsjournale* cannot be viewed solely as autobiographical documents; they are also an artistically crafted product and must be evaluated as such. To that end the “journal” form with its inherent tendencies toward hybridity seemed to be the vehicle best suited for Brecht’s intense reflections on his biography, his work, and the socio-economic and political conditions during World War II. He was keenly aware of the need to both break with and adhere to conventions of the autobiographical genre even while piecing together the journals:

Dieser Tage habe ich das ganze Journal [*Arbeitsjournal*] oberflächlich überflogen. Natürlich ist es recht distortiert, unerwünschter Leser wegen, und ich werde Mühe haben, diese Anhaltspunkte wirklich einmal zu benutzen. Da werden gewisse Grenzen eingehalten, weil eben Grenzen zu überschreiten sind.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴ Brecht’s statement (paraphrased in the heading for section II) “Grenzen einhalten, Grenzen überschreiten” can be found in an entry dated 27 February 1942, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 51. See also Jost, “Journale,” 431.

This entry tells the reader much about Brecht's intentions in creating the work journals as well as how he decided to present himself in various ways.²⁶⁵ The first sentence marks the importance and attention to detail in producing the journals. Brecht regularly returned to his work to redact passages from the entries; this is one example where evidence ended up in an individual entry. The final remark signals his awareness that the *Arbeitsjournale* as an artistic product had to be able to break the rules, at least where the traditions and practices of genre were concerned. This not only allowed Brecht to tell his story, but also the stories of others who appear throughout the journals. Taken in another way, and interpreted within the context of his life, one could read the "Grenzen" as an allusion to Brecht and his family's continued crossing of physical, geographic borders from one political state to the next. The adjective "gewiss" and the particle "eben" emphasize both of these potential readings: breaking boundaries in his work, and his family's journeys spanning 15 years during exile.

In one of the earliest articles on the subject Peter V. Brady regards Brecht's work journals (with the inclusion of photographs in particular) as something beyond the traditional generic term "journal/diary" by noting the "private and public entries." Can the assertion be expanded to encompass the journals in their entirety, if we ask the question: when is a journal more than simply a journal? In this case an artistic product like the *Arbeitsjournale* can afford a writer greater license to navigate the limits of private, subjective thoughts and published work. These freedoms, as Brady continues, are

²⁶⁵ The next section of this chapter returns to this quote to discuss the "distortion" problems associated with the actual construction (image-text montage) of the journals and how they contribute to purposeful and distinct reading strategies.

unmistakable in the *Arbeitsjournale*: “[...] not only the obvious freedom of social and political comment, often unpublishable in the circumstances of exile, but also the freedom to illustrate without regard to format or technical problems of reproduction” or publication.²⁶⁶ Brecht directly confronts the reader with photographic representations of his targets: for example, Pope Pius XII, industrialists, political leaders, or army generals.

Brecht engages with the tension between what is personal and what is public, and therefore publishable, in an entry from the Finnish journal, dated 21 April 1941:

Daß diese Aufzeichnungen so wenig Privates enthalten, kommt nicht nur davon, daß ich selbst mich für Privates nicht eben interessiere (und kaum eine Darstellungsart, die mich befriedigt, dafür zur Verfügung habe), sondern hauptsächlich davon, daß ich von vornherein damit rechnete, sie über Grenzen von nicht übersehbarer Anzahl und Qualität bringen zu müssen. Der letztere Gedanke hält mich auch davon ab, andere als literarische Themen zu wählen.²⁶⁷

The beginning of this entry is noteworthy for two reasons. First, Brecht provides a candid assessment of the journal writing process. His comment—that the journals contain so little that is “private”—is itself a highly private reflection. Second, the comment allows the reader to pose questions about the thought process behind constructing the work journals. Brecht and his family were not alone in Finland during exile; they received visitors on occasion, Brecht worked with collaborators, and he corresponded with many

²⁶⁶ Peter V. Brady, “From Cave-Painting to ‘Fotogramm’: Brecht, Photography and the *Arbeitsjournal*,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 14:3 (July 1978): 271.

²⁶⁷ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 475.

fellow artists and friends. His statement suggests that others were involved in conceiving the *Arbeitsjournale*; it also offers clues to Brecht's own thought process as he proceeded: what was he asking himself along the way? The final statement reveals the underlying issues that he had to address in producing the journals, such as the entries' lack of a cohesive layout ("Übersichtlichkeit") in general or their overall literary qualities. These considerations, according to Brecht, kept him from focusing his attentions purely on the "private" moments in favor of literary topics. The entire entry at the meta-level reads like a direct answer to a possibly anticipated question along the lines of: "Why do the journals contain so few of your private thoughts?" Of course the journals do contain personal reflections throughout, and he even references the journals at various points.²⁶⁸ Here, Brecht highlights the importance, especially for scholars, that he was well aware of this tension at play.

The rest of the entry reveals other insights. Brecht mentions his ongoing interest in the "journal" text type, well suited for his needs compared to the lack of alternative artistic forms. His goal of producing a crafted piece of work to document his story (and history)—which, according to Brecht, kept him from including more things "private"—stresses the difficulties in his situation. From the beginning, his plan was to create a hybrid "Chronik" that would cross not only political "boundaries," but also the borders of

²⁶⁸ There are numerous other entries where Brecht explicitly remarks on himself and references his journal writing to the reader, for example: BFA 27: 72 (24 March 1942), 116 (27 July 1942), and 227 (25 July 1945). "Looking back" and reassessment is characteristic of Brecht's writings, especially later in his life. See, for example, "Bei Durchsicht meiner ersten Stücke" (1953), BFA 23: 239-45.

genre. His reference to “Qualität,” quoted above, alludes to the penchant to create something new from what has come before, yet maintain a standard of literary integrity and cultural criticism in tune with his Marxist worldview. In short, Brecht’s comments on the paucity of “private” entries points to the emphasis he placed on employing the journals as a medium with which to expose the contradictions and atrocities during the exile years—not necessarily to focus on his day-to-day existence, but as complement to both. Of course, the journals reveal much more: Brecht as creative artist and thematized subject, his working method, and his orientation to his readership.

While the “public vs. private” dichotomy is an aspect worthy of discussion, particularly within the context of the *Arbeitsjournale*, it is also one worth problematizing and probing further. Brady’s exact definition of “public” remains unclear regarding the numerous photographs in the journals. The dichotomy neglects Brecht’s original intentions for the work and actually confines the reader to arrive at a specific meaning that is too narrow in scope. One must consider the difference between a private or personal photograph and one that was always intended for dissemination to the masses. Art critic and theorist John Berger elucidates this distinction as such:

In the private use of photography, the context of the instant recorded is preserved so that the photograph lives in an ongoing continuity [...]. The public photograph, by contrast, is torn from its context, and becomes a dead object, which, exactly because it is dead, lends itself to any arbitrary use.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ John Berger, *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 56.

A family photo is entirely different from one which records dead soldiers fallen on the field of battle, yet both types are to be found in the *Arbeitsjournale*.²⁷⁰ The appropriated photographs from various newspapers, magazines, journals, etc., represent elements on the page that are in essence “non-Brecht.” Not only do they highlight the agency gap at play—Brecht was not a photographer!—but they also, as Berger explains when examining “public” domain photographs, become open to various interpretation(s) when placed into any number of contexts.

In an opposing opinion based on an examination of the photographs in Ernst Jünger’s 1930 autobiographical text *Das Antlitz des Weltkrieges. Fronterlebnisse deutscher Soldaten*, J. J. Long argues against Berger’s assertion that the photograph becomes “public” and therefore stripped of specific contextualization. Long states that the images and texts “represent moments that have been torn from a temporal continuum and cannot be—or at least *are not*—reintegrated into larger narratives of individual development.”²⁷¹ This claim could be applied to reading the work journals, which contain images taken out of their original “continuum”; however, they also problematize (and possibly contradict) Long’s assertion within this specific context. Unlike Jünger’s image-text book, Brecht’s *Arbeitsjournale* reappropriated various mass-media images of war in order to at least partially link Brecht’s artistic and personal endeavors with these world

²⁷⁰ See the early journals from Denmark, the later journals from America, as well as the Berlin (GDR) journals for examples of photographs of Brecht and his family.

²⁷¹ J. J. Long, “From *Das Antlitz des Weltkrieges* to *Der gefährliche Augenblick*: Ernst Jünger, Photography, Autobiography, and Modernity,” *German Life Writing in the Twentieth Century*, 64.

events. The acts of appropriation and recontextualization are at the core of Brecht's project, as seen so poignantly in the *Arbeitsjournale* as well as the *Kriegsfibel* photographs. According to Roland Jost, the public (photographs) vs. private (Brecht's textual entries) approach to the image-text combinations in the work journals causes the reader to separate and/or differentiate what they find. This, states Jost, forces the reader to interpret the images and textual entries in one of two ways; either these elements are pulled apart and treated independently, or they are to be read "gegenseitig."²⁷² Such criticisms of Brecht's approach correctly amplify its shortcomings. The reader whose point of departure is the public/private dichotomy will marginalize the very aspects of the work journals that the author sought to underscore—its experimental, probing character and the objectivization of his dual roles. The textual entries, which on occasion have a more "private" or intimate tone, also help to break down the public vs. private argument when considered against Brecht's comments above ("unerwünschter Leser wegen"). He may have wished to keep certain material and information away from critical scrutiny, although he never stipulated exactly what should be excluded and from whom. Yet, he intended to eventually publish the journals, conceiving this project over a lengthy period of time out of the need to document his personal experiences during exile and come to terms with causes and effects of World War II.

Questions arise: where do we find "Brecht" in the work journals? And which "Brecht" appears at these points—Brecht the author or Brecht the subject of his own literary production? How does the text create tensions between this apparent "autographic" discrepancy? We may answer these questions by investigating Brecht's

²⁷² Jost, "Journale," 425.

auto(bio)graphy in the work journals. Autobiography, is not simply a genre of non-fiction of historical events in the life of an author, for it invites the reader to closely examine two other aspects: first, the relationship between the “I” as the narrating writer and the “I” as the narrated subject or person being described in the text; second, the relationship between the time at which the text was written and the narrated time within the text.

Problematizing and questioning the function (and the very idea) of the author has become a central tenet in the quest to define the genre of autobiography, in particular the question of the self. This question is predetermined in the logic of autobiographical writing and repositions the fuzzy identity of narratological elements like author, narrator, and protagonist: i.e., who is “speaking” in the text? The autobiography is a text type that presupposes the fusion of the author as the subject of the writing: authors who narrate themselves as the main character (subject) in their life story, where that subject is set within the context of historical life events and is realized as the center of critical self-reflection. This reflexive development, where the author places the ego-protagonist front and center by thematizing self-awareness, can be seen already at the turn of the twentieth century. Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s “Chandos-Brief” exemplified the modernist author’s critique of language as an ineffective medium. Further developments in the fields of language, literature, and cultural studies from the mid-1960s through the 1980s shifted the primary focus of scholarship on autobiography from the content to the text’s form itself. This led to the deconstruction of the relation between author and text, a perspectival and theoretical shift that affected the conception of the literary self and throws new light on Brecht’s autobiographical writing.

While reading the *Arbeitsjournale*, multiple entries create a convergence between Brecht as author and as subject. These elements exist on a parallel level and operate together:

Das Wort “ich” in der Autobiographie steht in einer doppelten sprachlogischen Funktion; es ist prädikativ, d.h. es macht eine Aussage und markiert damit die Instanz, die spricht bzw. schreibt, und es bezeichnet gleichzeitig eine zeitlich und räumlich von dieser sprechenden Instanz unterschiedene Position, das beschreibende Ich. Die Kollision dieser [...] Funktionen der autobiographischen Redesituation macht die Autobiographie zu einer [...] Gelegenheit, die als solche die literaturwissenschaftliche Aufmerksamkeit auf sich zieht.²⁷³

Important to remember for the work journals, however, is that the reader cannot fully separate the literary text from its writer; in fact, Brecht’s inclusion of various photographs (personal and family portraits in particular) further complicates this “separation” of the author and subject, and functions to anchor Brecht’s status as author. The very first photograph found in the *Arbeitsjournale* provides a fitting example. Brecht’s portrait photograph intervenes during the reading of two separate entries (16 and 18 August 1938) and calls attention to himself, establishing him both as the creator of the journals and as the subject in the work. This instance highlights what Paul Jay terms “the dissimilarity between identity and discourse” in the autobiography, yielding “the ever-present ontological gap between the self who is writing and the self-reflexive protagonist

²⁷³ Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Autobiographie*, 11.

of the work.²⁷⁴ And, unlike purely fictional texts that (for theorists like Derrida or Barthes) can exist independently of the author, the work journals are set within a specific referential context, as a chronicle of historical events according to Bertolt Brecht. In fact Barthes seems to misread (or misuse) Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* in relation to the "disconnection" between author and text: "The removal of the Author (one could talk here with Brecht of a veritable 'distancing,' the Author diminishing like a figurine at the far end of the literary stage) is not merely an historical fact or an act of writing; it utterly transforms the modern text ([...] the text is henceforth made and read in such a way that at all its levels the author is absent)."²⁷⁵ Barthes's reading is too simplistic. The *Verfremdungseffekt* is not simply a trick of distancing the author to the ends of the "literary stage," but rather a technical device employed to historicize and remove the reader and/or audience (not necessarily the author) from empathy toward a more critical reflection of the subject matter. It may be productive to think of the author/subject functions at play in the journals more as a collusion of identities, which—as quoted above—affirms why the autobiography as such continues to "attract" the attention of literary scholarship.

Literary scholar and narratologist H. Porter Abbott has posited an approach to the autobiography that untangles divergent paths associated with the genre and hones in on defining specific terminology within the scholarly discourse of the autobiography.

²⁷⁴ Paul Jay, *Being in the Text: Self-Representation from Wordsworth to Roland Barthes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 29.

²⁷⁵ See Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image—Music—Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-48.

“Autography”—an amalgamation of terms—is a “response to the problem of defining autobiography,” a theoretical paradigm that positions self-writing between fictional narrative and factual historiography.²⁷⁶ According to Abbott’s approach, autography is essentially the search for the author within the autobiographical text, where the reader is given the opportunity to question the text and generate possible answers. Such “detective” work on the part of the reader operates within similar parameters of Brecht’s own expectations for his work. The reader (or audience in the case of the plays) is charged with supplying contextual knowledge and teasing out meaning: “To read fictively is to ask of the text before all else: How is this complete? [...] To read factually or conceptually is to ask of the text: How is this true? [...] To read autographically is to ask of text: How does this reveal the author?”²⁷⁷ Following Abbott’s argument, fiction is the search for wholeness; non-fiction foregrounds veracity in the story; autography focuses the reader’s critical attention on the text’s creative originator, the dual identity of the author as historian and the subject as autobiographer. Grey zones do exist within the prescribed boundaries of any taxonomy such as Abbott’s. The reader has a choice: for example, deciding whether to read the text as something factual and focus on the act of writing or whether to accept the world in the text as something given and complete

²⁷⁶ H. Porter Abbott, “Autobiography, Autography, Fiction: Groundwork for a Taxonomy of Textual Categories,” *New Literary History* 19:3 (Spring 1988): 597.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 613.

without external influence. The difference lies in the orientation to the text, the stance or position (*Haltung*) that the reader takes vis-à-vis the work.²⁷⁸

Moreover, according to Abbott, the autobiography distinguishes itself from historiography or fiction because it operates in a different narrative time structure. Unlike histories, where the events or lives exist in the past, the autobiography presents the reader with events and lives “in progress.”²⁷⁹ This temporal variance trains the reader’s eye directly on the act of the self-writing per se. Jerome Buckley shares the view that the autobiographer’s life is something in progress. However, through the act of writing, one’s life achieves a sense of perspective at the moment when the act actually takes place.²⁸⁰ In the context of the *Arbeitsjournale* the perspectives often shift with each individual entry. The reader recognizes variation in tone and content on two temporal levels, from the day-

²⁷⁸ Brecht alludes to the “literary” elements included in the *Arbeitsjournale*. Jerome Buckley finds links between autobiographical writing and works of literary fiction: “[Autobiography] traces through the alert awakened memory a continuity [...], and as a work of literature it achieves a [...] wholeness,” in Jerome Buckley, *The Turning Key: The Autobiography and the Subjective Impulse since 1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 39-40. Buckley is mentioned here not to suggest that Brecht’s journals achieve any “wholeness”; in fact, the opposite could be argued because the *Arbeitsjournale* were conceived as fragments and were unfinished at the time of Brecht’s death. Buckley’s study is simply one that posits a reading of autobiography as compatible with works of literary fiction.

²⁷⁹ Abbott, “Autobiography, Autography, Fiction,” 598.

²⁸⁰ Buckley, *The Turning Key*, 39-40.

to-day to the long term (as seen, for example, in each of the five journal text-sets from America). Because many entries reflect a lapse in time, they are therefore dependent on previous ones and reference Brecht in the journals from the past, the present, and into the future. Buckley's argument examines the autobiography as a medium that offers ephemeral, momentary glimpses of the author at specific points in time, as if they were snapshots. Nowhere in his study, however, does he include photography and/or the use of photographs in autobiography.

While Buckley's study sheds light on the autobiographical snapshot, it neglects to consider the reader's reception of the autobiographical text. This returns to the question: where does Brecht declare himself in the journals to the reader? Elizabeth Bruss relies heavily on speech act theory, in particular the illocutionary speech act, to show how the "communicative unit not only states but also performs."²⁸¹ The illocutionary act—one in which the speaker's statements also perform an act, such as to persuade, force, or promise—foregrounds the social significance and/or convention of that act. Bruss's approach investigates the instances of authorial self-declaration in the text.²⁸² Borrowing from Brecht's own terminology, the act of writing can be an example of an authorial *Gestus*, one that signifies the author in the act of writing and signals the author's relation

²⁸¹ Abbott, "Autobiography, Autography, Fiction," 600. See also Wolfgang Iser, "Speech-Act Theory," *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 54-62.

²⁸² Elizabeth Bruss, *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). See her chapter called "From Act to Text."

to the reader. Paul Jay takes Bruss's shift in perspective a step further by emphasizing the "drama that takes place *in the writing* when the self seeks to write about itself."²⁸³ Jay views self-writing not only as a performance of the authorial *Gestus* but also a performance that addresses the text's active, engaged author and reader.²⁸⁴ The very first photograph—Brecht's en face portrait from the Danish journals in 1938—is a fitting example of how the authorial *Gestus* is positioned in the work journals (see Figure 5).²⁸⁵ The photographs of Brecht and his family found in the *Arbeitsjournale* operate in analogy to what the reader of the *Kriegsfibel* finds on its cover: Brecht's own signature, his "sign" of authorship. The reader must also actively engage with the text, reading against the grain in a way that is "autographic," i.e., actively searching for this tension between author and subject. Such a system of reading reveals a technique that chronicles events and writing while asserting the actual reading as action. The reader's productive action thus manifests itself in questions, revisiting what we "know" of Brecht, and correcting that information.

Following the framework outlined previously, Abbott sketches a method of how the reader's response to the autobiographical act guides his/her search for the author-subject in the text. Specifically in the context of the *Arbeitsjournale*: how does the reader respond to Brecht's written acts of performance, and what kinds of acts are being performed, e.g., self-assertions, defensive or offensive posturing, acts of collaboration, etc.? To discuss these questions we must first focus on the reader's reception. Abbott's

²⁸³ Jay, cited in Abbott, "Autobiography, Autography, Fiction," 600.

²⁸⁴ Jay, *Being in the Text*, 29.

²⁸⁵ See Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 320 f.

point of departure describes the possibilities for how the reader can approach the autobiography, where the reader either views the author as the writer of historical events or as the writer of a series of subjective, personal experiences.²⁸⁶ If searching for historical events the reader considers the text as something crafted by an author who is calculative and purposeful in his written records, one who is focused on past events and their significance as a whole to a broader historiographic discourse. The reader seeks mostly factual information about history, and less of the personal narrative of one singular author's life. According to Abbott, this reader's approach regards the author more as historian or chronicler, not necessarily as auto-biographer.²⁸⁷ In this way, Brecht's journals are read solely for their historical insights; taken as a whole, they assume the position as a work where the author writes a history of his subject (mainly World War II), looking back into the past (1938-1955) and writing those reflections from the present (i.e., at the time of revision and assembly of the journals after the fact). Here, a writer (Brecht) essentially states: "This is what happened during the war to *Bertolt Brecht*." This act of epic self-reflection from the standpoint of the outside observer is a prevalent feature of many of Brecht's other works, e.g., *Kriegsfibel*, the *Geschichten vom*

²⁸⁶ See Dorrit Cohn, "Discordant Narration," *Style* 34:2 (Summer 2000): 312. Her essay describes a "third level of reading," where the reader is made aware of his/her choices vis-à-vis interacting with the text. See also Bernd Neumann, *Identität und Rollenzwang. Zur Theorie der Autobiographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1970); and Günter Niggel, ed., *Die Autobiographie. Zu Form und Geschichte einer literarischen Gattung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998).

²⁸⁷ Abbott, "Autobiography, Autography, Fiction," 601.

Herrn Keuner, and his poetry. On the other hand, the reader can decide to read the work journals from a different perspective, one where the author is also in the same role as subject of action. This reader seeks mostly personal narratives (and images) of the subject's life and experience, some with fictional characteristics. In this light Brecht's journals assume the position of a work in which the author writes the autobiography of his subject (himself), where the focus is on the act of writing at the time it happened (1938-1955) for each entry, and each entry exists independently from a whole. Here, Brecht states: "This is what happened to *me*."

Abbott's framework, however, cannot be applied so easily without caveat or, in typical Brechtian fashion, without exposing contradictions. The journals offer examples that complicate the "either-or" dichotomy in Abbott's assertions. The *Arbeitsjournal* must be read with both approaches in mind for two fundamental reasons. First, on the macro level, Abbott's framework supposes that Brecht the author can indeed be extracted from Brecht the subject in any of the journal entries. As subsequent examples will show, this remains a difficult task and any such reading is inevitably problematic. In addition Abbott's theory does not account for the numerous photographs and visual intrusions that confront the reader throughout. Second, on an individual micro level, the entries that do feature Brecht as the subject of his writing appear in close proximity—some directly adjacent—to other entries with Brecht in the historian's role. Further still, some entries conflate both types of readings. The remainder of this section will offer three examples from Brecht's *Arbeitsjournal* that engage with and problematize Abbott's "autography" framework, which the reader can apply productively but should also view with caution.

The journal entry dated 8 December 1939 (Sweden) provides a possible starting point. The Swedish journals mark Brecht's increasing preoccupation with the hostilities leading up to and during the first year of World War II. 1939 was a year of many events—all of which Brecht was forced to read about in newspapers and correspondence—including the Nazi occupation of Poland, the rapid mobilization of armies, and the introduction of many anti-Semitic laws in Europe. At that time Brecht had lived in exile for almost six years. His journal entry is a series of lines containing a list of items, beginning with the words “Ich besitze.”²⁸⁸ Reading autographically—searching for the role of the author—depends on the reader's orientation to the text; how can we identify Brecht the historian-chronicler and Brecht the artist-subject? This entry is a prime example of how challenging it is to distinguish between the two entities. First, in reading for the historian Brecht, the reader will notice that the entries adjacent do not appear in chronological order, but rather as follows: 7 December, 8 December, 5 December, 10 December, 9 December. While the subsequent section of this chapter will discuss the composition and ordering of the journal entries as a specific and purposeful guide for reading, it is also important to note here which of Brecht's roles to follow in the text. The entries' arrangement was not an external editorial decision for the BFA volumes; this chronology was a purposeful act by Brecht the author-redactor who returned later to revisit and reconstruct his journals, relying on “Anhaltspunkte,” or

²⁸⁸ The text can be found in *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 350-51. See also BFA 26: 453-54.

In the latter, Brecht lists items—“Bücher auf Steffs Tisch”—and images hanging on Stefan Brecht's wall.

specific reference points, to guide him in the creation of his own work.²⁸⁹ Such broken sequencing appears in other places throughout the journals and proves to be a constitutive element in the way the reader perceives the work—where certain events and personal memories are juxtaposed without regard for temporal continuity.

Continuing with a reading of Brecht as historian, this entry becomes a listing of material possessions with poetic character due to its form and rhythm, much like some of his earlier diary entries from the 1920s, or as seen later in the work by other German authors who survived World War II.²⁹⁰ The “Ich” announced at the poem’s beginning details an artist’s inventory. Among these items are clear references (with mention of seven plays) to the artist Bertolt Brecht, as well as various other artists who are Brecht’s contemporaries and collaborators, e.g., Helene Weigel, Caspar Neher, and Ruth Berlau. These names refer to other artists who fled Nazi Germany and give shrift to the paucity of those artists’ worldly possessions in exile. The reader can also see this “poem” as a critique of the status of art (and of language in general), reflected through the prism of the war. The narrator does not cite the atrocities committed and does not explicitly have to—the reader is made aware of the events, many of which Brecht chronicled in neighboring journal entries, that led such artists to flee with so few possessions.

²⁸⁹ See Brecht’s entry quoted above in BFA 27: 51, which continues: “[...] ich werde Mühe haben, diese Anhaltspunkte wirklich einmal zu benutzen.”

²⁹⁰ For other examples by Brecht in this fashion, see BFA 26: 279 (“Tagebuch”), 26: 295 and 27: 354 (“Autobiographische Notizen”), or 27: 304 (*Arbeitsjournale*). The poem “Inventur” (1948) by Günter Eich provides an interesting contrast to Brecht’s own “inventory.”

On the other hand the reader could examine this journal entry literally, placing Brecht the artist in the role of author. The list would then be an index of his material environment at his Swedish farmhouse in Svendborg. The “Ich” is not a lyrical narrator but rather the owner who makes an inventory: “This is what I own.” First, the reader could question Brecht’s opening declaration by changing the point of reference and asking: “What owns Brecht?”—i.e., do these objects become markers of identity for him? This short, simple inventory highlights the complex exile situation. He and his family had very few possessions other than what he lists here. Theaters in which to stage his plays were scarce or non-existent in exile, and many of his German-language essays and plays were not yet available in translation in the foreign lands where he sought refuge. Noticeably absent from this list is a “home” or “nationality.” For that reason Brecht considered these material objects in his possession as placeholders for his idea of “self.” As a result the objects acquire a greater worth; therefore the “kupferne Aschbecher” or his “alte[r] runde[r] Tisch” among other things attest to personal aesthetic taste and, by association, define Brecht at that point in time—the exiled artist in Sweden in 1939. The importance of the books in Brecht’s possession must not be overstated in this context; he mentions a total of 13 books, manuscripts, and/or print materials in 31 lines. These print objects were his link to the outside world and maintained his sense of identity as an author and playwright.

The assemblage of possessions remaining to him in exile offers clues to the actual person. It acquires a different kind of coherence established both by the very formal character of the poem-like structure and being on the run while insisting on possessing these few (meaningful) possessions. The list, along with others found throughout the

journals, functions mnemonically as a practical snapshot of what he owned at a given moment in exile, and could be employed as a memory device later if those material items were ever lost. To name a few examples: his Bavarian roots (three “bayrische [] Messer”); his drinking and smoking habit (“Whiskyflasche” and “Tabakbeutel”); or his penchant for collecting, especially visual materials (the Chinese wall hanging “Der Zweifler,” various “Bretter” of his own plays, and two volumes with “Breughelbilder”), and international objects (Japanese Noh masks, oriental rugs, and an English-made “Dunhillpfeife” and chair). Brecht’s strategy of emphasizing the mix of everyday items with the expensive objects in such a sober manner speaks to the seeming ironic contradiction of such things; yet the matter-of-fact language also highlights that for Brecht, like many other exiles, the act of writing was often one of the only means of expression in such situations.²⁹¹

Two other examples from the American journals, when contrasted, also highlight the reader’s search for the role of the author in the *Arbeitsjournale*. The dual entries appear almost next to each other in the textual groupings from the American journals, which chronicle the climax and denouement of World War II leading into the immediate

²⁹¹ Brecht twice references his engagement with photography in this entry. Not only is this aspect important for the wider scope of this study, but also because it references other photographs included in the Swedish journals, and Brecht the playwright and theater director. He lists both “einen Leica Foto-Apparat mit Theaterlinse” and “eine Mappe mit Fotos.” These material and technical items gain greater significance when the reader compares them to other photos in the Danish set of journals, such as: BFA 26: 339-40 (photos with Helene Weigel, Brecht’s daughter Barbara, and friends).

postwar period (1944-1947). Brecht's entries describe the political situation in the United States—the war mobilization and President Franklin D. Roosevelt's unprecedented third reelection—as well as the updates from the eastern and western fronts in Europe. They detail many visits from friends and debates with contemporaries and fellow émigrés: Arnold Schönberg's twelve-tone compositions performed at the University of California, Los Angeles and on the radio; Charles Laughton's thoughts on the *Galileo* production; Hanns Eisler's compositions; and Max Gorelik on the status of exiled Jews throughout history. Brecht also chronicles the progress of his projects at the time (*Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*, *Leben des Galilei*, and the "Flüchtlingsgespräche").

Supplemented by this information, the entry dated 17 November 1944 is a brief musing of exactly two sentences: "Hin und wieder vergesse ich jetzt ein deutsches Wort, ich, der sich nur hin und wieder eines englischen erinnert. Suche ich dann, kommen mir nicht die hochdeutschen, sondern die Dialektwörter in den Sinn, wie Dohdle für godfather."²⁹² These are highly personal reflections that read as if Brecht—here wearing his hat as the subject of his own pondering—were also in the midst of daydreaming, contrasting with details and facts from the war effort or talk of his other artistic projects. The immediacy of the adverb "now" that he couples with "every once in a while" suggests forgetting his native with greater frequency, at least enough to force his attention to write about it. The "hin und wieder" is Brecht's authorial equivalent of looking back through his life and his work—the pages and entries in the *Arbeitsjournale* included. The tone of this entry seems to be one of surprise, since he admits to himself his apparent lack

²⁹² Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 210.

of skill with the English language.²⁹³ The reader is once again confronted with the problems of Brecht's current situation that were often at the crux of his exile-imposed identity crises. The writer ruminates here on the loss of his identity through the loss of his ability to express himself in his native language. In an attempt to compensate for his inability to think of words in standard High German, he tells the reader that dialect words surface in his mind, such as "Dohdle" (instead of the Ger. "Pate") for godfather. His mention of being able only to think (and/or speak and write) of dialect words at certain moments is significant within the parameters of Brecht's role as subject. The word "Dohdle" sets "Brecht" in his Bavarian roots, much like the entry discussed previously, in a way in which the word "Pate" could not.

The element of language and its inherent difficulties in the process of translation serves as an "Anhaltspunkt" of notable contrast for these two examples. However, the

²⁹³ This could also be construed as a certain degree of posturing (and/or humility?) on Brecht's part. While it is true that his language abilities were limited while in the United States, his English was not poor. See, for example, the entry of 30 October 1947 (BFA 27: 247-50) on the day of his testimony at the House Un-American Activities Committee. He included a press photo, "Smoke Screen" (BFA 27: 248), in the American journal positioned adjacent to other photographs in a series, showing his cigar smoke rising from his seated position at the witness stand. The photo's caption reads: "His thick [German] accent mystified the committee." Brecht also had help from collaborators like Laughton (*Galileo*); Fritz Lang, Eisler, and John Wexley (*Hangmen also Die!*); and Margarete Steffin or Ruth Berlau (correspondence, contracts, etc.), among others. Brecht was proficient in Latin and could read Lucretius and Horace in the original.

second entry dated 29 November 1944 provides the reader with a glimpse of Brecht from the alternative perspective as the writer-historian who chronicles trends. Here, he begins by copying a poem called “Resignation” from the Chinese poet and philosopher Po Chü-i, who wrote “Volkslieder,” or popular songs, during the Chinese Tang Dynasty (eighth/ninth century).²⁹⁴ Brecht greatly admired this poet, noting that “für den Po Chü-i zwischen Didaktik und Amusement kein Unterschied besteht.” The entry consists of two separate renditions of Po’s poem by Brecht, the first based on an English translation by the Sinologist Arthur Waley, the second a version in Brecht’s own popular poetic style of unrhymed verse and irregular rhythms.

Po describes the resignation one feels in life during dark times. For the historian Brecht, living as a witness to the war, it represents a significant time in world history; by November 1944, almost 5 years into World War II, most of the world powers were engaged in combat with casualties mounting on both sides. Much of central and eastern Europe lay in ruins. He must have esteemed this poem in particular because of its message: war and suffering are ubiquitous and because of it the common people experience resignation most of all from its aftereffects. His rendering of Waley’s translation provides an opportunity to think about how he performs this act. According to Brecht, the translator must focus his attention on the thoughts and position of the original author, not so much how one translates exactly word-for-word.²⁹⁵ However, he also had stark criticisms of Waley’s English translation, mainly because it lacked the didactic stance of the original: “Erstaunlich, was für ein Esel dieser ausgezeichnete Sinologe

²⁹⁴ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 211.

²⁹⁵ Brecht, “Die Übersetzbarkeit von Gedichten,” BFA 22.1: 132.

Waley ist!” Brecht’s second attempt sets the poem into one with an irregular rhythm and no rhyme scheme, contrasted here in the first four lines of each rendering:

(1) Denk nicht vor: / hast du kein Glück / Kannst noch lange schauern /
Denk um Himmels willen nicht zurück / Erinnern ist Bedauern. [Brecht’s rendering from Waley’s English-language text]

(2) Halte deine Gedanken von allem, was aus und basta ist / Denn das
Denken an die Vergangenheit weckt bedauern. / Halte deine Gedanken
von allem, was kommt und nicht kommen mag / Denn das Denken an die
Zukunft weckt Unruhe. [Brecht’s unrhymed version with irregular
rhythms]²⁹⁶

This transformation in “Versarchitektur”—seen also in the “Ballade vom toten Soldaten” (1918) as early as Brecht’s first volume of poetry—underscores his overarching goal, a poetics that not only stays true to the vernacular of everyday people, but also one which shows his readership (or audience) *how* people speak.²⁹⁷ Brecht describes it as follows:

In der Folge schrieb ich außer Balladen und Massenliedern mit Reim und regelmäßigem [...] Rhythmus mehr und mehr Gedichte ohne Reim und mit unregelmäßigem Rhythmus. Man muß dabei im Auge behalten, daß ich meine Hauptarbeit auf dem Theater verrichtete; ich dachte immer an das Sprechen. Und ich hatte mir für das Sprechen (sei es der Prosa oder

²⁹⁶ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 211.

²⁹⁷ Brecht, “Über reimlose Lyrik mit unregelmässigen Rhythmen” (1938), BFA 22.1: 359.

des Verses) eine ganz bestimmte Technik erarbeitet. Ich nannte sie gestisch.²⁹⁸

Brecht's second translation directly addresses the reader and retains the second-person narrative in the "du" imperative forms, while transforming the language from one that is "glatt" (too smooth) to one that is broken down into constitutive parts. It holds true to the original intent of Po Chü-i's message, utilizing a particular vocabulary to bring out actual speech patterns.

Brecht's second rendering also highlights the didactic potential in the language and word choice; instead of a more abstract "vordenken" or "thinking ahead," Brecht writes "Halte deine Gedanken von allem," or "protect your thoughts from everything." Moreover, the words "schauern" and "Erinnern" from the first translation are intangible as given; Brecht makes use of the coordinating conjunction "denn" and the action verb "wecken" (to "awaken" or "arouse") to signal causality to the readers and more concretely define why the readers should hold back their thoughts—"because thinking about the past awakens regret" and "because thinking about the future awakens restlessness." The transformational act (Brecht's "Umfunktionieren") of language performs a didactic function; it teaches the reader that one's thoughts and actions have consequences, i.e., that neglecting the present has an opposing effect on one's processing of the past and the future. This entry is an example of Brecht's authorial process in action and displays his proclivity, especially in his poetry, to preserve the "Gestus der sprechenden Person."²⁹⁹ The reader's "autographic" orientation to his text—in this case

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Brecht, "Über reimlose Lyrik mit unregelmässigen Rhythmen," BFA 22.1: 359.

reading for Brecht the author-poet—uncovers how he follows Po Chü-i's "Sprachgestus" and "Sprechen" with acts of language that instruct with a message, argue against capitulation in the face of adversity, and persuade the reader to endure. On a fundamental level the reader must recognize that the act of reappropriating Po Chü-i's message correlates to Brecht's assessment of the status of World War II, as well as his own "resignation" to life in exile. In a provocative way he also speaks indirectly to himself: "You are alive to witness history, so you must endure and record it." Yet, his Chinese scroll of the "The Doubter" ("Der Zweifler") might suggest that Brecht and fellow exiles take another, slightly different stance to what and how they record their exile situation: "Ist es brauchbar" or "wem nützt es, was ihr da schreibt?"³⁰⁰

IV. *Photographic Interventions: The Arbeitsjournale as Reading Guide*

"Was mir vorschwebt, formal, ist: ein Fragment in großen, rohen Blöcken."³⁰¹

The previous section has shown how "autographic" readings of Brecht's textual entries in the *Arbeitsjournale* productively raise questions of identity, authorship, historiography, and the reader's own orientation to the author's writing. While greater emphasis was

³⁰⁰ Brecht, "Der Zweifler" (1937), BFA 14: 376-77. This "Rollbild" (scroll) described in Brecht's poem accompanied him throughout his exile years and served as a model for Brecht's own "Haltung" and thought process to critically question common knowledge.

³⁰¹ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 324. This journal entry, dated 11 July 1951 (Berlin GDR), is one sentence long. It was also around this time that Brecht and others at the Berliner Ensemble assembled "Bemerkungen über realistische Bühnenbilder" for a theater almanach that would later become the *Theaterarbeit* volume.

placed on the writing process and the texts, this section of the chapter returns to examining the relationships in the photograph-text combinations found throughout the *Arbeitsjournale* and proposes a perspectival shift in our approach to the act of reading these multi-layered image-text constellations. It offers examples using two reading strategies: one firmly grounds the reader within the boundaries of the *Arbeitsjournale*; and another asks the reader to look beyond the texts and images exclusively in the journals, showing how the oscillation between exiting and returning to them can produce meaning. The numerous photographs and visual elements connect the reader with Brecht, allowing for new access and insights into his other works by linking the journals to them.

Focusing critical attention on their careful, deliberate, and often unordered architecture calls for a distinct approach to reading the work journals that is unlike the approach outlined in the previous section of this chapter. The “public” (images) or “private” (texts) approach limited the reader to identifying the author’s role but does little to account for the inclusion of photographs found throughout. Instead, this section will discuss how the bi-medial elements can be read together in ways that offer the reader a synthesis in Brecht’s work(s), placing the reader in dialogue with Brecht. Instead of a strategy that seeks to separate and/or distinguish between the images and texts, the reader can decide to read the images and texts in tandem. In putting together various pieces of the puzzle, Brecht incorporated into the *Arbeitsjournale* elements from other artists, techniques, and traditions. These include, first, a polyperspectival representation of how he thematizes himself and historical events, stemming from his sustained interest in Chinese painting and portraiture; second, his belief in exposing contradictions, deriving from his attraction to the paintings of Peter Breugel and Hans Tombrock; and third, the

development of the *Verfremdungseffekt*, as seen in his commentaries on Picasso, Breugel, and others.³⁰² The experiments in the *Arbeitsjournale* are practical examples of Brecht's "sichtbar machen"—to make elements and concepts visible, usable, and quotable (this was a central premise behind Brecht's rationale for the *Modellbücher*).

This approach views each journal individually as a collection covering a definite period of time (like the scenic tableaux in a play), with the entire *Arbeitsjournale* as an experiment in the ongoing tension between visual historiography and/or fiction.³⁰³ The reader must then reflect and reconstitute meaning from the author's purposefully discontinuous narrative strings. The reader can follow two courses of inquiry. Remaining within the boundaries of the journals, the reader's task is to create a systematic montage from diverse entries, their neighboring images, and other non-adjacent visual materials scattered throughout. The reader must reconstruct the constitutive parts in the journals and assemble these elements to allow for a fluid exchange between the various sources. These include textual entries by Brecht, photographs, drawings, newspaper clippings, maps, and Western Union telegrams. The purposeful rearrangement of comments, personal experiences, and historical events (as seen in many images) requires that the reader pause to reflect and reexamine the interplay of text-image constellations. The

³⁰² See "Über die Malerei der Chinesen," BFA 22.1: 133-34; see also Brecht's comments on Picasso's *Guernica* in a journal entry from 24 June 1940, BFA 26: 393; and for example, "Verfremdungstechnik in den erzählenden Bildern des älteren Breughel," BFA 22.1: 270 f.

³⁰³ Jost, "Journale," 440.

placement of these elements acts to slow down the reader and force deeper critical reflection:

Die Platzierung [...] markiert für den Leser den Reflexionsprozess des Chronisten [Brecht] noch entschiedener und bringt ihn [den Leser] noch zwingender in die Haltung, die Betrachtung zu “verlangsamen,” sie vom Text zum Bild zurückzuführen und umgekehrt bzw. sie zum zweiten Bild hinzufügen, um die Wahrnehmung von dort wieder zum ersten Bild sowie zum Zwischentext zu wenden, die Rezipienten also zu verweilendem und damit aufdeckendem Betrachten zu animieren.³⁰⁴

Most significant in this course of inquiry is the reader’s awareness of the process of reflection—for both the chronicler and the reader piecing together a narrative from those details—which becomes visible on the pages. Brecht’s “Reflexionsprozess” surfaces as the reader recognizes the multiple editorial decisions in formatting the journals; the reader is confronted with questions as to why Brecht chose to reorder certain elements where he did. The result, as outlined in the quote above, is the back and forth from text to image in order to negotiate meaning. As the reader learns to cultivate the attitude or expectation of spending time with details (“verlangsamen”), the intervening images invite the reader to pause and concentrate the gaze. It also serves to make Brecht’s process of working through his thoughts an integral part of the journals’ use value and overall structure.

Additional factors related to the photographs and pictorial material complicate this interaction between text and image. Many of these combinations do not appear in

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 438.

chronological order in the BFA editions. Indeed, some of the visual elements found in the BFA Volumes 26 and 27 do not correspond with Brecht's original manuscripts, e.g., photographs appear between different journal entries with different dates, or entries do not appear in chronological order.³⁰⁵ The BFA does not include many of the original "freestanding" photographs and/or clippings that have no (apparent) association with a specific textual entry. One grouping of journals (BBA 284/18-33, Berlin [folder 1]) has 15 pages omitted from the BFA edition, containing newspaper clippings of theater reviews for *Schweyk*, *Puntila*, the *Threepenny Opera Film*, as well as feature articles from German newspapers about Brecht's life in exile during World War II.³⁰⁶ John Willett and Hugh Rorrison's English-language edition of the journals (Methuen, 1994) also does not include all of the original visual materials from the journal manuscripts. The reader will also encounter roadblocks in the form of Brecht's own editorial decisions. As discussed previously, he had returned to certain journal sets after they were completed in order to add supplements. One noticeable example of this is found at the end of the Swedish journal grouping. Brecht appended at least two additional Swedish press photographs to this set although he had already arrived in Finland (17 April 1940) and

³⁰⁵ See, for example, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 17-19. Here the entries from the America 1941 journal set differ from Brecht's original manuscripts and in the BFA appear as follows: 8 October, 25 October, 20 October, 21 October, 26 October, 22 October, 22 October, 26 October. The reader must therefore either reconstruct the events in proper sequence or read the series out of order for thematic purposes.

³⁰⁶ See also the listing in Figure 4.

had begun composing entries for the Finnish journals.³⁰⁷ The first photograph dated 9 April shows two German soldiers in the occupation of Denmark that Brecht used to visually chronicle this date in his life and in the course of the war. The subsequent photos were additions following Brecht and his family's move to Finland. One photograph dated 11 May shows the city of Stockholm; another dated 27 May depicts the capitulation ceremony of King Leopold of Belgium flanked by German troops.

Arrangements of other montage examples should also be highlighted. As cited previously, Brecht had every intention of constructing the journals in such a way that would give readers some difficulty, calling the *Arbeitsjournale* "recht distortiert." However, he also sought to exploit these "Anhaltspunkte" of disorientation as didactic opportunities for the reader (even if some of those readers were, in Brecht's words, "unerwünscht," or unwanted).³⁰⁸ In an early instance from the Finnish journals from 1940, the reader finds a photographic image placed directly in the middle of a sentence; this clipping from a Swedish newspaper not only interrupts the flow of the sentence, but also forces the reader to turn to the next page to continue the thought. The photograph is correctly paired in the BFA with Brecht's journal entry of 28 August 1940. This example is noteworthy because it was the BFA editors' decision, not Brecht's own placement, to interrupt the text so blatantly (see Figure 6).³⁰⁹ Here, the reader cannot analyze the text-image montage as authorized by Brecht.

³⁰⁷ These photographs can be found in Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 361-63.

³⁰⁸ See Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 51.

³⁰⁹ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 419-20.

Why did this take place and what effect does this have on the act of reading? The photograph could have been removed, saved, and then transported with Brecht from Sweden to Finland to be included later in that journal set. It shows an inside close-up from the cockpit of a German bomber jet, complete with all the technical equipment: navigation instruments, altimeter, altitude and airspeed indicators, compasses, and the wheel.³¹⁰ This image cuts and separates the words “Bogen / Gottheit” in his journal entry. The full sentence reads: “Jäger und Krieger weihen den Bogen / der Gottheit.” In this context the photographic intrusion into the text references what is visible in the photo itself, i.e., the mechanically crafted arches, curved lines, and geometric shapes in the cockpit instruments. The entry reflects on how, when placed into the wrong hands, everyday items (“Gebrauchsgegenstände”) can assume other functions and even be employed as weapons. Brecht criticizes those who extend such “divine” attributes to machines like a plane, especially when they are used to bomb and destroy cities.

This entry expounds on one of the central tenets of Brecht’s artistic realism: how it exposes underlying social, political, and economic problems. The entry concludes as follows:

Die Schönheit eines Flugzeuges hat etwas Obszönes. Als ich in Schweden, vor dem Krieg, einen Film vorschlug, der die Parole “Das Flugzeug der Arbeiterjugend!” hatte—diese Waffe ist in festen Händen—und den

³¹⁰ See Tom Kuhn, “‘Was besagt eine Fotografie?’ Early Brechtian Perspectives on Photography,” *Brecht Yearbook* 31 (2006): 260-83. Kuhn includes one example of Brecht’s interest in photographs displaying machinery and/or technology.

einfachen Traum der Menschheit vom Fliegen ausdrücken wollte, wandte man sofort ein: Sollen sie Bombenflieger werden?³¹¹

Brecht devoted much thought and many essays to the questions of realism, realistic representation, and art's relationship with the masses. He also did not shy away from the discourse of art's beauty and/or pleasure. Indeed, he insisted that any art form that strived to reach the collective public conscience must first be true to everyday situations and reveal how humans relate to one another; however, Brecht also believed that art—particularly his plays—must not only interest the public while sitting in their seats, but also hold that critical attention outside the theater houses. Therefore, art must teach the audience and readers to be critical skeptics. His medium of choice, the theater, was a forum to put this concept into action. This proved to be no small task; there was a balance to strike between didacticism and entertainment. The entry above is set within that discourse. Brecht acknowledges the aesthetic beauty of a man-made machine like the airplane in that it satisfies man's fascination with flight and is a physical testament to science. Nevertheless, he questions such a notion of conventional wisdom and popular thought espoused by the “Jäger” (hunters) and “Krieger” (fighters), using both his words and the photograph of the bomber's cockpit. The apparent beauty in its symmetry and engineering the dangerous potential of such a machine that makes the conditions possible for human flight is something ultimately “obscene” because, in the wrong hands, it leads to death and destruction.³¹²

³¹¹ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, 26: 420.

³¹² See also *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 433. Dated 10 October 1940, the entry deals with the German “Propagandaschrift in Englisch” called *Signals*. The vertical series of three

The reader can find connections to this argument from neighboring journal entries and photographs. The photograph-text entry from 24 August 1940 also deals with Brecht's thoughts on "criteria for artwork" and the public's reception (see Figure 6).³¹³ The image of the men running with gasmasks underscores the absurdity of such devices being employed and invites the reader to question their very function. For Brecht, this photograph says as much about the status of World War II as it can about the status of living in exile—the frustration and suffocation of being without a permanent home, belonging to no physical, geopolitical state, and having no place to stage his plays. Existing in a geographic space in which things like gasmasks are a daily part of life and a constant reminder of conflict amounts to that place being uninhabitable for Brecht; yet, he and his family could not escape. The men whose hands are clenched into fists are in a formation of two parallel lines, which also quotes his reference to the "obscene beauty"

images shows how microbes attack each other under an electric lens. The publication lauds such technological breakthroughs in science, but Brecht's interest lies in how this technology (and the accompanying press photos) is misused in the hands of others.

³¹³ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 417-18. The photograph dates from 22 August 1940, from the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (number 34, p. 843). This was a weekly initially published by Ullstein, but taken over in the 1930s by the Springer publishing house, which was sympathetic to the Nazi regime. The *BIZ* became a classic example for Brecht of how the bourgeois press misused mass media like photography. Another photograph "Der Kriegsschauplatz," found in BFA 26: 415, is also from the same *BIZ* but does not correspond to any textual entry by Brecht, i.e., it is freestanding in the original manuscript.

of the precision engineering of lines, arches, and shapes. Their march suggests an absurd orderliness that Brecht had often criticized as symptomatic for the very nature of how war was waged. The photograph's profile on the page also comes into focus. Here, the reader can identify exactly how and where he had cropped the newspaper clipping to carefully extract the text from the image. The form recalls other photographic montages by Heartfield or Grosz (whose names and ideas appear in various entries). The end product seen on the page is a practical example of how Brecht and others appropriated and repurposed both textual and visual materials, as his earlier quote suggested cutting the image from the text: "mit einer Schere herauszuschneiden."³¹⁴

The reader may also look to the entry immediately following dated 29 August. The paratextual journal entry consists of Greek epigrams about war translated by Brecht. The first poem begins with the word "Bogen" which connects both entries. The press photograph in the 29 August entry is directly linked to that from 24 August because both originated from the same publication (*BIZ* 34). The reader's entry point from the gasmask photo into this image is the clenched fist holding hand grenades for display. Perhaps

³¹⁴ Another example can be found at BFA 26: 425-26. In that journal entry from 21 September 1940 (Finland), he writes: "Die *Berliner Illustrirte* [Brecht used the *BIZ*'s original German spelling] ist immer sehr interessant. In der Nr. 38 auf einander folgenden Seiten das Bild des gebombten London und dann "Deutsche Baumeister." The irony of these two opposing elements in the publication was undoubtedly too productive to ignore and were both included in the journal entry. Brecht had cut those words from one section of the *BIZ* and juxtaposed them onto the press photograph of the city of London for full ironic effect.

more noteworthy than Brecht's epigram is the caption attached to the photograph (see Figure 6):

Und zuletzt: Bomben und Granaten in jedermanns Hand. "Sie sind die Kampfaffen einer Zivilisten-Armee. Für ihren Gebrauch ist wenig Übung erforderlich—wohl aber Kaltblütigkeit und gesunder Menschenverstand..."—zu beziehen durch die Schriftleitung der *Picture Post*.³¹⁵

The caption makes the reader aware of the diverse elements at play in this entry. Brecht documents the history of warfare and its devastation in the translated epigrams (e.g., "blutige Schrecken") and pairs that with the press photograph, historicizing the classical medium of expression (epigram and poetry) with the contemporary artistic medium of photographic representation. Through the distancing effect of historicization the reader can trace the arc ("Bogen") of violent military history, from hand-to-hand combat to one in which a single person can kill many others or destroy an entire city with the help of man-made machines and technological devices designed to annihilate.³¹⁶ That waging war can be so easily accomplished with a cold-blooded "citizen army"—this idea is

³¹⁵ Photograph caption, found in Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 421. The *Picture Post* was a British illustrated weekly with content and coverage of Great Britain during the war.

³¹⁶ See also Georges Didi-Huberman, *Wenn die Bilder Position beziehen. Das Auge der Geschichte I*, trans. Markus Sedlaczek (München: Fink, 2011), 71-74. Here, Didi-Huberman applies the *Verfremdungseffekt* to various photos in the *Arbeitsjournale* for his readings.

visually represented, with the grenade pictured in “every man’s hand” (the textual contradiction). The statement that all one needs to operate such a weapon is a “healthy human rationality” also directly conflicts with Brecht’s own views on the absurdity of war. For not only are the soldiers and citizens who fight being exploited by their governments, but these people are also instrumentalized by the war industry to serve its own purposes. For Brecht’s purposes it is important to note the contradiction that the hands in the photograph are those of the average person who does not benefit from the war. The reader is asked to view the three photograph-text entries discussed here as a carefully composed series of elements that simultaneously show how to read, approach, and possibly interpret the entries in the *Arbeitsjournale*.

The course of inquiry undertaken above remained mostly within the boundaries of the work journal sets. The reader could choose a second course, that is: to import other external materials to develop a different reading. For an example to highlight how the reader can utilize both internal and external material, take the very first instance of the photo-text combination found in the *Arbeitsjournale*. It appears between journal entries composed during exile in Denmark dated 16 and 18 August 1938, and proves to be a fitting example for the intersection of autobiography and artistic product (see Figure 5).³¹⁷ On the page the reader sees the solemn, almost forlorn but thoughtful face of a German, who at that point in time had lived in political exile for approximately five years. Brecht, whose gaze is directed outside the photographic frame, wearing his reading glasses with a furrowed brow, reappropriated possibly to show his concern with

³¹⁷ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 320-21. The source of the photograph is unknown, although most likely a press photograph.

mounting tensions over a possible second World War. Above and below this photograph of Brecht we find two text entries.

Constructions like this force the reader to connect the visual and textual elements, as well as to interpret the various motives for the inclusion of photographs in the *Arbeitsjournale*. Why this particular photograph with this particular text? Can the reader choose other possible connections, thereby leading to new associations between the image and text entries? The reader must approach the *Arbeitsjournale* systematically and take the multiplicity of textual and visual elements into account in order to piece them together. Any reading must explore how these diverse elements interact to produce a new hybrid form of historiography/autobiography and a distinctive model for Brecht's work that combines both theory and practice.

Bild- sowie Zeitungstextmaterialien [in den *Arbeitsjournalen*] [...] sind mehr als Illustrationen, die nur am Rande zur Kenntnis zu nehmen sind. Der (potenzielle) Leser ist angehalten, diese Materialien "mitzulesen", d.h., etwa bei den Bildern zu verweilen und—wie es später bei der *Kriegsfibel* zum leitenden Prinzip wird [...]—sie im Kontext des Geschriebenen wahrzunehmen und, umgekehrt, das Geschriebene im Kontext der Bilder zu lesen.³¹⁸

Not only should the reader interpret the images within the "context of what is written" and the text within the "context of the images." Ruth Berlau's preface to Brecht's *Kriegsfibel* makes it clear that perhaps the most critical step for the reader is the didactic

³¹⁸ Jost, "Journale," 425. Brecht explicitly draws the reader's attention to the journals' construction, calling them purposefully "recht distortiert."

one, i.e., practicing and learning how to read any series of images in order to better sift through the contradictions and discover significance for societal relations.³¹⁹ The reader has choices to make—first, how to read the entries independent of the Brecht photograph; and second, whether to read the entry from 16 August 1938 together with the photograph or whether to connect the photograph with the journal entry from 18 August 1938.

Brecht's entry dated 16 August describes his engagement with and reflections on the work of British poet Percy Bysshe Shelley.³²⁰ Brecht writes:

Entsetzlich, die Gedichte Shelleys zu lesen (nicht zu reden von ägyptischen Bauernliedern von vor 3000 Jahren), in denen die Unterdrückung und Ausbeutung beklagt wird! Wird man so uns lesen, immer noch unterdrückt und ausgebeutet, und sagen: schon damals...?³²¹

Brecht had used Shelley's poem "Mask of Anarchy" (1819) about the worker uprisings in Manchester as an example to show how his contemporary and fellow (Marxist) theorist Georg Lukács's concept of realism was too narrow in its scope.³²² The "Egyptian peasant songs" alludes to Brecht's 1934 essay "Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der

³¹⁹ Berlau, in Brecht, *Kriegsfibel*, BFA 12: 129. Berlau emphasizes images from mass media publications.

³²⁰ This volume, *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1938), can be found in Brecht's literary estate at the BBA.

³²¹ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 319.

³²² See Brecht's essay "Weite und Vielfalt der realistischen Schreibweise," BFA 22.1: 423-34. Shelley's poem also served as a motivation for Brecht's poem "Freiheit und Democracy," BFA 15: 183-88.

Wahrheit,” whose origin was also rooted in the debates over realism and the possibilities of producing artistic representations of social “truths.”³²³ The short four-line entry references poems and essayistic work by Brecht, Shelley, and songs of Egyptian writer Ipu-wer (2500 BCE). This leads the reader outside the confines of the *Arbeitsjournale* to look for clues and answers. Conversely, the text can guide the reader to search within the individual journal groupings (here the Danish text-set) and/or the *Arbeitsjournale* as a single entity. Brecht directly addresses himself (as author) and his contemporaries by asking the question how/what history will remember and in which personal or historical context their works will be read. The “uns” in Brecht’s suggestion could also implicate the reader, who, looking back on recent history, ruminates on the enduring struggles against oppression and exploitation. This direct reference invites the reader to self-reflect on present circumstances and to ask: What has changed? Are the changes productive? Who has benefited?

The entry from 16 August becomes further complicated and significant when read within the constellation of the adjacent portrait photograph. The image of the grim, stern-faced Brecht with a furrowed brow functions on various levels. First, the photograph directly signals Brecht in a candid manner. His face shows the frustrations felt in his (and others’) exile situation. The image makes clear to the reader that Brecht is part of a collective group of artists (“uns”) and a society (Germany and/or Europe). The photograph intervenes in a way that firmly establishes Brecht’s reflections and statements

³²³ Brecht, “Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit,” BFA 22.1: 74-89.

in the text (“Konkretisierung von Aussagen”) while also visually untangling ambiguities and details (“Sichtbarmachung”).³²⁴

The adjacent entry dated 18 August addresses the debate over formalism and realism in the arts. Lukács had criticized authors like the American novelist Dos Passos (and among others Brecht himself!) for employing montage techniques. Brecht’s reaction to these claims, which he called “Stumpfsinn,” centers on Lukács’s argumentation just as much as it does on its content.³²⁵ He criticizes Lukács for repeatedly characterizing the “Realismusdebatte” in terms of its “formale Kennzeichen”—essentially defining realism formalistically by its constitutive parts, not by what it does. Brecht’s argument strikes a tone similar to his statements made ten years earlier on the function and use value of photographs to expose social relationships.³²⁶ He understands realism as a “Haltung,” not a question of “Stil.” This particular photograph functions not only as Brecht’s “signature” but also serves to guide the reader through his argument about realism. The photo-text combination directly challenges Lukács’s critique of montage as a symptom of “décadence” because it has a use value for Brecht’s purposes.

The juxtaposition of photograph and journal entry provides a sense of “author”-ity as he contends that montage—a prevalent characteristic of Brecht’s plays—can act as a

³²⁴ Jost, “Journale,” 439.

³²⁵ For Brecht’s response to Lukács’s polemic, see his essays in BFA Volume 22.1: “Notizen über realistische Schreibweise” (620-40); “Die Essays von Georg Lukács” (456-58); “Weite und Vielfalt der realistischen Schreibweise” (424-33); or “Volkstümlichkeit und Realismus” (405-13).

³²⁶ See Brecht’s short note [“Über Fotografie”] (1928), BFA 21: 264.

connecting point and in effect engage the reader with the visual elements on the page. This arrangement functions to both separate and integrate photograph and printed word, thereby exposing the reader to what is visible, who must then make the connections between the fragmentary expressions in order to draw conclusions. In addition to the montage effect this journal entry suggests that such multimedia encounters may awaken in the reader what Brecht calls “komplizierte[] Reflexionen.”³²⁷ His essays and theater pieces consistently cultivate this critical, distanced reflection in his reader/audience. The reader is presented with what Walter Benjamin labels in Brecht’s epic theater “zitierbare” and “gestische” tableaux.³²⁸ Throughout the *Arbeitsjournale* Brecht confronts us with multiple series of purposefully assembled textual and photographic groups. This grouping is but one example of many found in the work journals that serve to activate the reader’s “eingreifendes Denken,” or “interventionist thinking.” The photograph of the author presents the reader with two Brechts: the realist, who seeks to warn of potential disaster, and the optimist, who insists on the “änderbare Natur”³²⁹ of history and of people, which Brecht claimed to find behind the unstable medium of photography. Just as the text cites its author, this image signals both his frustration with living in exile and the unproductive and ineffective debate about realism to the detriment of the arts. A possible caption for this photograph from 1938 comes from the (second) journal entry itself, as Brecht

³²⁷ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 320.

³²⁸ Benjamin, “Was ist das epische Theater?” (1939), BGS 2.2: 534 ff.

³²⁹ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 66. See the journal entry of 13 March 1942, which consists of one line: “Der große Dialektiker Krieg testet alle Organe,” combined with a press photo from *Life* magazine of the last vestiges of colonial rule in India.

reflects: “Die Realismusdebatte blockiert die Produktion [read: Praxis], wenn sie so weitergeht.”³³⁰ His visage looks off to the right and away as if to indicate his desire to look elsewhere, toward the hope of altering the discourse, to focus on the oppression of the working classes by means of war. The year 1938 is significant as it coincides with Brecht’s maturing interest in the combination of photography and poetry, which led to the creation of the *Kriegsfibel*.³³¹

Additional elements found in the *Arbeitsjournale* may enhance the reader’s position vis-à-vis this entry. On the textual level the photograph is flanked by three (not the prevalent number two) journal entries coming from two dates, 16 and 18 August. This raises questions of time: when was this photograph included with the entry? The placement of the photograph and texts in the BFA edition corresponds correctly to Brecht’s manuscripts at the BBA, but it remains unclear to which 18 August entry it actually belongs. While this may attract readers interested in such constellations, it is also a moot point in the context of this particular reading. As discussed previously, Brecht had

³³⁰ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 321. See also BFA 26: 424 (16 September 1940).

Here, Brecht ruminates further: “Es ist interessant, wie weit die Literatur, als Praxis, wegverlegt ist von den Zentren der alles entscheidenden Geschehnisse.”

³³¹ Brecht’s growing interest and eventual engagement with photographs is also documented in a journal entry from 20 June 1944 (America). Here Brecht refers not only to the *Kriegsfibel* but also to the play *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches* (1935), his volumes of poetry, and his essay “Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit” as works that contribute to the *Kriegsfibel*’s importance as a “befriedigenden literarischen Report über die Exilszeit.” See Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 196.

purposefully thematized the journals' heterogeneous construction of its fragments and actively pursued this activity as its author. This aspect has become part of the very fabric of the work itself—inviting the reader to think about the journals' constitutive parts and investigating how they function both internally and externally to the work.³³² However, by utilizing the strategies outlined in this section, the reader is also called upon to draw from other sources; therefore, it might not make sense to focus solely on one entry from 18 August. Brecht wanted his readers to ask questions, to jump from page to page, to pair entries with other texts and visual materials in order to produce any number of interpretations.³³³ The reader must analyze the individual entries in order to (re)construct narratives from the image-text combinations.

In that sense, then, the *Arbeitsjournale* do not offer any form of “Abfertigungsgesten”—sweeping judgments or definitive claims about him and/or his

³³² Many of these constitutive parts include texts (both by Brecht and not) in many languages, stemming from Brecht's changing physical locations in exile. Those readers who cannot read the original language must then rely exclusively on the critical apparatus in the BFA editions. Examples of this linguistic pastiche include German, English (US and British), Danish, Swedish, Finnish, and Russian. Readers also encounter drawings and symbols (see BFA 27: 53-54).

³³³ See J. J. Long, “From *Das Antlitz des Weltkrieges* to *Der gefährliche Augenblick*,” 65. Long refers to this in his article on Ernst Jünger's autobiography as a “performance of decontextualization.” Applied to the unfinished *Arbeitsjournale*, the reader is made aware of how Brecht pieced together textual and pictorial moments of his life with current events in a way that rejects any merely sequential reading of the journals.

many works.³³⁴ Not only were the work journals still unfinished and incomplete at the time of Brecht's death in 1956, but they also display Brecht's penchant for critical engagement and thought ("Lust am Denken"). They function as the *Modellbücher* do for stage productions in that they are also models—sketches and attempts that show the reader Brecht's way of seeing himself, the historical-material world, and the interaction between the two. The *Arbeitsjournale* are not explanatory texts about his artistic productions, his biography, or life during World War II. Instead they invite the reader into a different relationship, one that suggests, implies, tests, and challenges. The work journals ask the reader to make choices and assume different positions. For example, the reader can choose to compare the very first image (Sweden, 1938) to the last one in the journals (Berlin 1952), adding to the sense of the significance of visual imagery in the work journals (see Figure 7).³³⁵

This chapter has shown how the multi-layered textual, visual, and authorial experiments in the *Arbeitsjournale* result in a critique of the genre of self-writing. The image-text constellations, along with the montage architecture, offer clues for a Brechtian concept of the artist-subject, the critical historiographer, and strategies for readers on how to approach his work. The *Arbeitsjournale* are a distinctive entity in that they represent an experimental literary hybrid set within the frame of an autobiography. Therein lies one of the many advantages in studying the journals as an artistic product and including them in Brecht's literary oeuvre. For too long the work journals have been relegated to secondary status among Brecht scholars. The *Arbeitsjournale* are not simply one resource among

³³⁴ Raddatz, "Brechts Privat-Zeitung," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10 März 1973.

³³⁵ This is the final photograph of Brecht in the journals.

others for scholars to interpret the plays, theories, and biography.³³⁶ The reader's engagement requires work in the strictest sense. Meticulously crafted over an almost 20-year time span from diverse elements, these journals are designed specifically for those interested in developing a keen awareness of strategies for reading Brecht's works, as well as identifying Brecht's own approach to literary and cultural analysis.

If queries remain unanswered from examining the textual entries in the *Arbeitsjournale*, one should turn to the photographs of Brecht to "photo-textualize" and help tell his story. Or as one Brecht scholar puts it: "Brecht war ein cooler Typ, man weiß es. Wer es noch nicht weiß, kann es sehen."³³⁷

³³⁶ See also the short essay by Jacques Le Rider, "Brecht intime? Retour sur les journaux personnels," *Brecht 98. Poétique et Politique / Poetik und Politik*, ed. Michel Vanoosthuyse (Montpellier: Bibliothèque d'Etudes Germanique et Centre-Européennes), 315-20.

³³⁷ Hans-Harald Müller, "Fotografie und Lyrik: Beobachtungen zu medialen Selbstinszenierungen Bertolt Brechts," *Autorinszenierungen. Autorschaft und literarisches Werk im Kontext der Medien*, eds. Christine Künzel and Jörg Schönert (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), 79.

Chapter Five

Brecht's Visual Historiography: *Kriegsfibel*

As Brecht scholar John Willett points out, many factors during Brecht's exile years, especially 1938-1948, and continuing until his death in 1956, led to the inspiration for writing a "new kind of war poetry"³³⁸—one in which he would be able to combine comments on the perpetual escalation in hostilities throughout much of Europe with his increasing interest in more experimental media of the times other than the theater, mostly film and photography. A closer look into the source materials of the *Kriegsfibel* (1955; Eng.: *War Primer*), i.e., the corresponding photographic inclusions to the epigrams, reveals a virtual trail of breadcrumbs as to his whereabouts in exile; it also exposes other angles of this world war: its contexts, perpetrators, victims, destruction, and contradictions.

Brecht's photo-textual documentation does not present the reader with an all-encompassing or definitive meaning of war; rather it seeks to identify the many constitutive parts that come to signify it: the many battles, faces, cities, institutions in play, politics, etc. As he states in an essay about photography from 1928, he is interested primarily in the supposed (and contested) mimetic relationship that photographs have to

³³⁸ John Willett, "Afterword," *War Primer* (London: Libris, 1998), vii. It is important to distinguish Willett's *War Primer* edition from Brecht's *Kriegsfibel*. The two works differ in number of photograms, have different visual layouts to the front and back cover, and offer at times divergent information about the conception and background of the work in the included critical apparatus.

truth and reality. He argues that photographs simultaneously re-present reality and truth while questioning them. In essence, photographs can help the reader to recognize differences, exposing what things do, not what they are.³³⁹ Looking at the *Kriegsfibel* press photographs, in this case, we are obligated to ask: How does the photograph prompt the reader to narrate the story along with the epigrams? What does it show and what is missing from that message? Who benefits? What are the contradictions?

Critical commentary on this hybrid collection of war photographs and epigrams has touched on diverse themes, from emblem traditions to its image-text relations. Compared to the *Arbeitsjournale* and *Modellbücher*, scholarship on the *Kriegsfibel* has been sustained and has cast its net with wider reach and broader scope. The collection defies most generic classifications and, until recently, had been labeled the “Stiefkind” of Brecht scholarship, most likely because of the difficulties in placing the work into any systematic literary taxonomy.³⁴⁰ The *Kriegsfibel* photographs were not published with the corresponding epigrams in the 20-volume *Gesammelte Werke* (1967) by Suhrkamp. In fact, not having the “Foto” element of the “Fotogramm,” which Brecht writes of in his journals, proved to be problematic? Without those photographs the collection loses its visual power, and the reader cannot observe the images that prompted him to compose the poems, examine the pictorial elements in the photographs, or make their own connections between each polysemous image-text and other photograms. The photographs were originally appropriated from other publication sources to provide visual materials—and therefore none were technically Brecht’s own images; nonetheless,

³³⁹ Brecht, [“Über Fotografie”], BFA 21: 264.

³⁴⁰ Jan Knopf, cited in Welf Kienast, *Kriegsfibelmodell*, 9.

he searched and collected these photographs over decades and various geographic spaces in exile, collecting them for future use in his textual production. In 1988, the photos were included with the collected poetry in Volume 12 (“Gedichte 2”) of the 30-volume critical edition (BFA), offering readers and scholars a more complete set of material, plus twelve “zur *Kriegsfibel* gehörende Fotoepigramme” and another five epigrams with no images, all of which were not included in the original 1955 Eulenspiegel edition.

This chapter focuses on the photographic aspects of the *Kriegsfibel* and offers new avenues of inquiry into Brecht’s image-text poetics. The first section examines the “photobook” as a genre of visual historiography and its proliferation throughout the twentieth century. To what extent Brecht perpetuate a traditional form or create an experimental genre specifically suited to combine history, photograph, and text? Drawing on examples from post-World War I photobooks leads to a comparison of visual focal points between these selected works and Brecht’s *Kriegsfibel*. The second section surveys the secondary literature on the *Kriegsfibel*, which serves as a point of departure for how the *Kriegsfibel* photograms offer the reader distinct ways of decoding and interpreting images.

I. Photobooks and Traditions of Visual Historiography

“Taten, von welchen damals alle Welt sprach, und von welchen er voraus
sehen konnte, daß sie auch der Nachwelt unvergeßlich sein würden.”³⁴¹

For Brecht, who worked in a visual medium during most of his career, mass media proved to be an effective means of communicating while in exile when he had no access

³⁴¹ Lessing, “Laokoon,” 88.

to an audience via the stage. He conceived of a project that could reflect on the war from a distinct point of view: from that of the outside observer (“*der Beobachtende*”), one who waits.³⁴² The *Kriegsfibel* is a collection of sixty-nine photograms—an amalgamated term coined by Brecht—that juxtaposes photographs (literally an image written in light) and short, four-line epigrams (Greek: “inscription”, short poetic form usually with rhyming couplets and a satirical punchline) with the goal of directly challenging the stories and images of World War II. The *Kriegsfibel* activates historical awareness; it instructs the reader to critically engage with and question the many images of war; it also offers a practical example for the claim that history is conceived as images corresponding to the metaphorical language of photography—a claim made famous by Brecht’s fellow exile and collaborator Walter Benjamin. The collection presents the reader with a series of carefully conceptualized photograph-text combinations as a guide to different contextual snapshots of history.

To awaken historical interest, Brecht’s epigrams incorporate themes, events, and people with a distancing, ironic tone, while the newspaper photographs are meant to visually recall specific perspectives of war. Each photogram combination asks the reader to confront conventional historical narratives and challenges beliefs about their representation of human relations. The photographs become critical records of history that invite us to search for visual *Gestus*, showing us how humans struggle, communicate, and dominate. Photography functions in this context to break history into fragmentary

³⁴² See Ruth Berlau’s contribution (“Klappentext”) on the cover jacket: “[Brecht’s] Haltung oder Gestus dieser Vierzeiler [...] ist der Gestus eines Beobachtenden, und seine Haltung [...] ist die eines Wartenden.” Berlau’s text is reprinted in BFA 12: 416-18.

moments so that we might examine its ruptures and subtexts. Image-texts question truth while simultaneously suggesting verisimilitude. Most important for Brecht was that we must learn to examine photographs in order to recognize differences. He criticized mass media imagery because it only showed what things are, not necessarily what they do, i.e., the function and processes underscoring what is visible.³⁴³ For example, a critical reading invites comparison and facilitates a rethinking of what one sees and what is missing. Furthermore, when we ask what things do in the photograph, we question the motives surrounding such an image.

The republican experiment of Weimar Germany (1918-1933) was short-lived. Toward the final years of this politically and socially unstable period of democratic rule factions from every direction and of every persuasion vied for political power in Germany and were seen in the streets, clashing publicly, in political party rallies, or in the conspiracy theories surrounding the Reichstag arson in February 1933. Newspapers, periodicals, and magazines played an integral role in the many attempts to shape public opinions and debates, particularly at the two ends of the political spectrum: the communists on the left and the National Socialists on the far right. Rising inflation, high unemployment rates, fears of greater instability, and growing resentment of defeat after World War I had driven Germany into a quagmire. However, amidst the chaos and upheaval the period of “relative stabilization” in the mid- to late 1920s as well as the period into the early 1930s also marked a time of great cultural achievements.³⁴⁴

³⁴³ Brecht, [“Über Fotografie”], BFA 21: 264.

³⁴⁴ See for example: Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 2-5; Jost Hermand and Frank Trommler, *Die Kultur*

Photography as a vehicle for artistic expression and social commentary can be attributed to its proliferation in the early twentieth century, especially during World War I (1914-1918) and the Weimar Republic, most notably because of advancing camera and reproduction technologies. Its popularity with the masses and the relative ease with which serious practitioners and the general public could photograph things, people, and events, made it a choice medium for political comment and historical documentation.

A review of Brecht's early notes, essays, and journals reveals his increasing interest in the photobook, which during the late 1920s and early 1930s was becoming a rapidly growing bi-medial genre of literature.³⁴⁵ This time period also parallels his growing engagement and work with images. In an autobiographical note as early as 1924

der Weimarer Republik (München: Nymphenburger, 1978), 23-29; Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987); or Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

³⁴⁵ On the photobook genre, see: Martin Martin and Gerry Badger, eds., *The Photobook: A History*, 2 vols. (London: Phaidon Press, 2004-2006). On the development of the photobook in Germany, see: Christine Kühn, ed., *Neues Sehen in Berlin. Fotografie der Zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2005); or Ute Eskildsen, "Photography and the Neue Sachlichkeit Movement," *Germany: The New Photography 1927-1933*, ed. David Mellor (London: Arts Council, 1978), 101-12.

titled “Lernen,” he lists among his principal wishes “Fotografieren” and “Technik.”³⁴⁶ In another early text he comments on his favorite books published in 1926. Himself an avid reader, Brecht was particularly interested in judging a book based on its “Materialwert,” i.e., not just for its informational value but also for its organizational methodology and whether its presentation made a lasting impression.³⁴⁷ Readers, however, should not remain uncritical of what they see. They, too, must play a part in the act of sifting through the labyrinth of images, selecting powerful ones that document history, and constructing meaning. They must practice the art of knowing what to look for—subtle contradictions or deceptions found in many mass media photographs.³⁴⁸ This active selection process is

³⁴⁶ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 279. At that time, however, Brecht apparently did not deem the art of taking photographs as difficult. In an interesting contrast one year later he notes that taking photographs is easy enough for children to do, something he had tried with his own children in an act of parental bonding: “Mit Kindern kann man, auch wenn sie so erstklassig wie meine Tochter [Barbara] sind, mit Ausnahme von Fotografieren wenig anfangen. Sie sind zu weise und zu defektlos, um interessant zu sein.” See autobiographical note [“Um 1925”], BFA 26: 285.

³⁴⁷ Brecht, [“Die besten Bücher des Jahres 1926”], BFA 21: 176. This was a short review of books that Brecht found worthy, published in *Das Tage-Buch* (4 December 1926).

Brecht mentions three photobooks in this review and singles out their ability to engage with photographic imagery effectively. Each one will be discussed briefly in this section.

³⁴⁸ Brecht stresses the informed reader’s active search in a short note from 1926: “Nur das Tier, das sich langweilt, braucht Täuschung.” See Brecht, “Über die Literatur,” BFA 21: 177.

similar to the footwork (and eye-work) required to take effective photographs. Photographers must train their eyes to locate moments of visual narratives with social significance and must be capable of wielding and manipulating the camera apparatus in ways that can capture and frame that message. The significance of Brecht's book review has less to do with *whom* Brecht was reading at the time and more to do with the *type* of book he deemed important to recommend. Three of the six mentioned—René Fülöp-Miller's *Geist und Gesicht des Bolschewismus*, Erich Mendelsohn's picturebook on architecture in the United States called *Amerika. Bilderbuch eines Architekten*, and the politically acrid photobook by German pacifist Ernst Friedrich entitled *Krieg dem Kriege!*—either include or consist entirely of photographs and/or image-text combinations. In his review Brecht favors *Krieg dem Kriege!* for its biting engagement with history and politics, its willingness to experiment with multimedia combinations, and its successful exploitation of "Bildmaterial" to convey "Materialwert" to the reader. Fülöp-Miller and Mendelsohn make his list, but fail to garner Brecht's full support.

In recommending Fülöp-Miller's book, Brecht addresses readers with these lines:

Sie können auch *Geist und Gesicht des Bolschewismus* kaufen, wenn Sie sich vornehmen, den Text mit einer Schere herauszuschneiden: das Bildmaterial ist ausgezeichnet und bewahrt Sie davor, über den Bolschewismus den üblichen Unsinn zu reden.³⁴⁹

The visual materials assume a noticeable and privileged position over the text, with Brecht even coaxing the reader to literally excise the words (the "Geist" of the title) and focus on its photographs, the eponymous "face of Bolshevism," in order to better

³⁴⁹ Brecht, "[Die besten Bücher des Jahres 1926]," BFA 21: 176.

understand contemporary Soviet history. More important is his insistence that looking at a photograph under specific circumstances can be more enlightening than reading the written words on the page. The volume contains 500 images on an almost equal number of pages. Most of these are photographs but it also includes some sketches and reproductions of portraiture, paintings, posters, and various other visuals. Its section headings reveal the book's four major themes, and the visual materials also echo these leitmotifs: the masses (workers, peasants, collectives); monuments and structures dedicated to the revolution (Soviet leaders, the Kremlin); cultural institutions (museums, music, graphic arts); and industrialization (factories, farms, military complexes and armament). Brecht found much to enjoy in the photographs but was less impressed with the overall package assembled by Fülöp-Miller. The author's texts about the history and contemporary "face of Bolshevism" are an unabashed glorification of the revolutionary movement in Russia with no attempt at critical analysis. Fülöp-Miller mentions societal problems such as illiteracy and poverty, but claims that the revolution will cure Russia's ills. Many of these photographs are mere decorative elements of the text's "history lessons," which diminishes the images' visual power. Aside from various captions, there is a divide between Fülöp-Miller's texts and his engagement with the pictorial materials. At best, the visuals are ornamental and are reduced to a long (and quite meaningless) series of images—hence, Brecht's statement above concerning the usual blather about Bolshevism.

The author does point to photography in a brief introduction to the volume. He thanks the medium for assisting him in presenting the "true picture of Russian society." His stated goal is to provide an image of the "Wesen und [den] Aussichten des

Bolschewismus.”³⁵⁰ The first of many problems with these statements has to do with how Fülöp-Miller views photography, and second how this does not translate into practice in his book. First, the author privileges photography above other modern representational media even though he does not engage with the visual materials. Despite the title, there is very little “critique” of the medium or what is visible in the photographs. Fülöp-Miller’s answer to most questions raised by the photographs is the onward march towards communism. He also disregards the shortcomings inherent in appropriated photographs, which by the time of publication in 1926 were well known. Second, a photograph cannot show the “essence” of anything. It can make metonymic problems visible, i.e., those problems not explicitly mentioned by name but to which the photograph refers, and invite readers to inspect them more closely for trends or differences. The volume most likely represented an example of a missed opportunity rather than a photobook that incorrectly employed image-texts to the detriment of the truth—after all, Brecht did endorse the book in his review. He saw great potential in the photographs, but because of Fülöp-Miller’s uncritical commentaries and his neglect of the images’ critical potential, his endorsement should also be seen as a covert repudiation of the photobook.

Images from the same period as Fülöp-Miller’s photobook were published in photobooks that both glorified and demonized Germany’s involvement in World War I. One of the most widely read authors was Ernst Jünger, whose *In Stahlgewittern* (1920) was not only a commercial success but also gave voice to the soldiers’ experience of trench warfare. In 1930, Jünger published the anthology/photobook *Das Antlitz des*

³⁵⁰ René Fülöp-Miller, *Geist und Gesicht des Bolschewismus. Darstellung und Kritik des kulturellen Lebens in Sowjet-Russland* (Wien: Amalthea, 1926), ii-iii.

Weltkrieges. Fronterlebnisse deutscher Soldaten, which contained over 200 photographs of soldiers, battlefields, war machinery, and death. *Antlitz* followed a long tradition of visual accounts of war, dating back to the birth of the photograph in the mid-nineteenth century through the first decade of the twentieth.³⁵¹ The publishers open with a foreword that speaks directly to the book's (necessary) visual component: "Unmittelbarer noch als Worte können Photographien, an allen Fronten aufgenommen, von der Zeit des Krieges berichten, dessen Notwendigkeit und Größe uns jetzt erst vollkommen vor Auge steht. Dieser Band ist daher gedacht als eine kurze Kulturgeschichte des Krieges."³⁵² The publishers argue that these war images deliver a more powerful historical narrative than words. Provided the reader knows how to navigate the flood of media imagery (in the press and in this book), the assertion would seem to corroborate Brecht's later statements

³⁵¹ For an excellent overview on the advent of war, photography, and the press in the nineteenth century, see Thierry Gervais, "Witness to War: The Uses of Photography in the Illustrated Press, 1855-1904," *Journal of Visual Culture* 9:3 (2010): 370-384. Gervais traces the industrialization of modern warfare as parallel to the technological developments in the photographic medium and its chemical and mechanical apparatus. Along the same line, Donald Richter provides a historical (and visual) survey of the development and use of weapons of mass destruction in the early twentieth century, more specifically gas warfare in the trenches, in *Chemical Soldiers: British Gas Warfare in World War I* (London: Leo Cooper, 1994).

³⁵² Publisher's foreword, cited in Ernst Jünger, ed., *Das Antlitz des Weltkrieges*.

Fronterlebnisse deutscher Soldaten (Berlin: Neufeld & Henius, 1930).

(e.g., “taking the scissors” to Fülöp-Miller’s text) on other photobooks of the time. The publishers also make the case for the “necessity” of war as something with greater significance for all of humanity. *Antlitz* is a visual record of German greatness and Germans fighting for their country, but perhaps also was meant to provide a sense of closure (and/or justification) of the war for those Germans still feeling the aftereffects from the loss and destruction.

Included in the anthology was Jünger’s essay “Krieg und Lichtbild,” which situated the events of World War I alongside photographic images that employ similar advanced technologies for documenting war. These photographs, so Jünger, can show many sides of the war, but must include written texts and descriptions (i.e., captions) for the reader to understand them. Here, Jünger rebukes the publisher of this photobook anthology, arguing that photographs can complement and visually illustrate, but not overcome the text’s importance over the image. A photobook anthology cannot exclude photographs any more than it can consist only of photos. To be sure, the photographs figure significantly in Jünger’s concept and aesthetics of war with the author. For Jünger, these photographs were “Dokumente von besonderer Genauigkeit.”³⁵³ Overall, he approaches photography’s claim to verisimilitude without the critical overtones quoted above about the image-text relationship between photos and the printed word. For Jünger, the photograph is for the most part an accurate likeness of what took place at a given

³⁵³ Jünger, “Krieg und Lichtbild,” 3f. See also Matthias Uecker, “The Face of the Weimar Republic: Photography, Physiognomy, and Propaganda in Weimar Germany,” *Monatshefte* 99 (Winter 2007): 469-84; and Dietart Kerbs and Walter Uka, eds., *Fotografie und Bildpublizistik in der Weimarer Republik* (Böhen: Kettler, 2004).

moment, an attitude of his that remains consistent throughout the photobook. J.J. Long has argued that *Antlitz* is essentially a domestication of (war) photography, “neutered” of critical value.³⁵⁴

Unlike Brecht’s approach, Jünger’s is not that of critical observation of details or looking for a specific perspective; rather, Jünger is content to accept the photographic surface in the anthology, staying in the realm of photography’s referential qualities:

Man darf überhaupt vom Lichtbild nicht mehr erwarten, als es zu geben vermag [...]. Hinter den Abbildern einer versunkenen Welt, hinter den Ruinen den Atem großer Taten und Leiden zu spüren, das ist die Aufgabe, die wie jedes Dokument, so auch das Lichtbild aus den Zonen vergangener Kämpfe dem aufmerksamen Betrachter stellt.³⁵⁵

Jünger stresses that making visible the “great deeds” and “suffering” of the Germans during the war is the task of this photobook. He speaks in general terms of the photobook as a site where visual documents like photographs memorialize for the reader the “zones of past battles,” which appeal to a positive reassessment of war—or possible nostalgia for the German Reich. The “zone” of remembrance is no doubt the negative outcome of World War I for Germany, which culminated in the detrimental and demoralizing “stab in the back” theory of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. Passages such as those quoted above display Jünger’s subtle nationalist undertones. When coupled with the visual materials, the reader can readily perceive these hints. There are very few images that show soldiers’ graves. A large number of the 200 photographs in the photobook titled *Antlitz des*

³⁵⁴ J. J. Long, “From *Das Antlitz des Weltkrieges* to *Der gefährliche Augenblick*,” 61f.

³⁵⁵ Jünger, “Krieg und Lichtbild,” 4 f.

Weltkrieges puts the face of the “enemy” on parade, providing a physiographic index of contrasting soldiers, e.g., Belgians, French, Americans, Indians, Japanese, Arabs, Africans, etc.³⁵⁶ This, in effect, singles out “German” faces as the heroes and contrasts these with the visages of the “others,” a visual example of the power dynamics in early twentieth-century Europe as well as the discourse of colonialism.

Jünger’s *Antlitz* is at best an anemic attempt to recount the events of World War I. A large percentage of photographs are dedicated to dead soldiers in the trenches. It places textual and pictorial emphasis on war as a heroic duty, showing the soldier’s death in battle as courageous and patriotic. Yet, a surprising number of images show soldiers waving, smiling, or in general high spirits. Far from skewing the conventional wisdom surrounding World War I, the reader must view these scenes of jubilation historically—much of Europe in 1914 was indeed caught in a war fever, with many artists from around the continent joining politicians and leaders in their call to arms.³⁵⁷ The critical reader will regard the celebrating soldiers from a different perspective (together with the benefit of hindsight); in 1914, not knowing their fate, they charged into a war of attrition. From today’s standpoint, what is most shocking is that the smiling young men would die horrible deaths under inhumane conditions in the trenches. For Brecht, readers must learn to rethink their own position as to the causes and effects of war. The hope was to prevent future wars from being viable alternatives to peace by both questioning conventional

³⁵⁶ Dora Apel, “Cultural Battlegrounds: Weimar Photographic Narratives of War,” *New German Critique* 76 (Winter 1999): 80.

³⁵⁷ In Germany, see for example the “Aufruf” by Kaiser Wilhelm II of 6 August 1914, “An das deutsche Volk.”

wisdom and warning that the threat of war is ever-present in the state of world affairs. *Antlitz* presents a different perspective, showing the thrills of battle, the power of German military might, and the face of the enemy versus the German physiognomy.

Two points of contact exist between *Antlitz* and Brecht's *Kriegsfibel*. First, both thematize the abstraction of warfare with the development of bigger, more effective (i.e., destructive) technology that continued to negatively alter the "faces" of its victims and the "face" of war itself. Second, and somewhat more surprising, both engage with the "work" aesthetic of war. Brecht and Jünger represent this in distinct ways. Jünger directly states that war is labor in his "Krieg und Lichtbild" essay. The work reference is linked to the actual altercations and the planning in order to execute large-scale engagements. Brecht's photograms, on the other hand, seek to shed light on a different aspect of "work." These highlight the socioeconomic and historical rift between the civilians and workers, who are the ones doing the fighting and producing the means with which to perpetuate it, and the political leaders and big business elites, who profit from that work.³⁵⁸

Other photobooks dealing with the first "Nachkriegszeit" (Weimar Republic) since German unification did not honor the virtues and sacrifices of war. Rather, some plotted a more neutral course between the ideologies on the right and the left. One such volume that neither glorified nor fiercely condemned World War I appeared in 1931, authored by Edmund Schultz, and sits today in Brecht's *Nachlassbibliothek*. Schultz's preface addresses this attempt at objective historiography:

³⁵⁸ Chapter six also deals with what Georges Didi-Huberman calls "fighting to live and living to fight" as seen in various *Kriegsfibel* photograms.

Dieses Bilderwerk unternimmt den Versuch, einen Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Nachkriegszeit zu liefern. Die Grenzen dieses Unternehmens sind zunächst durch das photographische Material selbst bestimmt, insofern, als natürlich nicht alle Vorgänge dieser Zeit photographisch erfaßt wurden, erfaßt werden konnten. Andererseits war das vorliegende Material so reichhaltig, daß auf manches interessante und wichtige Bild verzichtet werden mußte [...] Die Aufgabe, welche sich dieses Buch stellte, war, ein anschauliches Bild der jüngsten deutschen Vergangenheit zu geben. Möge es diesen Zweck erfüllen.³⁵⁹

According to Schultz, this photobook's deficit is that it cannot include all the images from World War I, both those collected and generally available from other publications. His statement is an attempt to bring editorial (and journalistic) credentials to his volume of war imagery. And, as with most other photobooks, it places emphasis on the visual materials that provide a "graphic image of recent German history." The book shows photographs (mainly from newspaper clippings and facial shots) of prominent figures in Germany during the Weimar Republic, such as politicians, war criminals, religious figures, and Nazi Party officials, as well as groups of workers and typical "Germans."

Some artists sought to completely distance their work from the previously made associations between photography and accurate representations of war by authors like

³⁵⁹ Edmund Schultz, ed., *Das Gesicht der Demokratie. Ein Bildwerk zur Geschichte der deutschen Nachkriegszeit* (Breitkopf und Härtel: Leipzig, 1931). This volume can be found in the BBA [NB 01/1].

Jünger or photographers like Hermann Rex.³⁶⁰ German pacifist Ernst Friedrich is one leftist author in this backlash against the pro-war, nationalist (“proto-fascist”³⁶¹) photobooks that appeared during the late 1920s and early 1930s. In Brecht’s short review of the best books of 1926, he writes with high regard of Friedrich’s photobook:

Für den gleichen Preis, den man für eine Grammophonplatte mit “O du fröhliche, o du selige” anlegt, kann man seinen Kindern auch jenes Bilderbuch kaufen, das *Krieg dem Kriege* heißt, aus photographischen Dokumenten besteht und ein gelungenes Porträt der Menschheit zeigt.³⁶²

In contrast to his remarks in the review about Fülöp-Miller’s *Geist und Gesicht des Bolschewismus*, where he suggested the reader should cut out and save all the photographs to save and discard the text, Brecht lauds Friedrich’s *Krieg dem Kriege!* as a true image-text “document.” It successfully combines (oftentimes gruesome) photographic material of the war experience from various thematic areas with text and commentary that implores us to rethink our opinion of conflict, question how humans are

³⁶⁰ Amateur photographer Rex published his own historiographic photobook during the 1920s that, like Jünger’s *Antlitz des Weltkrieges*, extolled the heroic German soldier and virtues of war. See Hermann Rex, *Der Weltkrieg in seiner rauhen Wirklichkeit. Kriegsbilder-Album in drei Teilen* (München: Hermann Rutz, 1926). See also Bodo von Dewitz, “So wird der Krieg bei uns geführt.” *Amateurfotografie im Ersten Weltkrieg* (München: Tuduv, 1989).

³⁶¹ Apel, “Cultural Battlegrounds,” 70.

³⁶² Brecht, [“Die besten Bücher des Jahres 1926”], BFA 21: 176. The song Brecht mentions refers to the traditional Christmas song by Daniel Falk (1816).

conditioned to think in terms of battle, and connect the underlying causes of war to those who profit from it. In fact, Brecht even jests (facetiously) that parents should buy their children this type of “Bilderbuch” in order to teach about the horrors of war.

Friedrich’s photobook was a commercial success at the time of publication. As Douglas Kellner notes, during the war many European countries forbade publication of many photographs, which fueled the flames of interest in the public to see “first-hand” pictures of the events.³⁶³ In 1926, Friedrich joined fellow leftists, pacifists, and Social Democrats such as Kurt Tucholsky, Walter Mehring, and Ernst Toller to form a revolutionary pacifist group. For the publication of *Krieg dem Kriege!*, he displayed many images from the photobook in his storefront windows in Berlin, and later transformed the entire building into an “Antikriegsmuseum.” In 1930, Friedrich came under intense scrutiny from the government and other prominent figures who claimed he had defamed them with his book. He was arrested and imprisoned for treason and defamation until his release (ironically) in 1933 after the Nazis’ rise to power.³⁶⁴ On 27 February 1933 the German Reichstag was burned; on that same day Nazis destroyed Friedrich’s museum and business. He fled Germany to Switzerland, then to Belgium, and

³⁶³ The 1987 reprint was edited by Douglas Kellner. See his introduction in Ernst Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege!* (Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1987), 12. The introduction also includes various photographs from Friedrich’s antiwar museum, before and after the Nazis destroyed it. Friedrich’s photobook was originally published in Germany in 1924, with subsequent editions in the following years.

³⁶⁴ See Friedrich’s “Danksagung” at the end of the book, where he even thanks his “torturers” (“Dank auch meinen Peinigern!”).

finally to France. In Belgium he recreated his antiwar museum, only to have the Nazis destroy it after the invasion in 1940. He remained active in the “militant pacifist” and labor union movements well after World War II. In 1967, amid the escalations in the anti Vietnam War movement, Friedrich died at Le Perreux sur Marne in France. In 1981, his grandson revived the museum in Berlin-Wedding, which is located today in Brüsseler Straße 21.

Krieg dem Kriege! thematized different aspects of war by using a technique of combining press photographs with highly critical captions and commentaries (in German, French, Dutch, and English!). Friedrich’s captions suggested alternative readings to what was visible—to the point that the readers do not believe what they see. First and foremost, the book contains photographs of soldiers—on the battlefield, dead bodies and alive, their gravesites, etc. Second, the destruction of villages and cities plays a major role in shaping the context of the unjust war. Third, like others before it, *Krieg dem Kriege!* shows how the advances in waging war mirror those advances in technologies that can represent and disseminate such images. The advent of photographs and their inherent reproducibility transformed the structure and imaginary concept of war into one that was technologically mediated.³⁶⁵ Although it could not at the time be broadcast “live” in real

³⁶⁵ See Apel, “Cultural Battlegrounds,” 51. See also Gervais, “Witness to War: The Uses of Photography in the Illustrated Press, 1855-1904.” Gervais makes a point of the socioeconomics of warfare. He gives examples of mid- and late-nineteenth-century magazines and newspapers that published battlefield scenes (i.e., the beginnings of “embedded” war journalism) for the growing middle class to read over tea on their lounge chairs!

time like today, the surfeit of images in the press blurred the war's events in favor of a series of images taken out of time and permanently frozen. Close, face-to-face combat was rendered anachronistic with weapons like rapid-fire machine guns, airplanes, tanks, and artillery. Fourth, and most important, the image-texts engage in a stark social critique of prevalent bourgeois culture in the Weimar Republic and a historical critique of war in general. This fourth component is precisely what drew readers (critics like Tucholsky, Brecht, and others) to Friedrich's photobook. In the prestigious left-liberal weekly *Die Weltbühne*, published by Siegfried Jacobsohn, Tucholsky penned his own one-and-a-half-page review of Friedrich's photobook with the title "Waffe gegen den Krieg." Already in this title we see similarities with Brecht's language regarding truth, representation, and photographs.³⁶⁶

Tucholsky, writing under the pseudonym "Ignaz Wrobel," writes an even stronger and more direct endorsement of Friedrich's photobook than Brecht's in typical polemic style, saying that Germans should buy multiple copies to hand out: "[*Krieg dem Kriege!*] ist die Waffe. Wer das sieht und nicht schaudert, der ist kein Mensch. Der ist ein Patriot. Denen, die mir so oft bejahend zugehört haben, lege ich nahe: Das Buch in einem oder mehreren Exemplaren zu kaufen und für seine Verbreitung zu sorgen."³⁶⁷ Tucholsky's plea echoes Friedrich's own intended audience for his photobook—the dissemination of this horrible war imagery: "Den Schlachtendenkern, den Schlachtenlenkern, den

³⁶⁶ Brecht calls the photograph a potential "Waffe gegen die Wahrheit."

³⁶⁷ Kurt Tucholsky [Ignaz Wrobel], "Waffe gegen den Krieg," *Die Weltbühne*, 27 February 1926.

Kriegsbegeisterten aller Länder ist dies Buch freundlichst gewidmet.”³⁶⁸ This drive to show the world is strengthened by the book’s multilingual (internationalist) presentation in solidarity with other antiwar movements.³⁶⁹ Tucholsky’s review continues in earnest. He suggests that Friedrich’s photobook be widely disseminated among fellow pacifists and liberals, and must fall into the hands of those in strong support of war. It should also be given to schools, to cultural institutions, clubs, and “Stammtische.” Above all, writes Tucholsky, this photobook should be given to mothers, whose opposition to war directly affects their own sons: “Es ist besser, sie fällt beim Anblick dieses Buches in Ohnmacht als nach Empfang eines Telegramms aus dem Felde...”³⁷⁰

The most shocking aspect of the photobook is the section on wounded soldiers. These are photographs of mutilated men, mostly facial but also some full body shots. Many stare directly into the camera, looking the reader in the eye. While only a few would make the point sufficiently, Friedrich instead chose to subject readers to approximately 30 pages of “Schreckensbilder” (about 60 photographs total). For many readers at the time, this would be the first opportunity to intimately view such images of the effects of war on those who must actually do the fighting—those who were gravely wounded but survived. Tucholsky dedicates a long passage in his review to these:

Die Photographien der Schlachtfelder, dieser Abdeckereien des Krieges,
die Photographien der Kriegsverstümmelten gehören zu den

³⁶⁸ See Friedrich’s dedication in *Krieg dem Kriege!*.

³⁶⁹ Next to the dedication page in Friedrich’s book is an image of a fist breaking a rifle. The fist is reminiscent of the clenched fist of the labor movement.

³⁷⁰ Tucholsky, “Waffe gegen den Krieg,” *Die Weltbühne*, 27 February 1926.

fürchterlichsten Dokumenten, die mir jemals unter die Augen gekommen sind. Es gibt kein kriminalistisches Werk, keine Publikation, die etwas Ähnliches an Grausamkeit, an letzter Wahrhaftigkeit, an Belehrung böte.³⁷¹

Thus, Friedrich's photobook had a clear focus on medically explicit photography³⁷²—the individual faces are actual clinical photographs complete with surgical instruments—as a powerful visual tool. These shocking images bridge the spatial divide between what happens on the front and what the public sees as the “face” of the war. He deliberately selected the worst of the worst for the greatest shock effect, and combined them with commentary to deliver the pathos of their situations to the reader. For example, multiple images of mutilated soldiers show half their faces missing, no jaw remaining, or most of their face blown away by a bomb. Friedrich combined such photographs with captions like “Des Vaterlandes Dank ist euch gewiß,” or with direct quotes from prominent Germans like this one from Paul von Hindenburg: “Der Krieg bekommt mir wie eine Badekur,” which clearly clashed with the photograph. In 1926, this quote had more critical resonance, as Hindenburg was Germany's President. Some captions are more informational, giving the wounded soldiers' names, their afflictions, and whether the treatments are still ongoing. However, the gruesome photographs are not the only visual element in Friedrich's photobook meant to cause shock, disgust, and fascination. The opening pages reproduce other materials detailing the connections between the state, religious groups, and business in the development and dissemination of pro-war

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² See also Apel, “Cultural Battlegrounds,” 57-68.

propaganda. These include reproductions of posters, petitions, instructional manuals for children's toys that promote violence (guns, "Soldatenspielzeuge," or even leaflets instructing how to build bombs with knitting needles!), or selected illustrations of war scenes from numerous publications.

Throughout the photobook Friedrich uses the visual power of photography to bring immediacy and shock to the reader. Rarely, however, does he directly and critically engage with the tenets and claims of the medium itself, other than to say that photographs are "Wortschatz aller Menschen" or "unbestechlich." These are lofty claims. Because images cannot speak and have no vocabulary, Friedrich's metaphor has more to do with their potential to communicate with the reader, who must supply meaning, and can serve a symbolic and indexical function. That photographs are presented as unmanipulatable (literally "incorruptible") should be cause for questioning. The photographs are included in the uncropped, unedited form in which Friedrich found them. Nevertheless he assumes the real, "documentary" status of photographs as a given without any question to the contrary. (Perhaps this was not required for such a partisan representation of antiwar sentiment.) Friedrich does not account for this aspect in *Krieg dem Kriege!*; in essence, his photobook is just as propagandistic as those pro-war photobooks he was trying to prove false. Still, he insists that the photographs and other visual materials presented in his version of World War I are true to history: "Hier ist das nüchtern-wahre, das gemein-naturgetreue Bild des Krieges—teils durch Zufall, teils durch Absicht—photographisch festgehalten."³⁷³ He claims that the photograph reproduces the war's unadulterated image

³⁷³ Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege!*, 29.

created by nature.³⁷⁴ This assertion may be true to some extent with the candid photographs from the front (“durch Zufall festgehalten”), but the reader must be skeptical of such statements on the veracity and objectivity of posed (“durch Absicht festgehalten”) photographs—which by definition are manipulated and staged.

Besides the photobooks discussed thus far, others employed different methods and techniques for image-texts. For artists like John Heartfield, manipulating and combining multiple images to create something new was not only productive but helped to normalize the photomontage (especially on the political left) as a means to convey political and social satire to the masses. As previously shown, artists and intellectuals on the left and the right subsequently turned to photography as the medium of choice for disseminating information, and inevitably, propaganda. Most notably, the photographic combinations Brecht saw in the left-leaning *German Workers' Illustrated* (*Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* [AIZ]) piqued his interest. He publicly endorsed the photomontages of John Heartfield, in particular, for their biting social commentary and defended them against criticisms of being too formalistic in their approach to the masses.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ This language is reminiscent of William Henry Fox Talbot's seminal publications *The Pencil of Nature* (1844-1846). Fox Talbot, inventor of the calotype process, was one of the first to commercially publish photograph-like images.

³⁷⁵ Brecht, [“Über Fotografie”], BFA 21: 264. Brecht defends Heartfield on occasion (see first quotes from the introduction of this study), but he rejects the montages of the Dada movement because the “historischer Blick,” or the standpoint of history, is lost without any apparent reference to original source material.

Between 1930 and 1938, the *AIZ* printed hundreds of Heartfield's photomontages, either as the paper's front or back covers or occasionally as double-page spreads. Willi Münzenberg, a German communist backer, started the *AIZ* in 1925 at a time when many other illustrated journals were being established throughout Western Europe and North America. During that period editors and artists began experimenting with design and layout to communicate political arguments effectively and to be visually attractive to readers. The *AIZ* promoted a progressive message to workers, who Münzenberg felt were not otherwise being served by the mainstream press in Germany. Because the readership bought the *AIZ* from newsstands, engaging cover images were crucial for the magazine's visibility and viability. Heartfield developed his own distinctive, experimental photographic aesthetic by cultivating relationships between the text and the pictorial fragments, between the images and social commentary, and between the issues made visible in the photomontages and the perspectives of the articles in the magazine.³⁷⁶

His satirical photomontages about Germany's political climate and the international events of the day are complex works about war and peace and about the links he perceived between fascism, capitalism, and war. Brecht's critical eye was drawn to Heartfield for good reason. His photomontage work exhibited an overt disdain for the rise of the Nazis in Germany and fascism in Europe; it also thematized in many cases the

³⁷⁶ For a detailed account of *AIZ*'s reception specifically regarding Heartfield's photomontages, see the chapter: "John Heartfields Hitler-Satiren 1932-1943," in Jost Hermand, *Politische Denkbilder. Von Caspar David Friedrich bis Neo Rauch* (Köln: Böhlau, 2011), 161-76. See also the special issue of *New German Critique* 107 (Summer 2009) dedicated to "Photomontage Across Borders."

exploitation of the working class by the social elite and big business concerns in line with nationalist sentiments. Many leftist critics and artists—Brecht, George Grosz, Erwin Piscator, and Kurt Tucholsky, among many others—saw these as negative aftereffects of Germany’s defeat in World War I and insisted on linking them. This amalgam of art and the public sphere, which Benjamin aptly noted as the communist “politicization of art,” is exactly what drew Brecht and others to the use of photographs.³⁷⁷ On the one hand, the widespread proliferation of photo-reportage images in the press and the technical reproducibility inherent in the photographic medium made them into a potentially “dangerous weapon against truth” in the hands of the bourgeoisie; on the other hand, it seemed this was a medium well suited for history.³⁷⁸ Alternatively, these photomontages were able to contest Benjamin’s statement quoted above, the fascist “aestheticization of politics,” or the process of making war look good.

Brecht followed Heartfield’s work closely throughout his life. Among the books in his personal library was a volume published in 1945 in Switzerland that dealt with the critical reception of Heartfield’s photomontages, including essays by Alfred Durus, Wolf

³⁷⁷ Walter Benjamin, “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit,” BGS 44. See also Brecht’s 1926 essay “Sozialisierung der Kunst,” BFA 21: 179-80.

³⁷⁸ Brecht, “Über die Wiederherstellung der Wahrheit,” BFA 22.1: 89-90.

Reiss, and Louis Aragon.³⁷⁹ It begins with a short text by the editor, Konrad Farner, much like Ruth Berlau's in the *Kriegsfibel*, introducing Heartfield's work to readers both familiar and unfamiliar with it and arguing for the power of the photomontage as a weapon to counter the prevailing mass media images that proliferated during World War II. The message in Heartfield's satirical photomontages (and others like his) generated the "Kunst der Gegenwart." Farner singles out the photograph in particular as the material object with the greatest power to oppose abstract art, combining "Volk und Kultur."³⁸⁰ The comments juxtapose Heartfield's work dealing with social issues with his predecessors during the Expressionist movement in Germany, who used abstraction as a means to come to terms with the aftermath of World War I. In his own work with photographs, Brecht displayed both a critical skepticism of the medium's inherent flaws—its claim to truth—and a willingness to engage his readers using photography's persuasive visual power oriented toward something concrete.

The way in which photographs can be reappropriated into other contexts to alter a message piqued Brecht's interest in image-text art forms. The main goal was to produce art that activated the reader's critical faculties, attracted attention by selecting and adapting provocative imagery, and taught others how to actively look for discrepancies.

The act of seeing and reading photomontage involves both a critical eye and the acumen

³⁷⁹ This volume on Heartfield's work is housed at the Brecht Archive's

Nachlassbibliothek [BBA call number C 10 / 057]: Konrad Farner, ed., *John Heartfield.*

Photomontagen zur Zeitgeschichte (Zürich: Vereinigung Kultur und Volk, 1945).

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

to select a path through the fabric and multi-layered perspectives of the montage (not unlike Brecht's thoughts on Chinese painting). Reading photographs, and photomontage in particular, is an act that "fuses perception and evaluation, a mode of active behavior by which observers creatively interact with their environment."³⁸¹ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy investigates this act of human visual perception in *Malerei Photographie Film* (1927). In the essay "Photographie" he argues that the artist must continue (or take over) at the point where the photographic object cannot, the generative process of transforming a visual document fixed in time into a conceptual image, thus creating a new relationship between art and perceived reality.³⁸²

The Heartfield photomontage rearranged and altered existing photographs, transforming them into new, materialist images that re-evaluate contemporary history and current events. Farner points to Karl Marx's seminal essay on religion: "Es ist die Aufgabe der Geschichte, nachdem das Jenseits der Wahrheit verschwunden ist, die Wahrheit des Diesseits zu etablieren."³⁸³ As with Heartfield's montages, the *Kriegsfibel* can also be seen as part of the struggle establishing access to a specific truth that resides "Diesseits," or in the concrete here and now, as opposed to one that perpetuates other so-

³⁸¹ Patrizia McBride, "Narrative Resemblance: The Production of Truth in the Modernist Photobook of Weimar Germany," *New German Critique* 39:1 (Winter 2012): 179.

³⁸² Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, "Photographie," *Malerei Photographie Film* (München: Albert Langen, 1927).

³⁸³ See Karl Marx, "Einleitung zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie," (1844) *Marx-Engels-Werke*, Vol. 1 (Berlin: Dietz, 1964), 378-79.

called realities “beyond the truth.” In another example, Alfred Durus compares Heartfield with Lenin, calling him not only an artist but also “Forscher” in the Benjaminian sense of the historical materialist. He emphasizes the active manipulation of images and texts in Heartfield’s satirical photomontages, which form their messages by combining “Photographie und Karikatur.” Those two elements form the dialectics at play in the photomontages, i.e., the photograph as visual document and the caricature as the artist’s critical statement.³⁸⁴ These combine to produce a new perspective. Heartfield’s achievement was the transformation of photography into what Durus calls “Photografik,” a term he applies to the genre itself.³⁸⁵ He finds the term “photomontage” inadequate and misleading for Heartfield’s work because the word “montage” places emphasis on the mechanics of his art, not on the message. While “photographics” may more accurately designate the genre, one should not forget that the message is also found within the mechanics of the photomontage. This aspect was not lost on Brecht who regarded Heartfield’s work with the highest respect in terms of quality and efficacy, and also employed similar cut-and-paste collage techniques with his *Kriegsfibel* photograms. Brecht and Heartfield share an objective, or the “Hinlenkung zur Wahrheit, statt Ablenkung,”³⁸⁶ where both sought to point the reader’s attention toward their perspective

³⁸⁴ This label of “caricature” is important not only for what satirical photomontage like Heartfield’s does, but also, as Alfred Durus points out, from the standpoint of language: Lat. “caricare,” Ger. “verzerren,” Eng. “to distort, skew.”

³⁸⁵ Alfred Durus, “John Heartfield und die satirische Photomontage,” *John Heartfield. Photomontagen zur Zeitgeschichte*, 26-27.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

by manipulating existing images into new forms, instead of trying to distract or obfuscate. The mechanics of montage must also be part of “drawing attention to the truth.”

One cannot discuss Heartfield’s photomontages within the context of Brecht’s work without also examining the work of author, satirist, and Social Democrat Kurt Tucholsky. His interest in image-texts started early and developed at a more rapid and emphatic pace than Brecht’s.³⁸⁷ While Brecht did not work with Heartfield, Tucholsky did collaborate with him through the 1920s on experimental image-texts, mostly photomontages by Heartfield and texts by Tucholsky. His first experimental work with image-texts called *Rheinsberg: Ein Bilderbuch für Verliebte* was published in 1912, with images by Kurt Szafranski. In an essay from the same year, Tucholsky recognized the need to engage the masses of readers with photographs, calling for a “tendenzfotografisch illustrierte Kampfzeitung” that could deal with social issues from a left-leaning perspective by using “Gegenüberstellung” as a guiding artistic practice.³⁸⁸ This need was eventually fulfilled by publications like *Sichel und Hammer* and the *AIZ*. For Brecht, the principle of “Gegenüberstellung” was also a leitmotif particularly in the *Kriegsfibel* photograms. This practice involved reading against the grain, questioning what one sees

³⁸⁷ See Peter V. Brady, “The Writer and the Camera: Kurt Tucholsky’s Experiments in Partnership,” *Modern Language Review* 74:4 (October 1979): 856-870. Brady traces Tucholsky’s engagement with photography beginning in 1912, with a piece called “Mehr Fotografien!” in the journal *Vorwärts*; it continues through the 1920s with his essay in *Die Weltbühne* “Tendenzfotografie” (April 1925).

³⁸⁸ Tucholsky, cited in Brady, “The Writer and The Camera,” 859.

and reads. Most of all it was the direct juxtaposition of two elements (image-text or image-image) that caught Brecht's eye.³⁸⁹ "Gegenüberstellung" is literally putting things in opposition to each other or arranging things so that they confront each other; by doing so, the artist creates a space for the reader to notice aspects that may not be entirely visible at first glance ("sichtbar machen"): differences between the elements, and direct or indirect references that connect the two.

By 1925, Tucholsky had sharpened his rhetoric on the understated potential of photography in *Die Weltbühne*. The political left needed "Themen, die mit Worten gar nicht so treffend behandelt werden können, wie es die unretuschierte, wahrhaftige und einwandfreie Fotografie tun kann, die erst durch Anordnung und die Textierung zum Tendenzbild wird."³⁹⁰ In response he created so-called "Bildgedichte"—image-poems consisting of his own short satirical commentaries with montages by Heartfield. Tucholsky/Heartfield contributed more than 30 of these to the *AIZ* between the years 1928 and 1930. The "Bildgedicht" was a product of visual composition ("Anordnung") and corresponding words ("Textierung"), which neither fully explain the image nor seek to distract the reader from what is visible. Rather, these elements functioned in tandem to suggest possibilities for critical thought. One can see how Brecht was not only impressed by these image-texts but was also inspired to pursue a similar course as the "Tendenzbild" by Tucholsky/Heartfield, not in terms of something fashionable or popular but to employ images that could show symptoms when situated historically along with a

³⁸⁹ This idea of arranging visual elements to expose "social groupings" will resurface in chapter six.

³⁹⁰ Tucholsky, cited in Brady, "The Writer and The Camera," 860.

specific “Textierung.” These multimedia experiments became the basis for much of Tucholsky’s later work with photography, such as *Das Pyrenäenbuch* (1927) and the popular satire *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* (1929).

The first of these two books is a novel about travel in the Pyrenees, the mountainous region that carves out the border between southwestern France and northern Spain. The photographs are from the region and present various elements referred to the text such as farmers, churches, and the rugged landscape. *Das Pyrenäenbuch*, penned under another Tucholsky pseudonym, “Peter Panter,” is a satirical travel guide with illustrations, written in the style of Tucholsky’s nineteenth-century predecessor Heinrich Heine. The novel was not extremely popular and did not sell well. Tucholsky’s next major work, however, was both a commercial and literary success. Published two years later, his *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* featured satirical essays, poems, and image captions set against photographs and montages by Heartfield. In its first year the photobook sold almost 48,000 copies in Germany. Tucholsky/Heartfield had no one particular target for their criticisms, but instead went after the entire nation. These humorous, witty, sometimes acrid image-texts lambasted Germany’s politicians for being corrupt; they characterized the big business and bourgeois social elites for wielding too much influence; they highlighted the German military’s self-proclaimed might to show how militarism leads to nationalism; they also targeted other institutions such as religion, mass media, fashion, sports, the police and criminal justice system, theater and film, architecture, and countless others. In all, *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* is a visual satire that reveals the Golden Twenties as the beginnings of the end of Weimar Germany.

Tucholsky/Heartfield's image-texts provide the reader with "Bilder, die kein Ende nehmen" in a never-ending "Bilderbuch."³⁹¹ They accomplish this by exposing individual parts of society—classes, symptoms, and contradictions—and then dissecting each one by presenting a critical perspective on various seemingly mundane cultural objects: this is what you see, but it is not what you think. For instance, a particularly banal photograph of a pile of mailboxes is juxtaposed with a photo of armed German "Beamten" marching past the camera, wearing top hats and suits. These images are linked by Tucholsky's text that provocatively asks why these mailboxes are so ugly (not, for instance, why they are presented there). Why should we be interested in this? As the reader scans back and forth between the two images and through the short text, we recognize differences and confront the possible reasons for this pairing ("Gegenüberstellung"). Tucholsky argues that the "ugliness" of the boxes is actually a class issue, which is reinforced by the two photographs, and comes to the conclusion that they represent "das Minimum" for the working masses as opposed to how the government—represented by well-paid officials of the German Post Office—neglects its duties to the people. The masses are in the hands of the upper classes that hold in the "Monopol der Obrigkeit."³⁹² This is just one example of "Gegenüberstellung" and "Textierung" in practice in *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*. Brecht's *Kriegsfibel* photograms function in similar ways. The reader is not meant to scan in passing the image-texts, but rather linger and scan the various visible elements.

³⁹¹ Tucholsky, *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles, Gesamtausgabe*. vol. 12, eds. Antje Bonitz and Sarah Hans (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2004), 11.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 94.

Ideally, one could formulate new interpretations with each reading.³⁹³ The multiple interruptions in the text (e.g., enjambments, word wraps that frame images, or continuations of image-texts onto multiple pages) reinforce the initial breaks in coherence or breaks in continuity that hold the reader's gaze and invite longer re-readings. One main difference between the *Kriegsfibel* and *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* is Brecht's strict adherence to the poetic form of the four-line epigram as the main textual element. Tucholsky, in contrast, does not impose such limitations and employs an almost limitless variety of styles, techniques, and image-text combinations. This could be a contributing factor as to why *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* is aesthetically interesting but also a difficult read; with so many techniques and targets, the reader can easily lose focus and become distracted.

Brecht, Tucholsky/Heartfield, and to a certain degree Ernst Friedrich all set their sights on a diverse group of targets. Brecht and Tucholsky/Heartfield employ humor and satire to provide a "Querschnitt durch Deutschland."³⁹⁴ Brecht dedicates significant space to thematizing the travails of his fellow Germans, just as Tucholsky/Heartfield exhibit a flood of imagery typical of that time in Germany.³⁹⁵ *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* begins with a quote from Friedrich Hölderlin's *Hyperion* (1797):

³⁹³ Brady, "The Writer and the Camera," 864.

³⁹⁴ Tucholsky, *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*, 13. Unlike Tucholsky/Heartfield, however, Brecht's photograms do not seek to represent any "essence" as to what "Germanness" means.

³⁹⁵ See Ruth Berlau's "Klappentext" to the *Kriegsfibel* in BFA 12: 417.

“So kam ich unter die Deutschen. Ich forderte nicht viel und war gefaßt, noch weniger zu finden [...] Ich kann kein Volk mir finden, das zerrissener wäre, als die Deutschen. Handwerker siehst du, aber keine Menschen. Denker, aber keine Menschen. Herren und Knechte, Jungen und gesetzte Leute, aber keine Menschen.”

Hölderlin’s text tells of Hyperion, a Greek figure, who looks back on his life and mourns his part in war. He flees to Germany, but finds it uninhabitable for reasons quoted above. He returns to Greece to live as a hermit. In this setting, Hölderlin’s text is as much a critique of Germany as it is a call for change. It also warns the reader and causes a reassessment—has the situation changed since the late eighteenth century? Is it possible to show images that are “typical” of anything? The photographs function as markers for what Tucholsky/Heartfield see as symptomatic for Germany. In the lead essay “Vorrede, oder: Die Unmöglichkeit eine Photographie zu textieren,” Tucholsky compares the medium of photography to something typically German: “Alle diese Bilder sprechen. Und von den wenigsten kann man den Text aufschreiben. Diese Photographien sind immer zweierlei: sie sind typisch für etwas in Deutschland—und sie sind gleichzeitig privat.”³⁹⁶ Here, Tucholsky lays out his critique of Germany, as a place divided by class and conflict, but also as “zweideutig” or ambiguous. He highlights the disparateness in German society, both the public and private nature (also inherent in the photographic medium itself). Much of *Deutschland* is, then, a series of image-texts that bespeak Tucholsky’s critique of Germany. The essay includes three photographs, which are “textiert,” one of which shows a group of photographers at work—a meta-photograph

³⁹⁶ Tucholsky, *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*, 11.

meant to draw the reader's attention to the photographs as constitutive component of the work.

Another noteworthy assertion in Tucholsky's essay is the idea that "all images speak." This must be viewed with healthy skepticism. Brecht, as argued in this chapter, would also find the notion problematic. An image cannot speak in the truest sense; it is the reader who must create meaning out of what is visible. And therein, for Brecht, lies the potential for danger, particularly with mass media images; one image can be employed to elicit infinite reactions. An image may suggest, implicate, or disgust, but it cannot provide definitive information. The assertion that text cannot be processed with a photograph in the "Vorrede" essay seems to conflict, at least somewhat, with Tucholsky's earlier statement on the necessity of "Textierung" when working with photographs. Of course, the assertion must also be read within the context of Tucholsky's complex personality and his penchant for satire. By adding such critical texts to the numerous photographs in *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*, Tucholsky may have purposefully challenged his own assumptions—exactly what the reader must do when interpreting image-texts.

A systematic analysis of each image-text in *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* cannot be made here. There are, however, parallels to Tucholsky/Heartfield's project that may be found in the *Kriegsfibel*. Photogram 27 is such an example, as the epigram employs the kind of overt satirical tone found throughout Tucholsky's text. The epigram reads:

“Joseph, ich hör, du hast von mir gesagt:

Ich raube.” – “Hermann, warum sollst du rauben?”

Dir was verweigern, wär verdammt gewagt.

Und hätt ich's schon gesagt, wer würd mir glauben?"³⁹⁷

The photogram is also different from others in the collection in that Brecht's poetic lines form a dialogue by the figures shown in the photograph (see Figure 8).³⁹⁸ Here, Joseph Goebbels stands next to Hermann Göring. Brecht plays the part of ventriloquist by placing words into his actors' mouths, forcing them into an imagined conversation in which the image in this case actually does "speak." Brecht's eye was drawn to the theatricality in the scene. The physical arrangement and positioning vis-à-vis each other carry meaning ("Gegenüberstellung"). Göring towers over the smaller Goebbels and assumes an aggressive stance, hands on his hips showing how one scolds a child or makes an accusation. Goebbels takes a defensive attitude, his hand on his chest gesturing to himself as both the recipient of Göring's accusation and as the source of "lies" about Göring. Brecht parodies these infamous Nazi officials through satire, a literary device that shames the subject by exposing and ridiculing their shortcomings. Unlike many of the contemplative and more serious photograms dealing with destruction, death, or class issues, the reader is supposed to laugh at this scene as the photogram degrades and mocks these infamous Nazi leaders. Goebbels and Göring use the informal "du" and address each other by first name, an improbable act between two such high-ranking officials. The register of speech suggests that the reader is privy to an intimate conversation and, in this setting, disempowers the figures in the photograph. A *Verfremdungseffekt* in Brecht's

³⁹⁷ Brecht, *Kriegsfibel* photogram 27, BFA 12: 183.

³⁹⁸ Photogram 2 is the only other one whose epigram uses a "dialogue" between subjects in the photograph. See Brecht, *Kriegsfibel*, BFA 12: 133.

dialogue between the two men reveals them as quibbling lackeys instead of the powerful minister and military general as portrayed in the history books. The reader may further extend Goebbels's question in line four of the epigram. He refers to the accusation that he damaged Göring's stellar reputation with his lie. Goebbels "responds" by degrading himself even more: "If I had said it, who would believe me?" Hence, not even the master of Nazi propaganda can believe his own stories. Such "scenes" abound in Tucholsky/Heartfield's *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*, complete with fake dialogues and satirical overtones.

In contrast to the photomontage and satire of Tucholsky and Heartfield, during the late Weimar period some artists and journalistic publications alike were turning to the so-called "objective" style, appealing to the reader's sense of realistic, unfiltered representation and documentary characteristics of photography. In keeping with the documentary debate, Walter Benjamin also describes the "Verfahren einer gewissen modischen Photographie, das Elend zum Gegenstand des Konsums [macht]." ³⁹⁹ Behind photography's claim to representational fidelity lies a deeper narrative layer that is often neglected on the surface of the image. Siegfried Kracauer also points out the fact that photographs hide something behind their surfaces, referring to the photograph as a "Traum," which has the ability to superficially mirror reality, but in fact is not real. ⁴⁰⁰ Those who appropriate this critique today often forget its historical context within this debate. The criticisms above specifically refer to the predominant products of the New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*) movement in the arts during the interwar period in

³⁹⁹ Benjamin, "Der Autor als Produzent," BGS 2.2: 695.

⁴⁰⁰ Kracauer, "Die Photographie," 39.

Germany, with its turn away from the abstraction of Dada and the subjective pathos of Expressionism towards a more sober, journalistic, mechanized orientation to reality and unfiltered representation. This shift was partly due to the growing separation among social classes as well as the increasing polarization of politics on the left and right. Critics like Benjamin charge that the “New Photography” (Moholy-Nagy) of the 1920s and 1930s (as opposed to that of the late nineteenth-century portraiture and cityscapes) succeeds in turning thematic subjects worthy of attention such as poverty, war, and class struggle into proliferated objects of enjoyment by their focus on formalism and fashionable, technical perfection. He expressly refers to New Objectivity as a movement that transforms political struggle so that it ceases to be a compelling motive for action, instead becoming an object of comfortable contemplation.

Many examples exist, including well-known and often-cited photobooks by Alfred Renger-Patzsch entitled *Die Welt ist schön* (1928), Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold’s *Foto-Auge. 76 Fotos der Zeit* (1929), August Sander’s *Antlitz der Zeit. Sechzig Aufnahmen deutscher Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1929), Werner Gräff’s *Es kommt der neue Fotograf!* (1929), or Erich Mendelsohn’s photographic guide to major cities in the United States called *Amerika. Bilderbuch eines Architekten. Mit 77 photographischen Aufnahmen des Verfassers* (1926).⁴⁰¹ *Amerika* includes non-

⁴⁰¹ Many of the same debates circulated in the United States in the late 1920s and early 1930s during the Great Depression. These “documentary” photographers traversed the country to document the “average” person or the “typically American” in a series of photo essays, some even sponsored by the US government (Farm Security Administration or the Department of Agriculture), such as Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans,

manipulated, documentary-style photographs from various fixed positions under such rubrics as “Typically American,” “Enhanced Civilization,” “World Financial Center,” “The Gigantic,” “The Grotesque,” and “The New—The Coming.” Brecht mentions Mendelsohn’s photobook specifically in his review of the best books of 1926.⁴⁰² In conjunction with the veiled criticism of Fülöp-Miller’s “botched” photobook, he writes: “Eine Art Ergänzung [zu *Geist und Gesicht des Bolschewismus*] bildet Mendelsohns *Amerika* (Das Bilderbuch eines Architekten), ausgezeichnete Photos, die man eigentlich fast alle einzeln an die Wand heften kann und die den (bestimmt trügerischen) Anschein erwecken, als seien die großen Städte bewohnbar.”⁴⁰³ Again, Brecht invites the reader to excise the “excellent” photographs and discard Mendelsohn’s text, which very plainly describes what is happening (mostly outside the camera frame). Individual city images were meant to create, or even reaffirm, the imaginary seductions of the American metropolises like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles: business, lights, and advertisements. But Brecht was also interested in teasing out the “dangers” of big-city life: exploitation of workers, the neglected and hungry homeless, or cityscapes in

James Agee, and Margaret Bourke-White. Some photographs became iconic symbols for the period and were either lauded for calling attention to the prevalent social problems of the working class or condemned as propaganda for trying to manipulate public opinion.

⁴⁰² See also the positive review of Mendelsohn’s photobook by Robert Breuer in *Die Weltbühne*, “Amerikanische Bauten,” (9 February 1926).

⁴⁰³ Brecht, [“Die besten Bücher des Jahres 1926”], BFA 21: 176.

decay.⁴⁰⁴ Most of all, the reader must be aware of the deceptive “Anschein” of these so-called accurate images. *Amerika*, like Fülöp-Miller’s book, also misfires in its stated goal of perceiving the United States “clearly” because it only shows façades of the urban landscape but does not expose the underlying causes of its ruination. In short, Mendelsohn’s photobook does not “literarize” the photographs.⁴⁰⁵

This “objective” turn moved photography away from the tendencies of radical alteration and manipulations, mostly associated with the earlier Dada movement and in contemporary incarnations such as photomontage. Brecht continued to underscore the power of photography’s potential but was still wary of its effect: “The camera can lie just as well as the typesetter”—essentially, both media have the ability to convey truth and falsity.⁴⁰⁶ Most often he tended to regard art photography as the biggest threat to showing truth, whereas the subgenres of documentary photography and photojournalism were

⁴⁰⁴ See the chapter “Berlin Ensemble” in Andrew J. Webber, *Berlin in the Twentieth Century. A Cultural Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 131.

Webber provides an excellent reading of Brecht’s interest in architecture and his “Stadtbild.” See also Brecht’s essays “Über die Verbindung der Lyrik mit der Architektur” (BFA 22.1: 140-41) and “Über die Lyrik und den Staat” (BFA 22.1: 132).

⁴⁰⁵ For a counter-example, see, *Kriegsfibel* photogram 29 (BFA 12: 187), showing a horse standing in front of the German Reich Chancellery (Hitler’s office).

⁴⁰⁶ See Brecht’s statement in “[Zum zehnjährigen Bestehen der *AIZ*],” BFA 21: 515, originally written in 1931 to honor the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* and its use of photographic material for societal critique.

spared much of that criticism.⁴⁰⁷ The central challenge lies in the photograph's reception; that is, how the image is contextualized and interpreted. In her essay on the late Weimarer photobook, Patrizia McBride briefly engages with Brecht's polemical observation that both text and image have the capability to deceive: "The mendacious potential Brecht attributes to photography lies in this manipulation of the symbolic level, specifically, in denying the narrative/ideological moment at work in the way the press uses photographs and the active work of interpretation this moment demands of the spectator."⁴⁰⁸ McBride convincingly probes the question first set into motion by Brecht's statement above about what it means for the camera to "lie" even when it produces candid shots. She attributes his stance towards photography as one less driven by a distrust of mimesis—the representation of appearances, which for many Marxists meant obfuscation or downright deception—and more having to do with the technical shortcomings in the camera apparatus itself ("the ability to reproduce appearances in an exact way.") This argument stands on the basis that mass media images seek to either legitimize or blur the reader's assumptions and narratives. For Brecht, this is true; he criticizes most media photographs (especially ones he collected during exile for the *Kriegsfibel*) for lacking any "teeth," i.e., for not probing underlying causes and processes. He would also agree that most images have some ideological slant that cannot be erased

⁴⁰⁷ Kuhn, "'Was besagt eine Fotografie?' Early Brechtian Perspectives on Photography," 263. See also Kuhn, "Poetry and Photography: Mastering Reality in the *Kriegsfibel*," "*Verwisch die Spuren!*" *Bertolt Brecht's Work and Legacy. A Reassessment* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 169-90.

⁴⁰⁸ McBride, "Narrative Resemblance," 174.

or denied. However, McBride downplays Brecht's distrust in the mimetic faculty of art. This skepticism formed a foundational basis for his thoughts on the epic theater. To dissolve illusionist drama, he proposed a purposeful detachment and re-examination of the representational act at its roots. The distrust in mimesis, taken as mere representation, grew during the early 1930s and corresponds to his increased familiarization with Marxism as a standpoint for his evolving views on art, culture, and history. He was not an ideologue, but his readings of Marx informed his perception of visual spaces and the power (and potential dangers) of imagery. Brecht's wariness goes beyond the flaws in the technical reproduction process associated with photography. It has its roots in the distrust of any medium that claims the ability to represent the "essence" of any subject or object. The point was not to prove that photographs could not reproduce the likeness of truth—others like Benjamin, Kracauer, Adorno, or Moholy-Nagy to name a few had already established this fact. Rather, he was more concerned with how images were unable to tell us about the *function* of those objects (see essays like the "Dreigroschenprozess," "Über Fotografie," or Ruth Berlau's statements on photography). Therein lies the crux of Brecht's thought.

Following this contrast of the fascist "aestheticization of politics" and the Marxist "politicization of art," and the rich tradition of image-texts, one can readily see Brecht's intentions for a new poetics of war imagery in the *Kriegsfibel*. As art historian John Tagg points out, there is a political and social message embedded in photography's very framework. Photographs are material objects that are generated by individuals within a sociopolitical system, coded with both visual and linguistic messages, and distributed within a specific social context: "Images [are] made meaningful and understood within

the very relations of their production and sited within a wider ideological complex, which must, in turn, be related to the practical and social problems which sustain and shape it.”⁴⁰⁹ One can debate photography’s claim to objective truth, but its inherent ideological slant cannot be denied; a seemingly banal photograph of a set of china, for example, would qualify as ideological once the reader begins to process what is seen and ask questions about how it got there, who claims ownership, how and for whom it was produced, who has access to look, and so on. Photography’s visual power lies in its ability to aid in shaping societal focus. It appeals to the readers’ ability to recognize the elements of significance in the image, critically decipher any given message(s), and orient themselves as to how they perceive the world around them through the mediating lens of the camera. McBride has outlined the diverse modes of “coding” found in the image-text and photobook subgenres popular at the time, like the photo-reportage, photomontage, or the photo essay. These various codes include the usual suspects—paratexts, language, and images—but, according to her, must also encompass other elements like “type” and “blank and filled space.”⁴¹⁰ Within the context of Brecht’s *Kriegsfibel*, the notion of blank/filled spaces becomes important. For example, the front

⁴⁰⁹ John Tagg, “Contacts/Worksheets: Notes on Photography, History and Representation,” *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 188-89.

⁴¹⁰ McBride, “Narrative Resemblance,” 181. See also Roland Jost, “Über die Fragwürdigkeit von Bildern. Brechts *Kriegsfibel* im gegenwärtigen Kontext,” *Diskussion Deutsch* 22 (1991): 231-39; and J. J. Long, “Paratextual Profusion: Photography and Text in Bertolt Brecht’s *War Primer*,” *Poetics Today* 29:1 (Spring 2008): 197-224.

cover is completely black except for the book's title and the lowercase "brecht" signature marking it. The title page is "split" as if torn by hand in an act of rupture diagonally from the upper-right to lower-left corners, one side black, the other white. Each photogram consists of two pages: the left is almost always completely white (blank) except for the photogram number and the editorial notes and or caption translations into German by Hans Seydel and Günter Kunert; the right-hand page contains the epigram and photographs, set against a black background which simulates Brecht's original construction of the photograms affixed to dark paper. As the reader progresses through the pages, the contrasting shades keep the focus on the right-hand page as if it were a picture flipbook. Each black background acts like a frame for each image, drawing the readers' eyes inward and inviting them to have a look through the image window. All photograms included in the *Kriegsfibel* are black-and-white press images, so the black/white contrast also enhances the visual characteristics and contrasts.

Photographs can be employed to remove obstructions in social relations or they can be seen as pictorial ornamentation, merely illustrating a given text. Brecht, in addition, wanted to make a contribution to the public's education ("Erlernen") in how one not only interprets a photograph, but also how the reader might recognize its use value to advance socio-political realities, as well as the reader's ability to identify photographic "fakes" ("Fälschungen"), simply posing as a visual document that can be trusted: "Es wäre etwa für eine Aufdeckung der Fälschungen, welche die bürgerliche Bildreportage auf dem Gewissen hat, sicher die geeignetste Methode, die Beschreibung so anzulegen,

als ob der Leser einfach instand gesetzt werden sollte, solches Fälschen zu lernen.”⁴¹¹ In connection with the *Arbeitsjournale* and *Kriegsfibel* the photographs’ “andere, tiefere Wahrheit” must be a truth that is concrete—a powerful reality that, once exposed or teased out, is difficult to deny or adulterate.⁴¹² The next section in this chapter examines Brecht’s contribution to the photobook genre. Drawing on others before him, Brecht’s work with appropriated images is specifically concerned with the search for access to truthful relations and a specific approach to history, which directly challenges the stories and images of conventional bourgeois thinking.⁴¹³ Not only does Brecht problematize fascism through his documentation of World War II; he also engages the very means of production with which the fascist propaganda machine operated. In effect, Brecht’s *Kriegsfibel* both criticizes and utilizes photography for these purposes.

II. Reading Brecht’s *Theater of War*

⁴¹¹ See Brecht’s essay about the intricate constellations between the artist, their work, and society “Der Dreigroschenprozess,” BFA 21: 448-514. Here, Brecht criticizes the bourgeois press for teaching the public how to conceal societal relations. This excerpted quote from the essay can be found in BFA 21: 510.

⁴¹² Ruth Berlau, cited from her “Klappentext” to the *Kriegsfibel* in Brecht, BFA 12: 416.

⁴¹³ See Benjamin’s seventh thesis in “Über den Begriff der Geschichte,” where he insists that we read history “against the grain,” in BGS 2.2: 696-97. Incidentally, this thesis begins with a quote from Brecht’s *Dreigroschenoper*: “Bedenkt das Dunkel und die große Kälte / In diesem Tale, das von Jammer schallt.”

“Der Krieg hat einen epischen Charakter, er belehrt die Menschheit sozusagen über sich selbst.”⁴¹⁴

“War does not determine who is right—only who is left.”⁴¹⁵

Compared to the *Arbeitsjournale* and *Modellbücher* of the Berliner Ensemble, Brecht’s multimedia theater of war collection has received greater scholarly attention over the past 50 years. This critical reception varies widely, from studies on emblematics and history to poetics and terrorism. The following will briefly sketch some of the more pertinent research on the *Kriegsfibel* that helps to situate this study. Reinhold Grimm was one of the first scholars to bring the *Kriegsfibel* into the fold of secondary literature on Brecht. His 1969 essay posits a “Marxist emblematic” at work in the poetry of the *Kriegsfibel*. While he traces the history of Brecht’s use of tradition, he does not focus his analysis on the photographs themselves. His discussions of “seeing vs. reading” are indeed stimulating, and the reader profits from his explication of how Brecht fashions his works. There is, however, a deficit in Grimm’s discussion. His arguments tend to neglect what is visible in the photographs. There is a connection between emblematics and the *Kriegsfibel*, but, as Christian Wagenknecht polemically argues, there is no discussion of the potential power and possible message(s) of the photographs per se, particularly in regard to their socio-historical value. He finds the *Kriegsfibel* more akin to a “Marxist

⁴¹⁴ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 348. This entry is dated 7 November 1939 (Sweden).

⁴¹⁵ Attributed to British social critic Bertrand Russell.

epigrammatic” that shows societal symptoms, not symbols.⁴¹⁶ Grimm does not claim that the *Kriegsfibel*, even with its “Journal-Charakter,”⁴¹⁷ intersects or crosses generic boundaries; instead he examines the conventional form of the emblem without testing its further social implications in Brecht’s text. Both Wagenknecht and Grimm identify the *Kriegsfibel* with older literary traditions, but fail to discuss how Brecht sought to create a new art form with the hybridized “Fotogramm,”⁴¹⁸ consisting each of a four-line epigram and a photograph.

Grimm also tends to make sweeping claims for the *Kriegsfibel*, for example: “Pictura und Subscriptio bereiten ohnehin keinerlei Schwierigkeiten; was die Inscriptio angeht, so entspricht ihr selbstverständlich die englische Bildunterschrift.”⁴¹⁹ Such a blanket declaration does not account for the multiple processes of interaction between

⁴¹⁶ Christian Wagenknecht, “Marxistische Epigrammatik. Zu Bertolt Brechts *Kriegsfibel*,” *Emblem und Emblematikrezeption. Vergleichende Studien zur Wirkungsgeschichte vom 16. bis 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Sibylle Penkert (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978), 542 f. Here, Wagenknecht emphasizes possibilities for how to read Brecht’s epigrams in order to guide the reader to possible (re)interpretations of the press photograph, criticizing Grimm’s reading that focuses too exclusively on the “emblematic” structure of the photograms.

⁴¹⁷ Reinhold Grimm, “Marxistische Emblematik. Zu Bertolt Brechts *Kriegsfibel*” (1969), *Emblem und Emblematikrezeption*, 517.

⁴¹⁸ Dieter Wöhrle, *Bertolt Brechts medienästhetische Versuche* (Köln: Prometh, 1988), 157.

⁴¹⁹ Grimm, “Marxistische Emblematik,” 522.

image and text in the *Kriegsfibel*. Brecht's four-liners were not simply meant to be skimmed, but rather to complement other elements (picture and English-language captions) through irony and to instruct the reader how to read against the grain. In these cases Brecht is not responsible for the written captions, and actually has less agency in that respect than Grimm asserts. He fails to take into account the various photograms that have no *inscriptio* (39 of 69 photograms contain some form of caption).

Grimm's strict adherence to the tripartite (*pictura, inscriptio, subscriptio*) interpretation of the traditional emblem structure with a Marxist ideological slant prompts J. J. Long to contest such a reading of the *Kriegsfibel*. He, instead, favors a "paratextual" one. Long, and to a lesser extent Jefferson Hunter, argue for "more complicated comparisons" that challenge Grimm's reading of the *Kriegsfibel* as a visual "Marxist corrective" of history.⁴²⁰ In the *Kriegsfibel*, as with the many other works where Brecht employs photographs, one must take into account multiple textual elements—caption, Brecht's four-line epigram, newspaper photographs, publication titles, and even the author's lower-case "*brecht*" signature on the book cover. The *Kriegsfibel* and *Arbeitsjournale* must be read against the origins and histories of the photographic medium, steeped in the capitalist tradition of "commodity, bourgeois portraiture, and state surveillance."⁴²¹ Long maintains that the "profusion" of paratexts serves to deter the reader from the intended ideological reading, yet underscores that "language can harness the power of photography in the service of radical politics."

⁴²⁰ Jefferson Hunter, *Image and Word: The Interaction of Twentieth-Century Photographs and Texts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 169.

⁴²¹ J. J. Long, "Paratextual Profusion," 203.

In her monograph, Christiane Bohnert places Brecht's poetry into its historical and political context, particularly in the section devoted to the genesis of the *Kriegsfibel*. While she explicates few individual photograms, she does focus her attention on the proximity and (inter-)dependency between photographic image and Brecht's epigram. She sees the *Kriegsfibel* as a product of the immediate postwar period of the late 1940s and early 1950s. In that respect photographic images play a significant role in the mediation of memory from the standpoint of the present. In Brecht's continued engagement with photography, especially in the *Kriegsfibel* and *Arbeitsjournal*, we find his most symptomatic response to the problems of artistic production during exile. These works highlight the complexity and volatility in Brecht's oeuvre as he was imagining a new future for peace and justice after World War II (including the *Svendborger Gedichte*, *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches*, *Kriegsfibel* and the *Arbeitsjournal*, among others).⁴²² Brecht sought to uncover the truths behind the conventional wisdom of the war, how it happened, and how it would and/or could happen again. Missing from Bohnert's discussion is the investigation of the photographic medium's history within the historical discourse of class struggle.

Some scholars have touched briefly on the genre of documentary photography and its relation to various themes. Jennifer Bajorek insists that it is a textbook example of appeal to keep taking photographs in order to isolate the moments of greatest tension and

⁴²² Christiane Bohnert, *Brechts Lyrik im Kontext. Zyklen und Exil* (Königstein: Athenäum, 1982), 239.

salvage history's ruins à la Walter Benjamin.⁴²³ Lutz Didam shows how Brecht utilizes the potential of the *Verfremdungseffekt* in the newspaper photographs to develop multidimensional approaches of address to the reader. His article also touches on the “*Fibel*” aspect of the *Kriegs-fibel* and its didactic intention, readily seen in photographer Ruth Berlau's introduction, to (re)educate the public on the art of reading images correctly (if that can *ever* be done) by looking at images of history from a certain “*Betrachtungsweise*,” a distinct Brechtian perspective.⁴²⁴ Both Didam and Soldovieri demonstrate the dual function of the “*Fibel*” as partly to decode (“*Lesenlernen*”) during the process of reading, and partly to understand how images work (“*Verstehenlernen*”).⁴²⁵ This aspect of de-coding images will be explored further in this section.

Brecht sought to highlight one dimension of the historical reality: the oppression and exploitation of entire populations required in order to wage modern warfare. In that same vein, Georges Didi-Huberman views many *Kriegsfibel* photographs in particular as “*Bildgedichte*,” and interprets these image-texts of World War II as commentaries on the

⁴²³ See Jennifer Bajorek, “Holding Fast to Ruins: The Air War in Brecht's *Kriegsfibel*,” *Bombs Away! Representing the Air War Over Europe and Japan*, eds. Wilfried Wilms and William Rasch (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 97-111.

⁴²⁴ Ruth Berlau's forward can be found in BFA 12: 129, which was written specifically for the 1955 edition published by Eulenspiegel Verlag in East Berlin.

⁴²⁵ See Lutz Didam, “Das Dokumentarfoto und seine Verfremdung in Bertolt Brechts *Kriegsfibel*,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstpädagogik* 5 (1977): 246; and Stefan Soldovieri, “War-Poetry, Photo(epi)grammetry: Brecht's *Kriegsfibel*,” *A Bertolt Brecht Reference Companion*, ed. Siegfried Mews (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), 139-67.

vicious circle of worker against worker: “Leben, um zu töten, und töten, um zu leben, in jedem Falle sterben.”⁴²⁶ *Kriegsfibel* epigram 68 reads:

Euch kennen, dacht ich, und ich denk es noch
 Und ich gehör nicht zu den blinden Lobern:
 Ihr wärt zu mehr gut als zum blinden Welterobern
 Zur Knechtschaft am Joch oder unterm Joch.⁴²⁷

The final line of Brecht’s epigram above bespeaks this overarching theme about the irony of war, that those working to produce it (“unterm Joch”) are the ones ultimately perpetuating the exploitation so that others may profit (“am Joch”).⁴²⁸ The epigram directly addresses the sullen faces in the collage of nine German soldiers shown in the corresponding image, those followers who caused suffering but also suffered from the war. Berlau points to this same photogram in her own reading:

“Eine Sache wunderte uns Nicht-Deutsche besonders: seine [Brechts]
 Liebe zu seinen Landsleuten. Denn schließlich hatten sie ihn doch verjagt,

⁴²⁶ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Wenn die Bilder Position beziehen. Das Auge der Geschichte I*, trans. Markus Sedlaczek (München: Fink, 2011), 66. For example, this motif of “living in order to kill, killing in order to live” is thematized in *Kriegsfibel* photogram 2. See Figure 8.

⁴²⁷ Brecht, *Kriegsfibel*, BFA 12: 264. Contrast this with photogram 30, which shows six Nazi generals as “murderers,” in BFA 12: 189.

⁴²⁸ In ironic analogy, the figure of Mother Courage in the final scene of the play demonstrates how she had become both the victim and perpetrator of her own misfortunes, essentially both “am Joch” and “unterm Joch.”

ausgebürgert und heimatlos gemacht. Da schnitt er sich einmal neun
Gesichter aus, neun von seinen Landsleuten. Er studierte sie und schrieb
[das Epigramm] dazu [...]. In diesem Vierzeiler liegt Wahrheit,
Freundlichkeit und Menschenliebe.”⁴²⁹

Here Berlau notes the *Kriegsfibel*'s manner of construction. For this example, Brecht had cut out and saved the photograph of the nine faces, then proceeded to compose his epigram.

Both Brecht's poem and Berlau's commentary must be read within the context of the early to mid-1950s as he composed and published his other literary works. He had become increasingly disappointed with the early development of the newly formed German Democratic Republic. Although a believer in the nascent socialist state as an alternative to the restoration of capitalism in West Germany, he was critical of the ways in which the government implemented some of the reforms at the time, especially the raising of production norms and the deterioration of workers' living standards. Brecht's affinity for his "Landsleute" had not diminished, even through 15 years of Nazi rule in Germany, political exile, or the workers' uprising in East Berlin on 17 June 1953. Against this backdrop, the *Kriegsfibel* epigram quoted above (published in 1955) and much of the poetry in the *Buckower Elegien* (1953-1954) thematize both the hope for change that remained with Brecht after the war and the fight against the oppression of those "unterm Joch." Brecht defended the workers in his poem "Die Lösung" and wrote self-critically of his own complacency in others like "Der Radwechsel" and "Böser Morgen": "Heut Nacht im Traum sah ich Finger, auf mich deutend / Wie auf einen

⁴²⁹ Berlau, "Klappentext" to the *Kriegsfibel*, reprinted in BFA 12: 417.

Aussätzigen. Sie waren zerarbeitet und / Sie waren gebrochen. / Unwissende! schrie ich / Schuldbewußt.”⁴³⁰ The narrator of the *Kriegsfibel* epigram quoted above challenges the reader’s perspective of the German soldier exposing the nine men as the face of oppression and the face of the oppressed, and echoes Berlau’s commentary on “Freundlichkeit” and “Menschenliebe.”

Berlau also contributed the foreword to the *Kriegsfibel*, itself a primer for Brecht’s *War Primer*. Her introductory comments, along with the text included on the cover jacket, try to shape the future discourse surrounding it. Not only does she address the need to reeducate the public on how to better read the proliferation of the modern media’s “hieroglyphics,” but she also emphasizes the remarks from her “Klappentext” on Brecht’s unwavering regard for his “Landsleute”—the farmers, workers, and intellectuals:

Warum unseren Arbeitern der volkseigenen Industrie, unseren
Genossenschaftsbauern, unseren aufbauenden Intellektuellen, warum
unserer Jugend, die schon die ersten Rationen des Glücks genießt,

⁴³⁰ Brecht, “Böser Morgen,” *Buckower Elegien*, BFA 12: 310-11. Additionally, the Berliner Ensemble had premiered Erwin Strittmatter’s play *Katzgraben. Eine Bauernkomödie* in June 1953, only one week before the workers’ uprising in Berlin. In the play the farmers resist pressure by the village officials and well-off landowners to defeat the construction of a “new way” leading to the city. Brecht had assembled a wealth of notes and material during the production called the *Katzgraben-Notate 1953*, which can be found along with the other published theater production models in BFA 25: 401-90.

ausgerechnet jetzt diese düsteren Bilder der Vergangenheit vorhalten?
 Nicht der entrinnt der Vergangenheit, der sie vergißt. Dieses Buch will die
 Kunst lehren, Bilder zu lesen. Denn es ist dem Nichtgeschulten ebenso
 schwer, ein Bild zu lesen wie irgendwelche Hieroglyphen. Die große
 Unwissenheit über gesellschaftliche Zusammenhänge, die der
 Kapitalismus sorgsam und brutal aufrechterhält, macht die Tausende von
 Fotos in den Illustrierten zu wahren Hieroglyphentafeln, unentzifferbar
 dem nichtsahnenden Leser.⁴³¹

Here, Berlau states the goal of the entire project of Brecht's photographic history: teaching readers how to read and see the images of history through a particularly Marxist lens. This is a common thread that runs through much of Brecht's theoretical writing, the idea of educating and engaging the working class with artwork that effectively "speaks" to them, i.e., art that motivates action and invites critical thought. Just as Brecht's "worker who reads" questions the representation of events in bourgeois historiography,⁴³² or the history in textbooks, so should the reader of these images of history learn to synthesize "Monumental History"—war, science, art, and so on—with the history and lives of everyday people (History vs. history). Even though we may see photographs of the key players in World War II—mainly politicians, dictators, and perpetrators, whose biographies dominate the textbooks of history—we are also asked to remember the common person who, according to Brecht, is the real casualty of the atrocities of war and

⁴³¹ Berlau, BFA 12: 129. Berlau's preface, composed in 1954, is neither reprinted nor translated by John Willett in the *War Primer* edition.

⁴³² See Brecht, "Fragen eines lesenden Arbeiters," *Svendborger Gedichte*, BFA 12: 29.

class conflict. The history of the workers' struggle is directly confronted with the history of warfare between the upper echelons of society. The passage by Berlau quoted above undoubtedly refers to the images in the *Kriegsfibel*'s middle section, which presents photographs of exploitation and the effects of total war upon civilian populations. Equally interesting in the preface is that Berlau never explicitly uses the word "war" in describing Brecht's collection. Instead she mentions the "images of *history*" [my emphasis], playing on the reader's expectations of such a collection of photographs with "war" in the title. We see history as war and war as signified through the images of history.

Brecht touches upon training the reader to make decisions well before the publication of the *Kriegsfibel* in a 1944 journal entry from America. He included two press photographs between the journal entries dated 29 April and 8 May 1944.⁴³³ The first photograph presents German soldiers frisking barefoot, poorly clad men whose arms are raised above their heads in surrender. This image shows no specifics of the situation that ensued at the time it was recorded, and at first glance it appears to be one war image among countless others. At this point the caption is the element that can persuade, argue, describe, or skew the image. The task therefore is to distinguish between the photograph's message that "this has happened" and the caption's often wide-ranging message(s). The caption included in the entry reads: "The Nazi caption for this photograph says the German soldier is frisking Yugoslav peasants suspected as guerilla

⁴³³ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 185. Another entry from 1944 was also the first to mention a series of "Fotoepigramme" that eventually led to the creation of the *Kriegsfibel* collection in 1955. This entry will resurface in chapter six.

fighters. Note the bare feet.” Brecht was aware of the apparent tensions between messages. Its message is that these men under arrest are partisans in the resistance against Germany, “guerilla fighters” seen in a negative light. The message of the opposing perspective in the English-language reproduction requires us to dig deeper and examine the visual elements more closely. This other perspective questions the veracity of what is visible in the image. It quotes the original caption and quite literally commands the reader to “Note” (in the imperative) an alternative scenario.

The photograph directly following the first is more ambiguous and requires the reader to make more decisions. This image shows a group of men in dark suits with guns surrounding a man in a light-colored suit. One man with a gun is crouched low, gritting his teeth in an aggressive stance towards the other man retreating on his heels, hands outstretched in a defensive position, his mouth open in protest. The other men with guns stand passively and observe the unbalanced match before them. The image conjures scenes of ritual murder, gangster fighting, or mob riots. The caption reads: “Italian partisans catching a fascist. Law and order was AMG’s [American Military Government] increasing job.”⁴³⁴ First, who are the perpetrators? The information from the text suggests that the dark-suited men are the freedom fighters who have cornered a person they believe to have been complicit in the remnants of Mussolini’s fascist regime. However, the photograph would not seem to fully corroborate that assertion. Who has the weapons? Who is gnarling his teeth in aggression, ready to attack? Why are the men here? There are many reasons why Brecht may have included this photograph, as it is a visually powerful document of the war in Italy. More likely, however, is that Brecht collected

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

images like this one and the one referenced above because they showed contradictory human relations in a similar vein as “living to kill and killing to live” from his *Kriegsfibel*. This image is a prime example of the social *Gestus* of revenge, how one exacts ruthless vengeance for crimes committed, in effect transforming the victim into a perpetrator. For Brecht, this act reveals the terror of war on both sides and visually represents the basis for social and psychological acts of desperate behavior during the stress of war. Can the armed men claim the right to terrorize the cornered “fascist” just for the sake of so-called justice?⁴³⁵ The reader must decide what to believe from the visual cues and textual elements presented; the reader must sift through the multiple messages and read against the grain.

Brecht understood the inherent difficulties in “reading” and making sense of image-texts. One photograph can lead to multiple messages and require the reader to make multiple decisions. Critical readers are not simply confronted with these grim images; rather, they are instructed to see the more complex message(s) within the photographs. Turning to the *Kriegsfibel*, readers can find alternatives—albeit distinctly

⁴³⁵ This photograph is positioned above Brecht’s journal entry from 8 May 1944 in which he writes of his struggle with the character of Azdak in *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*. Brecht may have had this photograph in mind when he wrote: “Die Schwierigkeiten in der Gestaltung des Azdak hielten mich zwei Wochen auf, bis ich den sozialen Grund seines Verhaltens fand. [...] Ich wußte, ich durfte nicht etwa zeigen, daß man das übliche Recht biegen muß, damit Gerechtigkeit geübt wird, sondern [...] wie bei nachlässiger, unwissender, eben schlechter Richterei [...] für diejenigen, die wirklich Recht benötigen.” See Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 184.

Brechtian alternatives—for interpreting what they see. For example, in photogram 47, which originally appeared on 15 February 1943, in *Life* magazine, the reader can see an armed American soldier standing over (and almost on top of) his Japanese counterpart, who lies dead on the ground. The original caption offers information about what has taken place and why this is an event worthy of photographic record: “An American soldier stands over a dying Jap who he has just been forced to shoot. The Jap had been hiding in the landing barge, shooting at U.S. troops.” In addition, Brecht presents us with his epigram, intended to instruct the reader on how to read the photograph within its historical and social context, and how to recognize its contradictions in order to critique the false propagations of history (see Figure 9):

Es hatte sich ein Strand von Blut zu röten
 Der ihnen nicht gehörte, dem noch dem.
 Sie waren, heißt’s, gezwungen, sich zu töten.
 Ich glaub’s, ich glaub’s. Und frag nur noch: von wem?⁴³⁶

In photogram 44 we see a photograph (again from *Life* magazine, 1 February 1943) of the burned, impaled head of a Japanese soldier whose corpse is missing. The head has been attached to a tank during battle. Like the previous one, this image also has its caption (“A Japanese soldier’s skull is propped up on a burned-out Jap tank by US troops. Fire destroyed the rest of the corpse”) and the epigram (see Figure 10):

O armer Yorick aus dem Dschungeltank!
 Hier steckt dein Kopf auf einem Deichselstiel
 Dein Feuertod war für die Domeibank.

⁴³⁶ Brecht, *Kriegsfibel* photogram 47, BFA 12: 223.

Doch deine Eltern schulden ihr noch viel.⁴³⁷

How can one use the visual cues from the press photographs and the informational elements from the texts to critically judge what one sees? As Roland Barthes has aptly noted in his many essays dealing with photography and its signification, any given image is necessarily made up of the interrelationship of its three messages: linguistic, coded, and uncoded.⁴³⁸ The photographic image is a set of connotators that signify meaning. Brecht's *Kriegsfibel* provides all three of these messages. In number 47 the American soldier plays double duty, depending on the reading of the photograph. First, the soldier signifies heroism and triumph in the struggle against the imperial power of the Japanese military, which aligned itself with Nazi Germany in the war (the uncoded message). Second, within the context of the *Kriegsfibel*, the reader also perceives the soldier as an instrumental tool of colonial world power (the United States) fighting another colonial power (Japan). This ironically subtle yet salient contradiction (the coded message) pulls the reader in the dialectical process of looking; subsequently, Brecht's epigram catalyzes communication between the photographic image and the reader. For example, the repetition created by the phrases "Ich glaub's, ich glaub's," and the words "dem noch dem" invite the reader to probe these reference points: to whom is he referring and why? Also, the impersonal tone of the interjection "heißt's" draws the reader in and, perhaps more important, points to Brecht's tone and stance as the one who informs or instructs.

Barthes's essay "The Photographic Message" further extends the reading of press photographs like those in the *Kriegsfibel*. According to Barthes, photographs take on

⁴³⁷ Brecht, *Kriegsfibel* photogram 44, BFA 12: 217.

⁴³⁸ Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image," 36.

different meaning when placed in a different venue or institutional setting.⁴³⁹ Compiled in this collection, specifically in this way by Brecht, the *Kriegsfibel* photographs appropriate images that, when combined with the captions and epigrams, facilitate a third degree of reading history filtered through multiple intermediaries: first as a photograph taken by a photographer seen in an international publication, then placed in a collection and published by Brecht, and finally interpreted by the reader. Consequently, the images that were once journalistic photographs out of international magazines and newspapers become something greater; the photographs become isolated instances of the signification of history. They do, however, retain a form of bias: though still attached to *Life* magazine or a newspaper, they are also now attached to Brecht's name, along with all it implies. This invites the reader to critically engage with what is seen through various degrees of *Verfremdung*. By appropriating the newspaper images into his own work, Brecht has also removed—or at least altered—the residue of factuality supposedly inherent in the medium of photography.⁴⁴⁰ Just as in the epic theater, where the audience is confronted by mechanisms that undermine or distance empathy or identification with the events on stage, Brecht's epigrams introduce critical distance, invite readers to reinterpret what is seen in the image, and ask instead to remain at a distance; the greater this distance, the better critical access one has to determine the messages, represented through signification of meaning.

In photogram 44 something is missing: the press photograph of the impaled head does not show the Americans, i.e., the perpetrators. The gruesome image and immediacy

⁴³⁹ Barthes, "The Photographic Image," 15.

⁴⁴⁰ Wöhrle, *Bertolt Brechts medienästhetische Versuche*, 160.

of the impaling onto the tank provide the reader with ample cause to rethink how we process images of war. The skull's mouth is open in perpetual lament—Brecht's epigram alludes to the deceased Shakespearean jester in *Hamlet*—yet we are obligated to remember that the Japanese soldiers were themselves oppressors and instruments of war. With the head purposefully mounted at the front of the vehicle, we cannot escape the allusion to the hood ornaments of automobiles from major German industrial concerns (such as Mercedes), which were involved in manufacturing tanks and military vehicles for the war effort, many of them war profiteers themselves. The head is also wearing a helmet (as if this decaying body part were still able to fight in battle), suggesting to us that this press photograph was staged for mass effect both as a signifier of future warning to the Japanese army and to signify victory for the American and Western European readership of *Life* magazine. The position of the maimed head is slightly turned and resembles a mug shot, portraying this bodiless soldier as a casualty of war: "This is what they looked like." Yet the reader does not know who this person really was; we can only employ the caption and Brecht's epigram, instructing us in the deeper message, one that emerges from the interplay of image and text. The soldier remains nameless and (almost) faceless. Here we see the employment of the photography of death at work, of some person who so graphically died while screaming, both victim and instrument of war.

Brecht's collection of images as history presents us with many contradictions and decisions. The photographs are not his ideas; rather, they comprise a set of coded messages, material he gathered together and placed within their respective contexts so that a critical reader produces meaning and understands them through their means of production and multifaceted representation. Yet through the contradictions interwoven

into the very fabric of photography, we recognize that Brecht offers us no definitive truth claim. The photographic image offers options but does not give us one truth, alluding to the inexhaustibility of the performance of possible meaning in art.⁴⁴¹ Brecht's *Kriegsfibel* is arguably, just like his theater pieces, a performance of social history. The major players all have specific roles in each photograph, and they stare the reader in the face to tell their stories. The reader, however, does not stare blankly in return but is asked to engage with what is seen, with what is not readily apparent, and to question what is given to us as truth. We are asked, as Alan Trachtenberg writes, to bear "witness" to history while at the same time to engage with it and make it our own, because, in this case, history is war.⁴⁴²

As a subset the photographs of Adolf Hitler can be examined through Brecht's theories of the epic theater and the social *Gestus*. For Brecht, the *Gestus* has both a restrictive and an expansive meaning. Restrictively, it refers to an approach to acting that assumes an understanding of the world from the observation of human behavior. The epic actor uses gestures on stage, but not every gesture constitutes this effective illocutionary speech act—for example, one that promises, deceives, or condemns. In other words the *Gestus* always aims to foreground the social significance of an action.⁴⁴³ With the

⁴⁴¹ Tagg, "Contacts/Worksheets," 203.

⁴⁴² Alan Trachtenberg, "Albums of War," *Reading American Photographs: Images as History from Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 73.

⁴⁴³ Brecht, "Über gestische Musik" (1937), BFA 22.1: 329. See also the chapter "From Act to Text," in Elizabeth Bruss, *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). This notion is also explored in the chapter on Brecht's *Arbeitsjournale*.

photograph of the American soldier mentioned above, we see the *Gestus* of fascism only when the soldier stands over the corpse he has killed. Expansively, the *Gestus* refers to the entire scene, within which every component—costume, lighting, props, scenery—contributes to the work of eliciting the social component.

Epic theater proceeds through an accumulation of the *Gestus*, resulting in a calculated fragmentation. Thus, for Benjamin, Brecht's theater proceeds by fits and starts in a manner comparable to the images on a filmstrip, or in this case a collection of contrasting photographs.⁴⁴⁴ Affinities between epic theater and cinema do exist, but Brecht is also drawing on older traditions, such as those explored in Barthes's essay "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein."⁴⁴⁵ For Barthes, the *Gestus* rethinks G. E. Lessing's idea of the "prägnanter Augenblick".⁴⁴⁶ This "Polaroid moment" is achieved through a composition that gives maximum emphasis to the "perfect instant"—a significant and tangible moment that visually condenses past, present, and future. The *Gestus* represents

⁴⁴⁴ See Joachim Lang, *Episches Theater als Film. Bühnenstücke Bertolt Brechts in den audiovisuellen Medien* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 26-37. See also *Kriegsfibel* photogram 40, BFA 12: 209. The photograph shows an American soldier smoking a cigarette after shooting a Japanese soldier. Brecht's satirical epigram comments on the encounter between the soldiers as a deadly game of smiles. The caption describes the American's realization of what happened as if it had played in a film: "I was walking down the trail when I saw two fellows talking. They grinned and I grinned. One pulled a gun. I pulled mine. I killed him. It was just like in the movies."

⁴⁴⁵ Barthes, "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein," *Image—Music—Text*, 73.

⁴⁴⁶ Lessing, "Laokoon," 103-04.

social situations semiotically and, in the case of Brecht's *Kriegsfibel*, visually. Barthes, whose œuvre engages to a great extent with the medium of photography, insists on the intimate relationship between the elements of photography and much of Brecht's work. By capturing the decisive "moment" and exposing the *Gestus* for critical examination, photographs realize elements of Brecht's epic theater that are perhaps not fully perceptible without such a visual aid.⁴⁴⁷ Significant moments can be simply overlooked by the human eye, whereas with a photograph, we have the image and its *Gestus* frozen for inspection. Moreover, there seem to be elements of Brecht's concept of the theater, whose home is not so much on stage but, rather, in the photographs of stage production themselves—one need only to look through the *Theaterarbeit* collection of the many Brecht plays from the Berliner Ensemble or the images of the photography-laden theater production models (Brecht's *Modellbücher*). With the *Kriegsfibel* Brecht challenges the reader's preconceptions and misconceptions of war. To this end, photography provides us with a privileged medium for coming to terms with and representing the unforgettable throughout history: admonishment and hope, ironically both in the image of Hitler.

Through the representational medium of photography, one does not have to physically stand on the battlefield in order to bear witness to history—we simply need to look, but look carefully. Photography's special status as recorder or objective "witness" to real events allows space and time to collapse for the reader. On beholding the first photographic image in the *Kriegsfibel*—Hitler at a party rally—one can have the sense, according to Barthes, that the photographic event "has been"⁴⁴⁸ and that the reader can

⁴⁴⁷ This idea is explored in greater detail in the chapter on the *Modellbücher*.

⁴⁴⁸ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 77.

still see this event as if staring Hitler in the face, even though we know Hitler is dead. The photograph provides the means of bringing the historic “Hitler image” into the present and collapses the distance between the photographer at the moment the scene was recorded and the present time. The photographs of Hitler (four total in *Kriegsfibel*; six total in Willett’s *War Primer* translation/edition) constitute a recurring theme as Brecht sought to link World War II with the image of Hitler. By sheer number the photographs of Hitler comprise a relatively small, yet substantial portion of those dedicated to war perpetrators and criminals. The image of Hitler, with all its associations and connotations (fabricated or true), is the seminal element Brecht insists we never forget. It is purposefully positioned in the *Kriegsfibel*, staggered in intervals throughout, to remind us of the work’s intention and effect. In fact, even when we see images of other Nazi officials, we are nonetheless compelled to set them into their broader context—compelled to see Hitler either as the one responsible or at least as someone linked to them. Among other World War II criminals prominently displayed are Hermann Göring, head of the *Luftwaffe*, and Dr. Joseph Goebbels, minister for public enlightenment and propaganda. Through the proximity of photography, history comes closer while remaining at a certain distance, and we are left with “the unforgettable”—the photographic images of Hitler.

The *Kriegsfibel* begins its archive with a press photograph of Hitler standing at his lectern. Brecht’s epigram, written around 1940, contextualizes the photograph (see Figure 11):

Wie einer, der ihn schon im Schlafe ritt
 Weiß ich den Weg, vom Schicksal auserkürt
 Den schmalen Weg, der in den Abgrund führt:

Ich finde ihn im Schläfe. Kommt ihr mit?⁴⁴⁹

Brecht's words allude to a photomontage by John Heartfield entitled "Der Führer weiß den Weg," which appeared in the *AIZ* on 3 January 1935. This first photograph and its epigram introduce the reader to specific personae of Germany's former dictator, to Hitler as larger-than-life orator and as "Knecht," or what postwar authors like Günter Grass or Heinrich Böll called the clown figure.⁴⁵⁰ Brecht mockingly referred to Hitler as the "Anstreicher," a reference to the dictator's failed aspirations as painter. Brecht's companion in exile, Lion Feuchtwanger, had called Hitler a "Hampelmann," referring to the children's hand puppet made of wood or cardboard whose parts can be moved by pulling on strings.⁴⁵¹ The metaphor characterizes Hitler as weak-minded and easily

⁴⁴⁹ Brecht, *Kriegsfibel* photogram 1, BFA 12: 131.

⁴⁵⁰ Lutz Koepnick, "Face/Off: Hitler and Weimar Political Photography," *Visual Culture in Twentieth-Century Germany: Text as Spectacle*, ed. Gail Finney (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 215. Brecht also labels Hermann Göring "der Schlächterclown" in *Kriegsfibel* photogram 25, BFA 12: 179. See also Jost Hermand, "More than a House-Painter? Brecht's Hitler," *Unmasking Hitler: Cultural Representations of Hitler from the Weimar Republic to the Present*, eds. Klaus L. Berghahn and Jost Hermand (Oxford: Peter Land, 2005), 171-92.

⁴⁵¹ Brecht records his conversation with Feuchtwanger in journal entries that appear out of order in the BFA from 27-28 February 1942, in *Arbeitsjournal*, BFA 27: 58-64. Brecht did not fully agree with Feuchtwanger's assessment (and other "Hitlergegner") of Hitler as a complete "phony," but finds the comparison intriguing. This "Hampelmann" idea appears in various photomontages by John Heartfield.

controlled, i.e., all one has to do is to “pull his string” to manipulate him like a doll. The word “Knecht” stresses Hitler’s role as servant and accomplice to the large business concerns that profited from the outbreak and duration of war. To that end, Brecht composed a four-line epigram dated 1954 intended for the *Kriegsfibel*; it did not make it into the 1955 version. That epigram reads:

Ein Bild des Knechtes hängt in jedem Haus.
 “Heil Hitler” grüßten Tausende und starben.
 Doch keiner weiß: Wie sehn die Herren aus?
 Begrüßt der Knecht sie mit “Heil I. G. Farben”?⁴⁵²

Those press photographs, along with Brecht’s epigrams, showing the means of war production, refer to further exploitation of workers for war profiteering, for example in photograms 2, 32, and 44.

This version of Hitler in photogram 1 has his eyes wide open, gazing toward some point external to the photograph; the crazed look gives his visage an eerily calming, chilled effect. His mouth is slightly open, suggesting that he is in the middle of a speech. The hand and arm are outstretched to reach Germany and the world. The contrast of

⁴⁵² Brecht, [“Ein Bild des Knechtes”], BFA 12: 283. See also Brecht’s journal entry dated 29 July 1943: “Natürlich gibt es so etwas wie die ‘Knechtseligkeit der Deutschen.’ Sie hat ihre historischen Gründe,” in BFA 27: 161. In yet another journal entry dated 5 November 1943, Brecht states: “Es wäre ein gutes Stück für die Deutschen, in dem man zeigen könnte, wie einer an ihrem Knechtsinn untergeht, d.h. ihn als Führer zunächst willig akzeptiert, worauf er später an ihrer Unselbstständigkeit mit ihnen zugrunde geht,” in BFA 27: 180.

white and black separates Hitler from the other spatial elements in the photograph: brightness illuminates his physiognomy—as if Hitler’s face were painted white like a clown’s—and the microphones act like an eagerly listening audience. The rest is dark and hidden. Because of the way the photograph has been cropped, we do not know whether he has an audience before him, although it is most likely the case here. The “narrow way” leading to the abyss to which Brecht alludes in his epigram plays on the difference of darkness and light; the swastika is barely visible in the background. However, this sign of National Socialism should be immediately noticed as a focal element within the photograph’s frame. As Hitler’s face stares into the heavens, his hypnotic eyes and extended arm lead the reader directly to the swastika that is markedly not attached to his sleeve; the swastika as his end point becomes a cipher of power and history, signifying his vision of a Third Reich which, as of the publication of the photograph in 1935, was not yet fully realized.

This first photograph of Hitler shows the dreamlike trance with which he hypnotically stared into the face of the rest of Europe. We should also ask what is “missing” from the photograph: the audience, Hitler’s supporters who constantly surrounded him. In this photograph the reader also sees the German people in Hitler, and therefore we do not need to infer an audience. We cannot segregate the image of this Hitler at the podium from the thousands of wartime images of Germans at Nazi rallies and in the streets of many other European cities, cheering the fascist regimes in their fervent nationalism, giving the “Heil Hitler!” salute with arms raised like Hitler’s in this photograph. The reader might contrast this particular version of Hitler with the final photograph, an incongruous image taken from an unknown American periodical during

Brecht's exile in southern California sometime around 1944.⁴⁵³ The final *Kriegsfibel* photograph screams at us through Hitler's open mouth: "This is what you came to see." The stage setting remains, with the microphone, the speech, and the rally, but also with a twist: Hitler frozen in the act of wild bodily movements during his typical theatrics.

The image of Hitler in numerous photographs synthesized Brecht's interest in theatricality and the representative characteristics of the dictator's behavior. The version of Hitler as seen in the final *Kriegsfibel* photogram was the case study for the screaming Hitler that Brecht overtly employs in his parody *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*, of which various photographs exist of the stage performances.⁴⁵⁴ Brecht's goal was to show the Hitler figure as caricature of the petty bourgeoisie and an indentured servant to big industry concerns funding his campaigns. Apart from the dramatic parody in *Arturo Ui*, Brecht's photograms present Hitler starring in various roles, from grand statesman, lover and patron of high culture (painting, music, theater) to soldier and military leader. Brecht refers to these "roles" after studying press photographs that show Hitler's theatrical fascism at work on the world stage:

[Es gibt] ein gewisses weltmännisches Air, das man besonders auf den Fotografien, die seine [Hitlers] Verbeugungen (vor Hindenburg, Mussolini oder hochgestellten Damen) zeigen, studieren kann. Die Rolle, die er aufbaut (der Musikfreund, Genießer echter deutscher Musik, der unbekannte Soldat des Weltkrieges, der fröhliche Geber und Volksgenosse, der würdig Trauernde, gefaßt), ist individuell angelegt. [...]

⁴⁵³ See BFA 12: 267.

⁴⁵⁴ See the *Theaterarbeit* volume from the Berliner Ensemble for production photographs.

Er liebt die Haltung des Inspizierens. Sehr bemerkenswert ist eine Fotografie seiner Ankunft in Italien (Venedig). Mussolini zeigt ihm anscheinend die Stadt. Der Anstreicher stellt den Geschäftsreisenden dar, der zugleich der *feine Kenner der Architektur* ist, übrigens auch des Umstandes, daß er vermeiden muß, einen weichen Hut aufzusetzen, Sonne hin, Sonne her.⁴⁵⁵

Brecht had saved and included many photographs showing the dictator making his rounds, overseeing actions, inspecting structures and troops. Hitler—the lowly corporal in World War I—played the power trip well and was aware of his many contrasting public faces. In Brecht’s reading, the photograph shows Hitler’s act of “inspecting” as not only aggression, but also as if he were there on a business trip. Two other aspects seem apparent to Brecht. He takes issue with Hitler’s self-portrayal as a connoisseur of art and engineering. He also points to Hitler’s attire in the photograph as an attempt to transform his public image from dictator into a common man or tourist trying to avoid the intense sun in Italy. This humanizes the mythos of Hitler as well as provides the public with interesting theater. Of course Brecht also criticizes Hitler for attempting to be everything to everyone at once, essentially exceeding his skills as an actor. With these posed photographic moments of Hitler playing the part Brecht states mockingly: “es gelingt [Hitler] nicht immer, die Rolle wirklich einheitlich zu gestalten.”⁴⁵⁶

The *Kriegsfibel* presents us with a chronicle of Hitler’s time in power, from persuasive and mythical orator with promises of a strong and respected Third Reich

⁴⁵⁵ Brecht, “Über die Theatralik des Faschismus,” BFA 22.1: 564.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 565.

(1935) to a mentally and physically ill man unwilling to admit impending defeat (1944). Here the reader sees the culmination of war, oppression, and ultimate madness in Hitler—yet he remains, in his oversized uniform, large boots, and contorted face, in the guise of the clown figure. As Brecht states, the logical person must be able to think through the images he or she sees, especially when what we see requires illusion and supports misconception.⁴⁵⁷ This closing photograph presents us with a frontal shot of a different Hitler than that of the first image: the madman as opposed to the somnambulist. Hitler's hands are once again prevalent features. In this instance, one hand swings back, not to reach out but to strike; the other hand clenches itself into an arthritic fist. The background of this press photograph displays Hitler's party faithful, not the cryptic, empty darkness of the first. The reader also notices quite distinctly that the sign of the swastika is now on Hitler's arm. No longer is he simply facing it; it has become a part of him and his message to the world (see Figure 11). Brecht's epigram accompanying the final photograph reads:

Das da hätt einmal fast die Welt regiert.
 Die Völker wurden seiner Herr. Jedoch
 Ich wollte, daß ihr nicht schon triumphiert:
 Der Schoß ist fruchtbar noch, aus dem das kroch.⁴⁵⁸

The combination of the photograph and the epigram collapses time and establishes the connection between these diverse layers. Line 1 alludes to the past and connects it to the future past conditional through use of the subjunctive; lines 2 and 3 set the reader in the

⁴⁵⁷ Brecht, "Über die Wiederherstellung der Wahrheit," BFA 22.1: 89.

⁴⁵⁸ Brecht, *Kriegsfibel* photogram 69, BFA 12: 267.

concrete past after Hitler's defeat in 1945; the epigram finishes in the present time, a warning projected into the future that the conditions that allowed his rise still exist. Here we see history through the image of Hitler from all possible perspectives of past, present, and future. After examining the photograph of Hitler wildly screaming into the crowd, the reader is confronted with the epigram's first two words "Das da." The choice of the neuter pronoun is significant when paired with the photograph. First, the deictic "Das da" invites the reader to immediately take another, closer look at the "it/that" and regard the man screaming from a different perspective. "Das da" is no longer a man giving an impassioned speech, but rather becomes something contemptible; "that there" becomes a monster, the personification of the entire Nazi war apparatus, oppression, and hate. Second, "Das da" takes up and turns the dehumanizing language against the Nazis' chief representative.⁴⁵⁹ The warning is the final message in Brecht's collection: history as disjointed revolution where our fate is doomed to repeat itself unless we change it. The lesson is to learn from the series of mistakes in our history (such as war) and closely echoes the final lines of Brecht's *Arturo Ui*.⁴⁶⁰ The addition of "HITLER: April 20, 1889" in the lower left-hand corner—the photograph's only caption—reinforces the rhetoric of a fruitful womb still able to bear those who are inclined to continue the violence and oppression; this is Hitler's date of birth.

⁴⁵⁹ See also Jan Knopf's editorial commentary: "Diese inhuman-sachliche Formel, mit der die Faschisten ihre angeblichen und wirklichen Gegner belegt haben, kehrt Brecht hier gegen sie um." BFA 12: 433.

⁴⁶⁰ See the closing lines of Brecht's gangster play, *Der Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*, BFA 7: 111-12.

In Brecht's *Kriegsfibel* we see history as a collection of photographic images. Not only are these images a series of powerful moments or flashes of conflict; we also get the sense of the kind of narrative (in)stabilities that accompany the compilation of such moments in history. The two photographs of Hitler function as bookends for Brecht's photographic theater of World War II. Its montage construction is similar to the essay on photography from Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk*, or Eduardo Cadava's monograph *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History*,⁴⁶¹ inviting the reader to notice the juxtaposition and arrangement of each element, to look and read between the lines of the captions and Brecht's epigrams. The elements are arranged in such a way with the photographs positioned above the epigrams to facilitate multiple, critical readings. Dieter Wöhrle suggests that the epigram should be read first followed by the other elements, which contradicts the fact that the gaze is inevitably drawn to the image first.⁴⁶² This, however, would circumvent the process of looking for contradictions and instead go directly to Brecht's perspective. We cannot read the *Kriegsfibel* from cover to cover; rather, we are constantly interrupted by what we see and how it is presented to us.

We can continue to utilize these interpretive strategies in order to better sift through the flood of contemporary media images and texts. Such a collection of photographs insists that we actively engage with what is seen and reflect on the lessons to be learned from such a reading. The *Kriegsfibel* photographs directly expose us to

⁴⁶¹ Benjamin, "Die Photographie," BGS 5.2: 824-46; and Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁴⁶² Wöhrle, *Bertolt Brechts medienästhetische Versuche*, 161 f.

challenging questions today. Brecht's goal, as previously suggested, is to instruct the spectator how to look for and provide answers to these questions for those images that do not include an epigram. War photographs continue to shock and fascinate. Such fascination inspires the need to reflect on but not to identify with the images. The photograph becomes the critical visual argument allowing us to see history's many constitutive parts. Photography isolates fragmentary moments for the examination of history's trends, breaks, and subtexts. It solicits the discovery of difference and, in the case of the *Gestus*, exposes contradictions and significant social patterns in the creation of human behavior. Just as the photographic image represents the photographer's multiple decisions and manipulations, so too does Brecht's work insist on the awareness that art and human behavior are no simulacra of nature. To that end, photography is better equipped to narrate history than to narrate reality. One must recognize artifice to recognize what is real.

Chapter Six

Photo Complex: *Kriegsfibel*—*Arbeitsjournale*—*Modellbücher*

By 1938, Brecht had been living in political exile for five years, having fled Germany shortly after Hitler's rise to power in 1933. To document his struggle, he had begun to meticulously collect and assemble newspaper clippings and photographs from various sources and publications. This endeavor was sparked by previous experiences during the interwar years in Europe, chronicling his travels en route to America, and continued even after World War II in East Berlin until the publication of his *Kriegsfibel* in 1955, just one year before his death in 1956. The *Kriegsfibel* is the product of Brecht's artistic impulse for pictorial documentation of the events that shaped the twentieth century. The years between 1938 and 1955 are significant within the general context of Brecht's biography (from mid-exile almost until his death) as the period of his career when he produced some of his greatest plays, theoretical essays, and poetry, and continued to expand his experiments with other artistic genres. For reasons beyond his control Brecht had to be more creative while in exile; he had limited theater access to stage his plays and had to overcome the barriers of language (Danish, Swedish, Finnish, and to a certain extent American English), antagonistic political climates (particularly in the United States), and monetary hardships.

This time period of approximately twenty years also plays a significant role in his overarching interest in working with other media in the visual and graphic arts, from

painting to sculpture and architecture.⁴⁶³ The scope of this final chapter will remain narrower in its focus, homing in on the three bi-medial projects discussed in this study that constitute and synthesize Brecht's "photo complex"—the model book, the work journal, and the *Kriegsfibel* photogram. As detailed in previous chapters, the model book packages produced by Brecht and others at the Berliner Ensemble provide a new way to visually examine Brechtian scenography in the epic theater; the entries in the *Arbeitsjournale* become image-text documents of experiences in exile; and the hybrid *Kriegsfibel* photograms offer a distinct perspective on World War II historiography while seeking to reeducate readers on how to decipher mass media images. The years 1938-1955 provide the approximate frame for the concurrent inception and production of the three projects in question. During this time, Brecht pushed the boundaries of genre with his experiments.⁴⁶⁴ This final chapter analyzes how Brecht's "photo complex" cross-

⁴⁶³ For an overview, see Andreas Zinn, *Bildersturmspiele. Intermedialität im Werk Bertolt Brechts* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011), 8-17. Zinn's monograph, part of the publisher's series "Der neue Brecht," investigates Brecht's "intermediality" and rightly calls for scholarship to move away from a word-centered approach to Brecht's work. It also contains a wealth of pictorial materials.

⁴⁶⁴ As early as 1928, he writes in a short note about the possibilities to counter contradictory and ambiguous images by altering the apparatus (camera) or by juxtaposing texts to them. These thoughts could constitute some of Brecht's first ideas that would later become the photogram: "Berufsmäßige Modelle sind auch zuwenig durch den Apparat irritiert, sie präsentieren sich dem Apparat anders, als sie sich dem nachmaligen

referenced these three projects—*Kriegsfibel*, *Arbeitsjournale*, *Modellbücher*—and locates the intersections of the model book, work journal, and *Kriegsfibel* photogram.

The point of contact between the three parallel projects is the photographs, which become a—if not *the*—constitutive element. Photographs not only characterize how readers and scholars have come to study and interpret these works, but also influence how they are classified as literary and historical documents. As previously discussed, Brecht had always shown interest in the visual arts, having worked in a visual performance medium during his entire career: the theater. To trace his engagement with the photographic medium within the context of this triad, one must look to 1938. While Brecht had most certainly written about and engaged the medium before this time,⁴⁶⁵ it was in July 1938 during exile in Denmark when Brecht first incorporated the material object, a self-portrait photograph, into his *Arbeitsjournale*. Between 1940 and 1944, his attraction grew, manifesting itself mostly in numerous press photographs along with work journal entries. Among those entries from 1940 the reader finds Brecht, who already had

Beschauer präsentieren würden, es entsteht eine abgeschmackt harmlose Atmosphäre.

Etwas aufzuhelfen wäre vielleicht nur durch den Titel.” See Brecht, BFA 21: 265.

⁴⁶⁵ Photography pervades much of Brecht’s work, from the plays and poetry to his many essays. See for example Brecht’s earlier plays such as *Die Dreigroschenoper*, which profited from use of extensive montage and projection imagery on stage, or *Die Mutter*, which directly thematized a photograph, or Brecht’s essays on photography or art’s struggle with authenticity, e.g., “Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit.”

begun to collect even more photographs from multiple sources, turning his attention towards the epigram as poetic form.⁴⁶⁶

In October 1940, Brecht composed his first two four-line epigrams that comment on German press (read: propaganda) photographs.⁴⁶⁷ The images were originally supposed to convey a “softer” side of Adolf Hitler: the first shows him eating at a table surrounded by women, another as a respectful and gracious leader shaking the hand of a grateful old woman. Brecht’s epigrams challenge what the photographs show—the seeming banality of the “beloved” dictator—unsettling their intended message to expose the visual gestures for what they really are: a smokescreen to hide Hitler’s oppression and garner the people’s favor for his obsessive conquest. These first two photograms in the *Arbeitsjournale* were not included in the 1955 published version of *Kriegsfibel*, but nonetheless served as models for Brecht going forward with his ideas on the project. Other photographic intersections during this time include, for example, a press photograph of Brecht’s fellow exile Lion Feuchtwanger in a journal entry from 22 July 1941, the day after he and his family arrived in California. This photograph can also be found in *Kriegsfibel* photogram 13, one of the various photograms highlighting exiles like Brecht; the “Singapore Lament” photograph can be found in a journal entry from 5 April 1942, and reappears in *Kriegsfibel* photogram 39; *Kriegsfibel* photogram 60 appears first in the journal entry from 5 June 1942; or the photograph of the Nazi attacks

⁴⁶⁶ See the *Arbeitsjournale* entries (Finland) in BFA 26: 401-02 (25 July) and 419-20 (28 and 29 August).

⁴⁶⁷ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 434-35. See also BFA 27: 314 and 15: 227, which include other photograms not in the *Kriegsfibel*.

in Norway, found as a complete “Fotoepigramm” in the *Arbeitsjournale* from 25 June 1944 and in *Kriegsfibel* photogram 6.

The year 1944 is particularly significant, as this marks the first instance formally documenting Brecht’s work on the *Kriegsfibel*:

Arbeite an neuer Serie der Fotoepigramme. Ein Überblick über die alten [Fotoepigramme], teilweise aus der ersten Zeit des Krieges stammend, ergibt, daß ich nichts zu eliminieren habe (politisch überhaupt nichts), bei dem ständigen wechselnden Aspekt des Krieges ein guter Beweis für den Wert der Betrachtungsweise. Es sind jetzt über 60 Vierzeiler, und zusammen mit *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches*, den Gedichtbänden und vielleicht ‘Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit’ gibt das Werk einen befriedigenden literarischen Report über die Exilzeit.⁴⁶⁸

The journal entry attests to the inception of *Kriegsfibel* dating to at least 1940, with more than 60 complete by 1944. Brecht’s focus, as discussed previously, is to tease out a new way to examine these collected war photographs, to amplify the means with which we may better sift through the wreckage of war.. On a personal level, he acknowledges the *Kriegsfibel* photogram as a “satisfying” artistic means of documenting and reporting his time in exile. In fact, it seems Brecht was convinced that these photograms were so successful in chronicling and exposing the actualities of World War II that he had plans to expand the scope and quantity of the project, not wanting to “eliminate” anything or any detail. Among the first to read the *Kriegsfibel* material was Brecht’s friend and fellow German exile Karl Korsch, member of the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*,

⁴⁶⁸ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 196.

critical theorist, and law professor in the United States. Brecht had let Korsch see the photograms and in 1945 received a letter from him: “Die Fibel ist das beste, was es über diesen Krieg gibt. Ich habe es schon mehrere Male ohne und mit Lupe [...] studiert und finde immer mehr darin.”⁴⁶⁹

By 1954, Brecht had assembled a total of 72 photograms (plus others not included for publication) and was searching for a publisher. But before that could happen the project was almost derailed by politics. Members of the cultural ministry of the SED had objections to some of its overt messages. Some criticized its so-called “pacifist” tendencies. The official stance of the East German government towards World War II was one of necessity, to fight against the fascism of the Nazi regime; the *Kriegsfibel* directly contradicted that line of thought. Another objection levied against it had to do with the visual materials—specifically the use of photographs from the war: the *Kriegsfibel* photograms did not adhere to the Soviet-style Socialist Realism in literature and the other arts. Brecht did not deny either claim, for both were part of his critique of the war. Instead of Socialist Realism—whose tenets included thematizing the proletariat, the everyday lives of workers, mimetically realistic representation, and a partisan socialist agenda—Brecht emphasized a *social* realism in his image-texts. The photograms situate the war within its historical and class contexts, but do not explicitly engage with the party’s orthodoxy on the teleological progress towards socialism. Eventually, and reluctantly, Brecht revised and omitted various photograms, which led to the signing of the publication contract in 1954 with Eulenspiegel Verlag. In 1955, the *Kriegsfibel* was published and included 69 photograms by Brecht, a preface and “Klappentext” penned by

⁴⁶⁹ Letter from Karl Korsch to Brecht, dated 25 February 1945, in BFA 12: 424.

Ruth Berlau, as well as editorial commentary for certain photograms by Heinz Seydel and Günter Kunert. *Eulenspiegel* billed its first edition release—with a rather large printing at around 10,000 copies—as “*die Sensation*.”⁴⁷⁰ Despite the public attention the *Kriegsfibel* did not actually sell many copies, was panned by some critics, and subsequently did not receive any literary prizes. Brecht was undeterred and, in the spirit of his “satisfying” description of the *Kriegsfibel* quoted above, he planned to follow it with a parallel volume provocatively titled *Friedensfibel*.⁴⁷¹ Shortly before his death in 1956, Brecht wrote to Seydel professing his continued support: “Vor allem muß die *Kriegsfibel* in die Bibliotheken, Kulturhäuser, Schulen usw. Ich wäre gern bereit, an diese Stellen selbst zu schreiben, denn diese tolle Verdrängung aller Fakten und Wertungen über die Hitlerzeit und den Krieg bei uns muß aufhören.”⁴⁷²

The following continues to investigate the system of textual and visual references among all three projects. The *Kriegsfibel*'s reception history underscores the many points of contact with the *Arbeitsjournale* and *Modellbücher*. While the intersecting points between the projects meet at the photographs, each shares its own affinity with another in distinct ways. First, the war images in the *Kriegsfibel* and production photographs in the model books of the Berliner Ensemble show forms of the *Gestus*, a visual sourcebook for

⁴⁷⁰ See BFA 12: 424.

⁴⁷¹ The one photogram that can be attributed to this *Friedensfibel* is found on the back cover jacket of the original 1955 *Eulenspiegel* edition. This “peace primer” idea never came to fruition.

⁴⁷² Brecht, in a letter to one of the *Kriegsfibel* editors, Heinz Seydel, dated 26 July 1956, cited in BFA 12: 424.

human relations both on the epic stage and in the theater of war. For example, photogram 59 shows a dead German soldier's parents at the moment they identify his body on the battlefield. The old mother is frozen in the image as she faints against her husband's body, with outstretched arms and head back facing the sky in lament. This is the *Gestus* of mourning, with Brecht's epigram reinforcing the idea that there will be no healing process for these victims and their families until the "old thorn" of war is removed from the "flesh of humanity."⁴⁷³ This theme echoes in the *Couragemodell* seen, for example, in the photographs as Mother Courage buries her dead daughter who was shot for warning the people of Halle about the impending ambush.⁴⁷⁴

Second, the connections between the model book and work journal document motifs for theater work from the exile period through the founding of the Berliner Ensemble in postwar East Berlin. In an entry from December 1944, Brecht mentions his preparations for *Aufbau einer Rolle*, the ongoing and intensive work with Charles Laughton on the main character for the play *Galileo*: "Daneben fotografische Experimente mit Ruth [Berlau], bestimmt, ein Archiv von Filmen meiner Arbeiten anzulegen. [...] Amüsant, die Fehlerquellen in den Papieren, Filmen, Lichtenanlagen, Linsen usw. zu entdecken."⁴⁷⁵ In this example, it is Brecht's penchant for finding mistakes in order to change and improve upon his production process, his own personal "Spaß an der Veränderung." Another example comes from an August 1944 United States

⁴⁷³ Brecht, *Kriegsfibel* photogram 59, BFA 12: 247.

⁴⁷⁴ See, for example, the production photographs of Mother Courage covering Katrin's dead body. In Brecht, *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 382-83.

⁴⁷⁵ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 215.

Navy photograph displaying a group of soldiers huddled around a grey-haired woman and her radio. She stares at the radio and beckons one man to her as they listen to a broadcast by the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF).⁴⁷⁶ The photograph is situated between entries where Brecht discusses the development of Grusche, the female figure in *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*, and how he drew from Pieter Breugel's painting *Tolle Grete* for the role. This image documents a turning point in World War II—people gathered to listen to the AEF radio broadcasts after D-Day (6 June 1944), as the American military joined the war effort against Germany. Beyond that fact, Brecht may have found the motherly figure with her radio at the center of the image a suitable subject for study in his plays with strong female characters. Production photos for Helene Weigel's role as Pelagea Wlassowa in the overtly communist play *Die Mutter* (staged with the Berliner Ensemble in 1951) also display the mother figure around whom the community gathers to learn lessons about political economy and plan actions.⁴⁷⁷ Further, the *Arbeitsjournale* include numerous other production photographs (e.g., *Der Prozess der Jeanne d'Arc zu Rouen*, *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*, *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*) with commentary on the plays.

Still another example comes from the photograph included with a journal entry from 5 December 1941.⁴⁷⁸ The image shows a "Death Cart from New Mexico" housed at the Modern Museum of Art. A skeleton with bow and arrow pointed at the camera sits on

⁴⁷⁶ See Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 199.

⁴⁷⁷ See Helmut Kiehl's production photographs from the staging of *Die Mutter*, e.g., in *Theaterarbeit*, 124-25.

⁴⁷⁸ See Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 31.

a stationary wooden cart carrying other objects like an axe and rope. The camera angle catches how the skeleton casts a shadow onto the surface in the background of the shot. The cart symbolizes the cycle of death's arrival for all living things. The other weapons visible in the image signal how gruesome that passing can be. Because there are no other informational markers with this photograph, the reader can only speculate why and how such an artifact was used. However, the cart's contents and the skeleton riding it suggest that it in some way represents the business and mechanics of death. Such a motif is of course a major theme in *Mutter Courage*. Her single possession is her own "death wagon" that she and her children pull as they wander throughout Europe. Just as the cart distinguishes between life and death, so too does Courage's wagon divide characters and events on stage, often foreshadowing a life or death sentence.⁴⁷⁹ In many instances Courage's "Planwagen" represents the dividing line between life and death. The cart, along with the Courage figure, is an instrument of contradiction. On one side, it is the business that provides the "livelihood" for her and her family; on the other, because the cart is her business, it is the source of her downfall. By selling her goods, she perpetuates

⁴⁷⁹ See Brecht, *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 200. In this note titled "Diesseits und Jenseits," Brecht describes how in Scene 3 Mother Courage's "Planwagen" physically dissects the stage into two spaces of parallel action. To one side, Mother Courage makes her business transactions, while on the other side of the wagon Katrin studies the dress and behavior of the prostitute Yvette. The result is that as Courage seeks to profit from selling her goods, the distracted Katrin cannot warn against the armed raid that ensues and the eventual arrest of her brother Schweizerkas. See also the production photographs from Scene 3 in BFA 25: 357-59.

the business of war and in the course of the play brings about her children's downfall. In the end the "Planwagen" is all Courage has left. The reader can study her transformation from crafty businesswoman to a skeleton-like figure. She must show her physical torment, yet we know that Courage herself learns nothing and continues to pull the death cart in circles on stage.⁴⁸⁰ These grave images resemble the skeleton and the death cart found in the work journal entry. Its contents, the axe and rope, are really no different from Courage's goods in her wagon—objects contributing to the demise of her family, yet at what cost? The business of war does not provide Courage with the living she believes it will; once in motion it is too late to reverse course.

Another related image showing a distressed woman with her cart spans all three of Brecht's projects. The "Singapore Lament" press photograph emerges in an *Arbeitsjournale* entry as well as in *Kriegsfibel* photogram 39. The argument could also be made that it resurfaces in Scene 3 of the *Couragemodell* and is quoted on stage by Weigel in *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*. The image first appears in the journal entry of 5 April 1942 (see Figure 12).⁴⁸¹ The Associated Press photo, reprinted in *Life* magazine of 23 March 1942, shows the aftermath of a Japanese bombing attack on British-controlled Singapore. A woman crouches low to the ground and screams at the side of a dead young boy (most likely her son), a bystander caught in the attack. Another woman sits behind her, her arms flailing in agony. A cart similar to a rickshaw taxi lies mangled on the ground while other bystanders continue to walk around this scene on the street. Brecht

⁴⁸⁰ See the production photographs of the final moments from Scene 12 in BFA 25: 300-01.

⁴⁸¹ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 27: 80.

comments in his journal that culture and art are also under attack: “Die Schlacht um Smolensk geht auch um die Lyrik.”⁴⁸² How can art effectively represent such situations? Brecht’s response is that art must be part of that answer. Art must facilitate critical thinking and demonstrate how to situate current events within their historical context and make that applicable for the present.

In 1949, Brecht and Erich Engel staged *Mutter Courage* with the Berliner Ensemble at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin to great acclaim. Brecht viewed this not only as an important accomplishment toward a renewed postwar German theater, but also as a step toward social progress in Germany.⁴⁸³ Here again the “scream” image from the Singapore press photograph resurfaces—according to Brecht—on stage as Courage hears the execution of her younger son, Schweizerkas. In Scene 3 he is arrested for stealing the money box. Schweizerkas is shot and Courage can hear these gunshots. The corpse of her son is carried to her for purposes of identification. Courage must remain silent (i.e., disown him) to save herself. The *Couragemodell* visually documents these pivotal moments in a sequence of four photographs, labeled 119a/b and 120a/b (see Figure 12).⁴⁸⁴ Brecht remarks on Weigel’s attention to fine detail in this sequence:

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ See Brecht’s poem “Das Theater des neuen Zeitalters” (1950), BFA 15: 226: “Das Theater des neuen Zeitalters / Ward eröffnet, als auf die Bühne / Des zerstörten Berlin / Der Planwagen der Courage rollte. / Ein und ein halbes Jahr später / Im Demonstrationszug des 1. Mai / Zeigten die Mütter ihren Kindern / Die Weigel und / Lobten den Frieden.”

⁴⁸⁴ See Brecht, *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 317-20.

Der Ausdruck des äußeren Schmerzes nach dem Anhören der Salve, der schreilos geöffnete Mund bei zurückgebogenem Kopf stammt vermutlich von der Pressefotografie einer indischen Frau, die während der Beschießung von Singapore bei der Leiche ihres getöteten Sohnes hockt. Die Weigel muß sie vor Jahren gesehen haben, wiewohl sie sich auf Befragen nicht daran erinnerte. So gehen Beobachtungen in den Fundus der Schauspieler ein. Die Weigel nahm diese Haltung übrigens erst in späteren Vorstellungen ein.⁴⁸⁵

According to Brecht, Weigel had seen the press photograph of the Singapore woman screaming and had studied her positioning to model her silent lamentation sequence on stage. Brecht's note details the actualization process of character development among his actors: how one photograph of a real-life massacre might be translated to the stage. One difference between the two, of course, is that the mother in the Singapore photograph was not the cause of her own suffering (a fact not known by examining the photograph out of context); it is implied that she is the innocent civilian war victim. On the other hand, *Mother Courage* shows the audience her *Gestus* both as one who is culpable in her son's death and as a mother who suffers the loss of her son. Another difference lies in the "scream" itself. In the Singapore photograph the open mouth implies a sound, whereas *Mother Courage*'s open mouth actually produces nothing audible on purpose. Weigel's "stummer Schrei" is executed visually as a sequence of head movements and facial gestures, from anger (119a), to "silent scream" (119b, 120a), to resignation (120b). Each of the four production photos holds each instant as Weigel's facial gestures change,

⁴⁸⁵ Brecht, *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 203-04. The note is labeled "Beobachtung."

demonstrating Courage's many façades and her character's complexities. Therein lies the significance of these moments: Weigel quotes the Singapore photograph on stage and recreates a powerful sequence of visual tableaux without the use of sound, as if they were quasi scenic photographs of Courage's *Gestus* of the mourning mother. To the audience, the "silent scream" must also become a shock effect, an instance of *Verfremdung* where the audience's expectation of an audible lament is not satisfied, but rather replaced by silence and a momentary pause. In an added gesture or visual framing technique for the stage prior to the silent lament, the chaplain (Feldprediger) leaves his seat next to Courage after he too hears the shots fired at Schweizerkas (production photographs 120a/b). This exit leaves a noticeable absence on stage, drawing greater attention to Courage's lament; it visually represents the mother alone and reinforces her earlier speech after she realizes that her son had been conscripted by one of the military recruiters behind her back: "Ich glaub, ich hab zu lang gehandelt."

The same photograph included in the journal entry and "quoted" on stage in *Mutter Courage* reappears finally as *Kriegsfibel* photogram 39 (see Figure 12).⁴⁸⁶ For this version Brecht had altered the photograph somewhat to adapt it to the corresponding format, and depending on how one reads the photogram, it may elicit varying conclusions. First, the photo is cropped on all sides framing the screaming woman in the center of the image. This focus on the lamenting woman and the additional collation of a sizable headline "Singapore Lament" by Brecht shift the reader's eye away from the dead boy. Unlike the Singapore press photo found in the work journal, where the gaze (and

⁴⁸⁶ See Brecht, *Kriegsfibel* photogram 39, BFA 12: 207. Like many others, Brecht also composed the epigram to this image in 1944.

possibly Brecht's) wanders over multiple visual elements such as the smashed cart, the others in the background, and the dead boy, the subject for the *Kriegsfibel* photograph becomes the two lamenting women, so much so that the reader's eye barely notices the dead body among the rubble. The corresponding epigram partly generates this effect:

O Stimme aus dem Doppeljammerchore
 Der Opfer und der Opferer in Fron!
 Der Sohn des Himmels, Frau, braucht Singapore
 Und niemand als du selbst brauchst deinen Sohn.⁴⁸⁷

Here, the dramatic "Doppeljammerchor" screams over the death of the child. Brecht's lines draw together the victim ("Opfer") and the sacrificers ("Opferer"). Who is the real victim of this bombing, the mother who lost her son or the child who lost his life? At what cost? This photograph is purposefully ambiguous because all three subjects—the screaming woman in the background, the lamenting mother, and the dead boy—play dual roles both as victims of war and as the ones who are sacrificing something. Who suffers? It shows the lamenting mother showing how one suffers just as it shows that it is too late for her dead son. The final two lines in the epigram provide concrete historical and cultural reference to the "son of heaven" (Japanese emperor). Yet, the mother cannot find solace in her lament. The reader must situate this scene in terms of war and its underlying machinery of oppression and exploitation. No matter how much she cries, there will be no explanation. This tragedy is an example of the nonsensical nature of war, that there are

⁴⁸⁷ Brecht, *Kriegsfibel* photograph 39, BFA 12: 207.

only negative outcomes for civilian populations, and that war destroys to make a profit.⁴⁸⁸ These very lessons elude Mother Courage in her situation during the Thirty Years' War.

Second, despite the intended framing of the screaming woman as central focus of the suffering, the image both of Weigel's mother on stage and the mother in this photogram lamenting her son's death draws parallels to the business of war, or doing business during wartime. In an alternative reading the smashed rickshaw in the background can also present a different perspective on this situation. The cart remains visible and resists the definitive reading outlined above. Just as Courage's inaction played a role in Schweizerkas's arrest and murder, so too can the Singapore mother and her cart—her livelihood—be considered culpable in the boy's death. This perspective uncovers the socio-economic forces that drive humans to do whatever necessary under any circumstances to survive. Brecht does not fault his characters for their will to survive, yet they are still punished for it. The irony on stage in the play as well as in this photograph reveals another subtext: the psychological dimension of war. Both mothers must do business to survive; they have no choice. Because a photograph cannot convey sound, it is the wide-open mouth attesting to the scream that is visually powerful in the realization that each mother cannot undo what has been done. In the words of Mother Courage they have “bargained too long.”

⁴⁸⁸ See Brecht's journal entry from 22 April 1941, in BFA 26: 476-77. “Warum ist die *Courage* ein realistisches Werk? Es bezieht für das Volk den realistischen Standpunkt gegenüber den Ideologien: Kriege sind für die Völker Katastrophen, nichts sonst, keine Erhebungen und keine Geschäfte.”

Kriegsfibel photogram 39 directly engages Courage's and the Singapore mother's lament. Brecht's label "silent scream" is a purposeful contradiction in terms: it references the sound, yet the photograph cannot reproduce it (demonstrating a representational shortcoming of photography).⁴⁸⁹ This invites the reader to question the representational characteristics in the medium, i.e., can a scream be silent? To be technically precise, an inaudible scream would not be a vocal utterance, but rather a combination of facial and head positions. As previously stated, this silent or fake scream on stage points the audience to the underlying factors at play in Mother Courage's distress, that is: her involvement in the business of war and her inability to change course to save herself and her family. And, with the aid of the production photograph of this moment, the reader is better able to study the situation arrested in time. On the other hand, the theater is an *audiovisual* medium; removing the sound aspect from it also lends those silent moments an even greater significance on stage. The epic theater is comprised of scenic moments and shows social behaviors that shape human relations. First, eliminating spoken dialogue and other sound during the production creates a greater tension for distancing between the audience and actors. This particular "*Drehpunkt*," or pivotal turning point, builds anticipation and irritates the audience's expectations. Second, the silence

⁴⁸⁹ Jacques Derrida takes up the "silence" of photography in his lengthy theoretical essay in the photobook *Right of Inspection*, in Derrida and Plissard, "The Right of Inspection," *The Right of Inspection*, trans. David Wills (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1985), 2-4. A photograph's "silence," so Derrida, directly correlates with the reader's "pensive pause" needed to examine it, and the "unwillingness" of a photograph to convey a message.

emphasizes other visual elements like stage action or arrangements over spoken text.

Third, this silent scream sequence on stage corresponds to a series of stage photographs as found in the *Couragemodell*, making the gestures quotable and the story visible.⁴⁹⁰ The *Kriegsfibel* photogram and production photograph of the screaming mother encourage us to extend the scream through prolonged scrutiny. Haunting images like these photographs represent a series of internal articulations that are then externalized by the actor and the Singapore mother, affirming the argument for good reason that the epic theater is photogenic.

Among the many connections between the three projects discussed in this section, the work journals and the *Kriegsfibel* photograms offer the most overt stylistic affinities and photographic intersections. Reinhold Grimm, echoing Ruth Berlau's assessment, acknowledges these links, pointing out the *Kriegsfibel*'s "Journal-Charakter."⁴⁹¹ Berlau, in her assessment of the *Kriegsfibel*, writes: "Brecht nennt diese *Kriegsfibel* 'eine Art Journal' und seine Vierzeiler 'Kommentare zu Fotos.' [...] Brecht spricht nicht nur in der *Theaterarbeit* über Gestus, sondern er kennt auch den Gestus eines Gedichts."⁴⁹² She

⁴⁹⁰ See Berlau, "Modelle des Berliner Ensembles," BFA 25: 536 f. This essay is discussed at length in chapter three on the *Modellbücher* of the Berliner Ensemble. See also Rebecca Schneider's chapter "Still Living" which examines the interrelationship between photography and theater, in *Performing Remains*, 138-68. Although Schneider's discussion centers on the "death" discourse of photography, the argument is relevant here: theater is a "live form of the still" photograph.

⁴⁹¹ Grimm, "Marxistische Emblematik," 517.

⁴⁹² Berlau, BFA 12: 417.

seeks to piece together Brecht's photo complex by drawing the reader's attention to Brecht's other work with photographs, mentioning the *Arbeitsjournale* (implicitly) and the visual documentation of the production models at the Berliner Ensemble (explicitly). Berlau provides a peek "behind the scenes" of the *Kriegsfibel*, into how and why Brecht constructed his photograms:

Oft sah ich ihn [Brecht] mit Schere und Klebstoff in der Hand. Was wir hier sehen, ist das Resultat aus des Dichters "Schneiderei": Bilder vom Kriege. Auf die dicken Eichenbalken seines Arbeitsraumes hatte er sich einen Spruch geklebt: DIE WAHRHEIT IST KONKRET. Das, glaube ich, ist der Grund, warum er Bilder ausschneid: ein Dokument kann man schwerer ableugnen.⁴⁹³

Of course, the reader must also take her statements with a grain of salt. No image, including the ones we see in the *Kriegsfibel* photographs, can reproduce the truth. This must come from the readers' own ability to work through and question what they see. The *Kriegsfibel* photograms do not show any "concrete" truth that might be "hidden" in the photograph. Rather, the "concreteness" articulated in Brecht's motto in his Danish work room—and likely his guiding principle in assembling the photograms—has more to do with practicing a way in which the readers systematically approach these images and the historically rooted perspective from which they interpret them. The combination of photograph and epigram should be seen as developing parts of an apparatus, as

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 416. See also Brecht's journal entries documenting the *Kriegsfibel* process, for example, BFA 27: 196.

instruments in a toolbox to practice reading and writing against commonplace assumptions about World War II, or at the very least to present an opposing perspective.

Two prevalent themes that run through both projects will help to illustrate the connections between the *Kriegsfibel* and *Arbeitsjournale*. The first represents the theatricality of war and war as theater (“Schauplatz”). In numerous photograms and journal entries Brecht had chronicled World War II from multiple angles: its perpetrators, its destruction, its victims, and its underlying symptoms. During the first years of exile between 1935 and 1938, Brecht had worked on the episodes that would later become *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches*. The play’s opening later included a *Vorspiel* with the song called “Die deutsche Heerschau,” which iterates the notion of war as spectacle:

Dort kommen sie runter: / Ein bleicher, kunterbunter / Haufen. Und hoch
 voran / Ein Kreuz auf blutroten Flaggen / Das hat einen großen Haken /
 für den armen Mann. / Und die, die nicht marschieren / Kriechen auf allen
 vieren / in seinen großen Krieg. / Man hört nicht Stöhnen noch Klagen /
 Man hört nicht Murren noch Fragen / Vor lauter Militärmusik. / Sie
 kommen mit Weibern und Kindern / Entronnen aus fünf Wintern / Sie
 sehen nicht fünfe mehr. / Sie schleppen die Kranken und Alten / Und
 lassen uns Heerschau halten / Über sein ganzes Heer.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁴ Brecht, “Die deutsche Heerschau” (1938), from *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches*, BFA 14: 395-401. Compare this to *Kriegsfibel* photogram 36 (BFA 12: 201) where Brecht seems to show the reader the outcome of standing by and watching as the invading army passes. In this particular case, it is a German soldier trying to escape the American bombing of occupied Libya.

Here, the song introduces the twenty-four scenes of everyday life during the Third Reich as a spectacular procession of scenes. To enforce the text's imagery—an army rolling past with swastikas in front of bystanders—during the song, the audience hears the roar of army trucks and tanks, as if they were passing them by. Brecht composed the song in 1938, one year before Nazi troops invaded Poland (September 1939), thus putting World War II into motion. This coincides with the collection of other images for the *Kriegsfibel* project and with the inclusion of the first photographs in the *Arbeitsjournale* (August 1938).⁴⁹⁵ The “Kriegstheater” imagery also surfaces in *Kriegsfibel* photogram 5, the invasion of Poland.⁴⁹⁶

Photogram 5 shows a curving line of German soldiers in cars and tanks advancing in an orderly column. This photograph makes visible the soldiers' mannerisms as they ride in their trucks. The four at the bottom of the image display grins as they take various

⁴⁹⁵ The frontal portrait of Brecht, wearing his eyeglasses and looking off-camera, is positioned in the Danish *Arbeitsjournale* between entries for 16 and 18 August 1938. See *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 320-33. See also chapter four of this study.

⁴⁹⁶ Although Brecht used this photograph for the “Einfall in Polen,” the press photograph actually stems from a Swedish periodical (June 1940) and shows the German Army's march into Paris, not Poland. Strangely conspicuous in the center of the photograph is the Polish eagle, carried in the moving vehicle. One can only speculate why this eagle was with the German troops at the time of the campaign in France, but it was likely an impetus for use as the photogram of the Polish invasion. The photogram also serves as a fitting example for how an image can be re-functioned when taken out of its original context (the Western Front) and applied in a different setting (the Polish invasion).

positions in the vehicle, from clutching weapons or reading maps to driving. The photo is also visually striking as it accentuates the advanced war technologies that removed the degree of intimacy between the actor-perpetrators actually fighting each other, i.e., the weapons, machinery, and large scale of war production, etc. The mannerisms and the technology on display combine to offer a macabre performance. For Brecht, the reader should be shocked at what it takes to put on such a performance of might and aggression. One should also ask what is missing or cropped from the image. The photograph is cropped on all four sides and appears vertically on the right half of the page next to a completely blacked-out left half. In this case what was available to the camera eye at the moment during this procession is not entirely visible. This stark separation of the page reveals the war's Janus-faced nature and the photograph's ambiguous nature. However, the production of war is not black and white. Because of its cropping the wider scope of this long procession is missing; there is no beginning or end point to this line of soldiers, prompting us to ask how long this will continue. This, along with other photograms, demonstrates how the *Kriegsfibel* offers prime examples for the theatricality of fascism:

Die Nähe zur Theatralik des Faschismus ist angezeigt: Hier sind es die Menschen des Krieges, die an der großen, inszenierten "Welt-Komödie" teilnehmen, in der das Menschenschlachten und die Vernichtung Paraden- und damit sozusagen Bühnencharakter enthalten. Die Ästhetisierung des

Politischen durch den Faschismus ergänzt [...] die lässige,
Siegessicherheit suggerierende Haltung.⁴⁹⁷

Here, the soldiers' march is a carefully staged "global comedy," where the procession bringing occupation and destruction is reduced to a line of clown cars at the circus. Whether Brecht would have shared this interpretation is not clear; however, he did find use for such images that showed how war could be engineered and theatrically arranged as a romp across the world stage, recorded by press photos such as photogram 5. The reader must understand that war is not organic, i.e., it does not just *happen*, it is planned ad absurdum.⁴⁹⁸ Waging war means purposefully manipulating and orchestrating an entire apparatus both seen and unseen (as in the photograph), alluding to Benjamin's assertion of the fascist "aestheticization of politics."⁴⁹⁹ The line of soldiers in the image forms a curved arch, which must have been visually appealing to Brecht's keen eye for spatial arrangements. This is also the arc of history rolling by in a procession of tanks.

Tying the "Kriegstheater" imagery to other works is easily done. *Kriegsfibel* photogram 5 visually recalls the opening scene in *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*, as Courage and her wagon roll onto the stage amid a song: "Ihr Hauptleut, eure Leut marschieren / Euch ohne Wurst nicht in den Tod. / Laßt die Courage sie erst kurieren /

⁴⁹⁷ Roland Jost, "Über die Frag-würdigkeit von Bildern. Brechts *Kriegsfibel* im gegenwärtigen Kontext," *Diskussion Deutsch* 22 (1991): 237.

⁴⁹⁸ See Brecht's poem "Der Krieg soll gut vorbereitet sein," from *Svendborger Gedichte*, BFA 12: 72. His lines satirize the Nazis' war apparatus not only as absurd, but also as never-ending.

⁴⁹⁹ Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit," 44.

Mit Wein von Leibs- und Geistesnot” (see Figure 13).⁵⁰⁰ Brecht’s work journals contain a number of references to this motorcade aesthetic in the fascist theater of war. These images provide evidence for the efficacy of marches and parades as displays of power. They also document the mechanization of war discussed above. Brecht was particularly interested in understanding this aspect as it applied to the Nazis’ efficiency and speed when winning battles in the first years of World War II. The text for photogram 5 reads:

Ihr Leute, wenn ihr einen sagen hört
 Er habe nun ein großes Reich zerstört
 In achtzehn Tagen, fragt, wo ich geblieben:
 Ich war dabei und lebte davon sieben.⁵⁰¹

This photogram visually and textually addresses the speed with which the German army was able to overtake Poland. Together, the image-text invites the reader to re-examine the Nazi’s self-proclaimed war strategy of “Blitzkrieg”—overwhelming and constant concentration of military force at all levels against the enemy—revealing the success and death contrasted in the logic (rationale, planning) and logistics (execution, staging) of “lightning war.” In a journal entry dated 8 June 1940, Brecht comments on this very aspect: “Das Tempo wird zu einer neuen Qualität der Kriegshandlungen. Der deutsche Blitzkrieg wirft alle Berechnungen über den Haufen, indem die vorhergesehenen Vorgänge eintreffen, daß ihre Folgen ganz unvorhergesehen sind. Und die Technik fügt

⁵⁰⁰ From Mother Courage’s opening song from Scene 1 of *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*. For the production photo from Scene 1 in *Mutter Courage*, see *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 247.

⁵⁰¹ Brecht, *Kriegsfibel* photogram 5, BFA 12: 139. See Figure 13.

dem Kriegstheater eine neue Dimension zu.”⁵⁰² He also describes the war using theatrical terminology: “Handlung,” “Vorgang,” and “Kriegstheater.” He problematizes its mechanization as a cause of its rapid pace. A press photograph with no accompanying textual entry from around the same date (found between entries from 3 and 6 June 1940) documents the surrender of Paris from 12-14 June.

Photogram 5 and the work journal photograph share further similarities (beyond the fact that both images originated from the same campaign in France). First, the Paris photo in the work journal frames the parade of German soldiers both visually and contextually via the Arc de Triomphe, one of the symbols of post-Napoleon France.⁵⁰³ The Germans saunter through the archway into the city with bikes in hand and smiles on their faces (again) as if this were a joyous occasion. People line the boulevard to watch the show; some can even be seen giving salutes to the passing “Heerschau.” Brecht would not have missed the irony in such an image, which juxtaposes the neoclassical monument of French military might against the invading German army. Here, the arch has been recast as a symbol of French defeat. The line of soldiers quotes the line in photogram 5 without the curve. The camera, positioned at an oblique angle, captures the

⁵⁰² Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 377. While emphasizing the Nazis’ speed, he thematizes it further to criticize underlying causes of the war as a cartel: “Die Militärs hätten sich in der City erkundigen sollen, wie man sich Aktienmehrheiten (‘Kontrolle’) zu Konzernen verschafft und überhaupt Geld im Gang hält und Monopole ergaunert!” See also the entry from 30 June 1940, BFA 26: 395-96.

⁵⁰³ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 376. See also, for example, BFA 27: 68. See Figure 13.

procession marching in a straight line. The reader's eye follows the seemingly unending line back through the arch to a vanishing point at the center of the image, revealing a multi-planed composition that, like representational painting, uses lines of depth to map three-dimensional space onto the two-dimensional picture plane. The endpoint is missing from these photographs. Both images reveal no beginning and no end to the line of troops.

Even though the French surrendered to Hitler in order to save their capitol from being reduced to rubble, the processions suggest that the true nature of the struggle for France had mostly to do with public relations. The image represents how the Nazis staged their own victory parades for all to see. For Brecht, marching soldiers or military and political leaders (Hitler, Mussolini, Rommel, Göring, Churchill, etc.) in action among their collaborators were essentially the stuff of good theater. In a journal entry from 8 October 1940, he writes: "Welche Ausbeute für das Theater bieten die Fotos der faschistischen illustrierten Wochenblätter! Diese Akteure verstehen die Kunst des epischen Theaters, Vorkommnissen banaler Art den historischen Anstrich zu geben."⁵⁰⁴ The fascist leaders and German soldiers represented in the mass media, so Brecht, knew their roles and were aware of their presence while acting those parts; they even knew how and where to position themselves vis-à-vis others, endowing such a "staging" with historical significance. Recognizing the theatricality of war plays a major role in how the reader situates many of the visual materials in the *Kriegsfibel* and work journals. War as

⁵⁰⁴ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 431-32. See also Figure 13. The adjoining photograph shows the "Freundschaftsbesuch" with German foreign minister von Ribbentrop and Mussolini.

theater was one of the various motifs that provided Brecht with a basis for his work. Fascist leaders like Hitler and Mussolini also exploited “Kriegstheater” for their own purposes. Perhaps that is why so much during World War II was recorded on film and photographed at Hitler’s behest. Not only did this constant archiving and preservation for the future cultivate Hitler’s visual self-fetishization, but also transformed the war into an experience mediated by the profusion of imagery that could be readily disseminated and manipulated.⁵⁰⁵ Such reasons prompted Brecht to collect and employ images like *Kriegsfibel* photogram 5 in order to read them against the grain.

Besides reading these works for their shared “Kriegstheater” imagery, another motif binds the *Kriegsfibel* photograms to the materials in the *Arbeitsjournale*. Aesthetics of social arrangement teaches how to look for ways in which groups and classes of people are assembled and visually represented. Brecht was keenly aware of basic arrangements (“Grundarrangements”) when his actors represented such human relations on stage, to which the details of the production photographs in the *Modellbücher* can

⁵⁰⁵ See Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, BFA 26: 380-89. One fitting example among many is found in an entry from 17 June 1940 (at France’s surrender). It contains a series of twenty photographs from a German newsreel service, showing Hitler “dancing a jig” for victory. The photo sequence works like a filmstrip or picture flipbook (kinetograph) with each photograph articulating each movement. The caption explains Hitler’s gesticulations to the reader, no doubt of interest to Brecht: “Keeping his heels together, he clenches his fists and jerks his arms stiffly up and down, grinning in tense, prim jubilation [...] thrusting out his jaw he lifts one foot in a Lindy Hop of victory [...] This is the face of triumph.” Next to Hitler is Heinrich Hoffmann, his personal photographer.

attest. The way in which actors and characters took different stances vis-à-vis one another contributed to the overall message of the play. Actors were themselves part of that message, not simply a vehicle for a character. To that end, Brecht collected images that showed the dynamics of social interaction and applied readings that situate them in their historical contexts. For the *Kriegsfibel* and *Arbeitsjournale* these images are positioned alongside personal commentary and poetic texts by Brecht that inspire critical thought. According to Ruth Berlau, Brecht's own position was that of one who waits, of someone looking in as the outside observer. His "Haltung" towards these collected images was an attempt to objectify what was visible, to view the human arrangements from the standpoint of history, and to suggest alternatives to the ways in which mass media images were conventionally read. "Haltung" then becomes an action when reading and interpreting the *Kriegsfibel* photograms, for they invite the reader to actively take part in the analysis, to engage with and question what is seen, i.e., to refunction history for today's use. "Haltung" is taking a stance or position, part of the work conveyed in the German phrase "Position beziehen."⁵⁰⁶ Having an opinion, for Brecht, was not enough; it was the *formation* of that opinion that was critically important, how one approaches and processes experience to reveal underlying causes toward social change.

As his ideas on Marxism developed during the late 1920s and early 1930s, Brecht became more interested in experimenting with processes and function as seen in his "Versuche," not simply the outcomes and effects. For example in a short note from 1928, Brecht wrote specifically about the photographic medium in regard to function and the

⁵⁰⁶ The German-language title of Didi-Hubermann's monograph *Wenn die Bilder*

Position beziehen bespeaks this process of interpretation through direct action.

process of experiment: “Weiterführung der Experimente im Hinblick auf Funktionen. Nicht nur, wie ist das Ding, sondern nunmehr auch, was macht das Ding? Das Verhalten der Dinge.”⁵⁰⁷ In his much-quoted 1931 essay “Der Dreigroschenprozess,” detailing his involvement in the lawsuit over copyright infringements surrounding the film adaptation of his play, Brecht not only criticizes the outcome of the judgment against him, but uses it as fodder to lambaste the German judicial system. He begins with a basic question that summarizes his entire argument: Which exists in German society, justice or the practice of law? He concludes from the result of the trial that the law trumps justice in the legal system (Brecht is all too keen to highlight this fact for it confirms his belief in the system’s breakdown).⁵⁰⁸ The salient lesson is not that corruption exists, but *how* social systems have become corrupt and what the function is of that corruption (“für wen?”). Brecht’s attempts to historically refunction art for the present are rooted in the fact that there is a need for such change, saying rather playfully that, if the world were funny, we would not need humor.⁵⁰⁹ Brecht’s own Herr Keuner echoes this mindset in his stance against the abundance of hunger in the world and the underlying socioeconomic processes that perpetuate it—war, greed, politics. The short prose text “Hungern” (written around 1930) is first and foremost a commentary on why people starve, not just the fact that hunger exists in the world: “Ich kann überall leben, wenn ich leben will, wo Hunger herrscht...Es wäre ja nicht wichtig, wenn ich Hunger hätte, aber es ist wichtig, daß ich

⁵⁰⁷ Brecht, [“Fotografie,”] BFA 21: 265.

⁵⁰⁸ Brecht, “Der Dreigroschenprozess. Ein soziologisches Experiment,” BFA 21: 448.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 483.

dagegen bin, daß Hunger herrscht.”⁵¹⁰ By the late 1930s, his ideas on process and function also included cognitive and/or visual/perceptual (*betrachten*, *beobachten*, *umfunktionieren*, etc.) components to the work of analysis and interpretation of history, particularly when dealing with the visual:

Die Künstler verschiedener Zeitalter sehen natürlich die Dinge sehr verschieden. Ihr Sehen hängt nicht nur von ihrer individuellen Eigenart ab, sondern auch von dem Wissen, das sie und ihre Zeit von den Dingen haben. Es ist ein Charakteristikum unserer Zeit, die Dinge in ihrer Entwicklung, als sich verändernde, von andern Dingen und allerhand Prozessen beeinflusste, veränderbare Dinge zu betrachten. Diese Betrachtungsart finden wir in unserer Wissenschaft ebenso wie in unserer Kunst. Die künstlerischen Abbildungen der Dinge drücken mehr oder weniger bewußt die neuen Erfahrungen aus, die wir mit den Dingen gemacht haben, unser zunehmendes Wissen um die Kompliziertheit, Veränderlichkeit und widerspruchsvolle Natur der Dinge um uns und— unserer selbst.⁵¹¹

Again, Brecht stresses that any reading must begin from the present standpoint to show how processes have developed and changed in order to alter social systems. Important to note in this quote is that the “Abbildungen der Dinge”—the artistic reproductions of

⁵¹⁰ Brecht, “Hungern,” *Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner*, BFA 18: 16-17.

⁵¹¹ Brecht, “Die Betrachtung der Kunst und die Kunst der Betrachtung. Reflexionen über die Porträtkunst in der Bildhauerei” (1939/40), BFA 22.1: 572-73.

human relations—express how we experience something, i.e., forming an idea or opinion and the process of change.

To take an informed position or stance, one must be able to practice the art of observation and analysis. One of the basic principles of art is to model how to “look,” a certain “Betrachtungsweise.” Within the theater context Brecht argued that, by effectively executing their craft, artists also teach the skill of how to observe things, behaviors, speech, etc. In his speech to Danish worker-actors from the *Messingkauf* poems, Brecht asserts that this self-aware behavior is an integral part of the dialogue between art and the public:

Wie / Dieses Zusammenleben der Menschen abbilden, so / Daß es
 verstanden werden kann und beherrschbar wird? Wie / Nicht nur sich
 selbst zeigen und andre nicht nur / Wie sie sich aufführen, wenn sie / Ins
 Netz gefallen sind? Wie / Zeigen jetzt, wie das Netz des Schicksals
 gestrickt und geworfen wird? / Und von Menschen gestrickt und
 geworfen? Das erste / Was ihr zu lernen habt, ist die *Kunst der*
*Beobachtung.*⁵¹²

This “art of observation” examines from multiple standpoints and perspectives.⁵¹³ In his speech Brecht addresses the Danish workers as potential actors, but also as an audience who will visit theater houses to see performances. From this stance, the reader can

⁵¹² Brecht, “Rede an dänische Arbeiterschaulspieler über die Kunst der Beobachtung” (1935), *Gedichte aus dem Messingkauf*, BFA 12: 324.

⁵¹³ See Wöhrle, *Bertolt Brechts medienästhetische Versuche*, 190-99. Wöhrle refers to this as “Kunst der Betrachtung.”

determine social and economic categories via spatial position in the visual arts, as represented, for example, in painting, theater, or photographs. The “Zusammenleben der Menschen” is predicated on the different positions/stances human beings assume towards one another. For Brecht’s actors, it was not enough to show their actions; they must also show the process of how this happened and their situation as a result of others’ actions (how the net of fate was woven and thrown by humans). Learning is a dialectical process—by observing something else or how another acts opposite others, we also gain insight into our own identity and actions. The fundamental skill is to read spatial arrangements or cues as a symptom of history and then ask how and why—what are the underlying processes that have led to this point and who benefits?

Exercising multiplicity of perspective when observing situations is significant within the context of the *Kriegsfibel*. Photogram 50 is a prime example of how Brecht’s work concentrated on the composition of people as a visual strategy. The photograph stems from an unknown American news source that claimed the American Military Government had brought daily life back to normal after the fall of Benito Mussolini and restoration of Italian king, Victor Emmanuel III. A large crowd of Italians surrounds one American officer who doles out flour to the waiting mob. The civilians look hungry and press the soldier into the doorway of a food storage facility where other sacks of flour can be seen. The photograph offers a birds-eye view of the situation; the camera is not part of the action but rather observes high up from a distance looking down on the group. The only person aware of the photo shoot is a woman at the bottom left of the photograph. Her earnest face stares directly into the camera and is adjacent to the caption, which

reads: “Restoring the normal flow of life—AMG officers sell American flour to Italian civilians.”

The critical reader must question the “normalcy” of such an image during wartime and the processes leading to that point. Images like this were not unique as many civilian populations went hungry because food rations dwindled and most resources were spent on the war effort across Europe and Asia. But nothing is “normal” about having to beg for food, or even worse to buy it from one’s occupier. Photogram 50 shows the United States as an occupying force offering to help, but what does its “offer” really entail? Is it made in good faith out of humanitarian concern or is it another instance of the victors dictating terms of defeat? Brecht’s epigram situates this photograph in its historical context by commenting on the current situation (see Figure 14):

Wir bringen Mehl und einen König, nehmt!
 Doch wer das Mehl nimmt, muß den König nehmen.
 Wer sich zum Stiefellecken nicht bequemt
 Der mag zum Weiterhungern sich bequemem.⁵¹⁴

These lines recast this offer from the Americans as a gesture that profits from the Italians’ need in desperate times, with the funds most likely going towards perpetuating the war effort. Ironically, many Italians may have agreed with such a transaction to aid the American military’s fight against fascism. Most would also welcome the food. But the epigram warns against precipitous allegiances, overturning one regime for another, that would perpetuate the exploitation. The sacks of flour merely obfuscate the American military’s aggressive imposition of its will. Along with the promise of food, the United

⁵¹⁴ Brecht, *Kriegsfibel* photogram 50, BFA 12: 229.

States imposed conditions on Italy's surrender, that King Victor Emmanuel III—who initially supported the fascist regime before his departure—had to be reinstated.

Photogram 50 presents yet another perspective on war's literal and figurative costs for civilian populations. These Italians are forced to pay for their survival.

Beyond finding the contradictions in this photograph—that the masses are susceptible to influence and can shift their affinities when it suits their needs—Brecht may have been intrigued with its compositional characteristics. The image stages the power dynamics of the group vs. the individual. Here, the officer is the sole representative of the occupying power of the American military. He is at the center of action and holds the needs of the others in his hands. He also controls the supply. The caption does not specify how much the Italians must pay to receive their food, but when times are dire, prices are never low.⁵¹⁵ The mass crowding around the soldier consists of hungry civilians forced to comply with any terms imposed in order to receive their food. The only one within the group who realizes the implications of the situation unfolding in front of her is the woman who stares up directly into the camera. Lines 3 and 4 in the epigram reply to her wary gaze: if she does not endorse this scene, she may leave and go hungry. Perhaps she understands that, even though her compatriots and she are in the majority, they are in effect powerless because they do not hold the means to provide for themselves. There is no strength in numbers once that majority is dependent and their hunger is used as leverage, as in the text “Hungern” quoted above (from *Die Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner*). Another visual constellation illustrates the Italians' awareness of

⁵¹⁵ See Brecht/Eisler, “Song von Angebot und Nachfrage” from the learning play *Die Maßnahme* (1930). In BFA 14: 61-62.

their own subjugation. A woman holding a basket has positioned herself behind the American soldier's back so that she is unseen. She stares, head down, at the supply of flour sacks being guarded by the soldier. Despite her close proximity to these sources of food, she waits her turn to pay for her ration. The photograph shows how one submits to authority and how one conforms to the situation in a group mentality. Lines 1 and 2 challenge the readers to reexamine their own stance against that of these two women in the photograph. The reader has time to reconsider such offers of good will, whereas the Italians huddled around the soldier cannot. The imperative "nehmt!" is also a provocation and asks the hypothetical *why not?*: why don't you reject this arrangement, why don't you take what you need, who has the right to control your hunger? Line 3 plants the seed of doubt after these questions: which is better, subject to others or going hungry? Ultimately, the reader can surmise from the visible elements in this photograph what Brecht already summarized in his early critiques of the capitalist system: "Erst kommt das Fressen, dann die Moral."⁵¹⁶ We realize that even the fight against fascism cannot bring justice as one regime passes to another, and with the case of the people represented in this photogram, the act of begging for one's existence has become an everyday ritual, staged in countless mass media images.

As discussed above, looking for spatial arrangements with visual significance was part of Brecht's motivation for collecting and employing such images. Other photograms

⁵¹⁶ From Brecht's song, "Wovon lebt der Mensch?" from *Die Dreigroschenoper*, BFA 2: 229-32.

in the *Kriegsfibel* collection thematize social arrangements.⁵¹⁷ Additional examples can be found in the work journals, for example, in Brecht's entries detailing Chinese narrative painting and the works of Pieter Breugel and Hans Tombrock.⁵¹⁸ Among these the multiplicity of perspectives was the aspect that caught Brecht's eye, and especially the use of *Verfremdung*. For example, Brecht remarks how Breugel's subject in *Tolle Grete* is not just a peasant but also a "Tragetier" running through the stations of the painting, showing the fury of war.⁵¹⁹ Brecht was partial to his friend Tombrock's work, and the comments on the painting "Die Witwen von Osseg vor dem Prager Magistrat" tie together Brecht's interest in spatial connections with social significance and the visual materials for the *Kriegsfibel* photograms. During preparations while in Finland for his play *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*, Brecht received photographic reproductions of a painting by Tombrock (at Brecht's request) that could model what he called "soziale Gruppierung," or social arrangements: "Tombrock schickt mir die Fotos eines ersten Ölgemäldes (ich habe ihn auf Ölmalen gehetzt) [...] Er hat enorme Fortschritte gemacht, weg vom Romantischen und Verplumpten. Und er hat überraschend das Prinzip von der sozialen Gruppierung als bildkompositorischer Kategorie begriffen" (see Figure 14).⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁷ See, for example, *Kriegsfibel* photograms 4 (BFA 12: 137), 49 (12: 227), 66 (12: 261), or even 12: 273.

⁵¹⁸ See also Brecht's essay "Über die Malerei der Chinesen," BFA 22.1: 133-34.

⁵¹⁹ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, entry dated 15 June 1944, BFA 27: 191-92.

⁵²⁰ Brecht, *Arbeitsjournale*, entry dated 7 February 1940, BFA 26: 397-98. See also the entry from 25 September 1940 (BFA 26: 429) where Brecht writes critically of Tombrock's portrayal of the Galileo character.

The social arrangements in both the Tombrock painting and the *Kriegsfibel* photogram stage the dynamics of human relations. To the right a group of peasant women, marked by clothing and headdress, stand together and petition officials for assistance. At the left sits an all-male tribunal of authority. In the center of the image a peasant woman with outstretched arms directly faces a seated official at a table. This painting, more so than the photogram, shows definite compositional lines that form visual barriers and spatial spheres, to the left those with power, to the right those without. The woman in the center standing before the table is one who crosses the threshold and creates a third sphere, the intersection of these social groups. The dividing lines are stark and reveal two distinct visual dynamics. First, one group is juxtaposed against another, the peasants opposite the group of magistrates (in the scene elevated to represent the power structure). Both groups are held in position by the dividing spheres, either the half-circle or the line of women. There is another dynamic that comes into play in the third sphere at the center of the image. Here the two figures narrate the action as the pregnant woman asks for help from the official seated in front of her. This is the dynamic of the individual as a representative of the social group. The woman has both stepped out of her group and also “stands before” it (in the dual sense of “steht für” and “steht vor”); the seated man represents his group. Each pair of hands also carries meaning in this setting, as they show the significance of each group’s actions. The woman’s hands and her outstretched arms show the *Gestus* of poverty and abasement. Her hands, representing the collective need, non-verbally perform the request. The seated magistrate’s hands also play a role in the non-verbal, ritual-like exchange with the woman asking for help. In contrast, his hands are notably closed, a denial of recourse to the peasants. Each

magistrate has individual hand gestures and can be viewed as an individual within a larger social group; the woman's hands are the only distinct hands amongst the entire group of peasants. Her hands speak for the rest of her social group (see Figure 14).⁵²¹

Can the reader apply the imperative “nehmt!” from the first line in *Kriegsfibel* photogram 50 to this painting? First, the proximity of the compositional spheres in these images is different; Tombrock's painting contains clear dividing lines between the social groups, whereas the press photograph of the Italian civilians buying flour shows closer contact between the groups as well as the opportunity to actually take what they need. Both situations depicted would require one group to overpower the other. This scenario is improbable in the painting, as the peasants are frail (some are old, or even pregnant); the Italians, by contrast, are young and outnumber the American soldier selling flour. And, as the photograph documents, many people in this group realize the effects of their situation (e.g., one stares directly into the camera, one woman stares at the supply in front of her, one man stands impatiently with his hand on his hip, others push the crowd toward the soldier to move closer to the food source). The visual negative in the painting is that the women must beg. However, unlike the Italian civilians who do not control the access to their supply, the Osseg widows exhibit strength in their collective solidarity before the magistrates. The line of women leads the eye directly through an external threshold in the painting to the land and fields outside. This is the source of the peasants' power. The question remains as to whether the peasants can present a united front and use it

⁵²¹ Mother Courage's hands also play a role in the contrariness of her character as the production photos in the *Couragemodell* show. See Brecht, “Widersprüchlichkeit der Figur,” *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 302-03.

advantageously. One visual clue is the stance and physical presence of the pregnant woman at the center who represents her group. The peasants are orderly and collected, and even though they must beg, they are not on their knees but rather stand upright. In contrast to the Osseg women, the photograph in the *Kriegsfibel* seems quite chaotic and urgent (candid). These two images exemplify Brecht's interest in such arrangements that show "soziale Gruppierung" in disparate ways, depending on how and where the reader looks.

Brecht's message of learning how to read images in a world where deception is commonplace still resonates today. The *Kriegsfibel* photographs can attest to the distinction between "truth"—real and "concrete"—and between "belief" systems. For Brecht, the truth was concrete and historical; belief was subjective. In his view, beliefs were easier to cultivate and did not require critical thought, whereas "Wahrheit" was more difficult to locate. The task, therefore, was to learn to look past empty rhetoric and have the courage to take action. The poem "Die Wahrheit einigt" communicates this to Brecht's readers:

Freunde, ich wünschte, ihr wüßtet die Wahrheit und sagtet sie!

Nicht wie fliehende müde Cäsaren: "Morgen kommt Mehl!"

So wie Lenin: Morgen abend

Sind wir verloren, wenn nicht...

So wie es im Liedlein heißt:

"Brüder, mit dieser Frage

Will ich gleich beginnen:
 Hier aus unserer schweren Lage
 Gibt es kein Entrinnen.”
 Freunde, ein kräftiges Eingeständnis
 Und ein kräftiges WENN NICHT!⁵²²

Truth is concrete, but also contains the element of the hypothetical, the changeable, and the imperative to participate in wielding it. The words echo Ruth Berlau’s statement in the forward to the *Kriegsfibel*: “Nicht der entrinnt der Vergangenheit, der sie vergißt.”⁵²³ One can neither escape nor must one forget what has happened or what the future will bring.

Brecht had tentative plans to follow the *Kriegsfibel* with another collection of photograms called the *Friedensfibel*. This project was never realized.⁵²⁴ Yet one photogram exists, found on the back cover jacket to the *Kriegsfibel*. The photograph shows rows of young university students attending a lecture, staring intently at an external point outside the image frame. Brecht implores these students (and the readers)

⁵²² Brecht, “Die Wahrheit einigt,” from *Buckower Elegien*, BFA 12: 315.

⁵²³ Berlau, *Kriegsfibel*, BFA 12: 129.

⁵²⁴ The tradition lives on in a free adaptation of Brecht’s *Kriegsfibel*. See Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, *War Primer 2* (London: MACK Publishing, 2011). Online version: <<http://mappedititions.com/publications/war-primer-2>> (link active as of June 2013). This volume features contemporary war photographs (Afghanistan, Iraq) superimposed onto the original mass media photographs.

to pay attention to history, actively pursue the truth in the present, and never stop learning for future benefit:

Vergeßt nicht: mancher euresgleichen stritt

Daß ihr hier sitzen könnt und nicht mehr sie.

Und nun vergrabt euch nicht und kämpfet mit

und lernt das Lernen und verlernt es nie!

Figures

Figure 1: The *Model Books* of the Berliner Ensemble

Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv, Berlin Germany

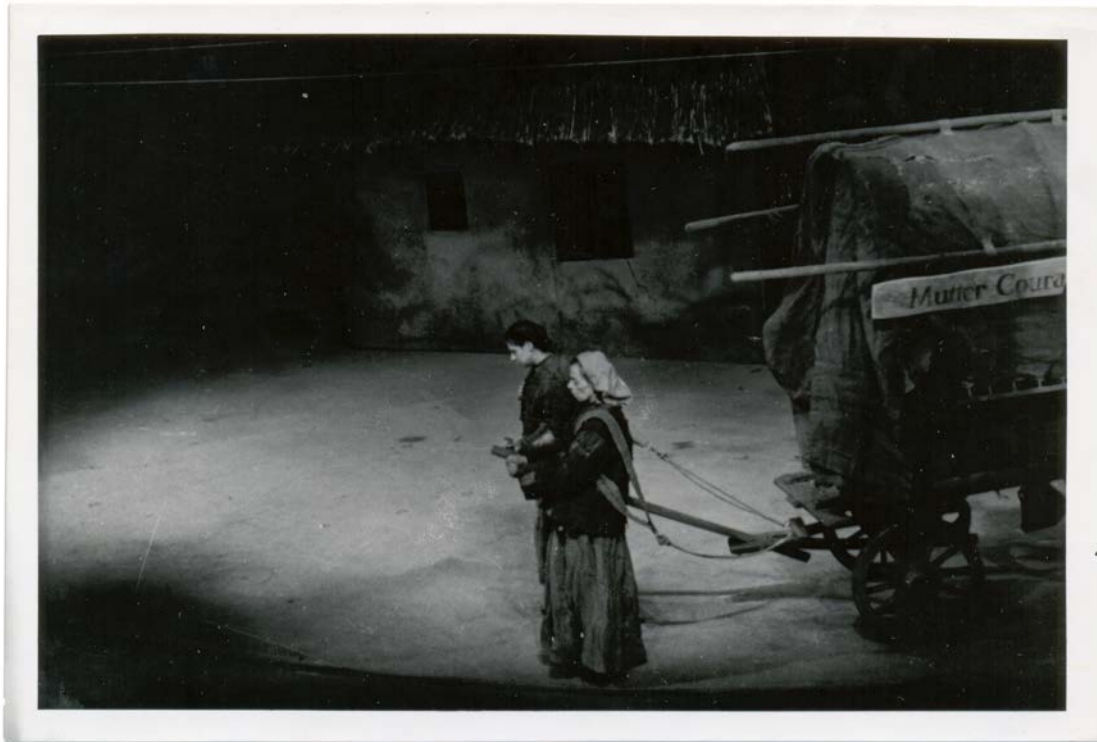
1. *Biberpelz und roter Hahn*: 4 volumes (vol. 2 double) [*The Beaver Coat and the Red Cock*]
2. *Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar*: 2 folders [*Señora Carrar's Rifles*]
3. *Die Tage der Commune*: 1 volume [*The Days of the Commune*]
4. *Coriolanus*: 1 volume [*Coriolan*]
5. *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*: 1 “mini” model book folder, with photographic negatives and reproductions; 5 volumes [*Mother Courage and her Children*]
6. *Don Juan*: 2 volumes; 1 folder, with loose pages and leaves
7. *Dreigroschenoper*: 1 volume [*Threepenny Opera*]
8. *Frau Flinz*: 1 volume [*Mrs. Flinz*]
9. *Furcht und Elend des dritten Reiches*: 1 volume [*Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*]
10. *Das Leben des Galilei*: 1 volume [*The Life of Galileo*]
11. *Galileo*: 2 volumes; 1 folder with loose pages and leaves
12. *Das Glockenspiel des Kreml*: 1 volume [*The Chimes of the Kremlin*]
13. *Hirse für die Achte*: 1 volume [*Millet for the Eighth*]
14. *Der Hofmeister*: 7 volumes [*The Tutor*]
15. *Der Prozess der Jeanne d'Arc zu Rouen*: 1 photo album [*The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc at Rouen, 1431*]
16. *Katzgraben*: 1 volume
17. *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*: 1 volume; 1 folder; 1 photo album [*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*]

18. *Der zerbrochene Krug*: 1 photo album; 3 volumes [*The Broken Jug*]
19. *Das kleine Mahagonny*: 1 volume [*Mahagonny-Songspiel*]
20. *Mann ist Mann*: 3 volumes; 1 folder [*Man Equals Man*]
21. *Die Mutter*: 2 folders; 3 volumes; 1 photo album; 1 draft/template [*The Mother*]
22. *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*: 8 volumes; 1 photo album; 2 folders [*Puntila and his Man Matti*]
23. *Schweyk im zweiten Weltkrieg*: 2 volumes [*Schweyk in the Second World War*]
24. *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*: 2 volumes [*The Good Person from Szechwan*]
25. *Urfaust*: 1 volume; 1 photo album [original *Faust*]
26. *Wassa Schelesnowa*: 1 volume
27. *Die Ziehtochter*: 1 volume [*Jenufa; The Stepdaughter*]

Figure 2: Model book manuscripts of the Berliner Ensemble with “E” classification call numbers at the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv. These manuscripts have handwritten notes by Brecht, found in his literary estate.

<u>Play</u>	<u>BBA call number/ pages</u>
1. <i>Der kaukasische Kreidekreis</i>	E 49/1-55
2. <i>Der kaukasische Kreidekreis</i>	E 50/1-25
3. <i>Die Mutter</i>	E 51/1-30
4. <i>Der Prozess der Jeanne d’Arc zu Rouen</i>	E 52/1-110
5. <i>Urfaust</i>	E 53/1-33
6. <i>Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder</i>	E 54/1-79
7. <i>Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder</i>	E 55/1-217
8. <i>Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder</i>	E 56/1-82
9. <i>Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder</i>	E 57/1-41
10. <i>Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder</i>	E 58/1-337
11. <i>Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder</i>	E 59/1-220
12. <i>Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder</i>	E 60/1-204
13. <i>Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti</i>	E 70/1-6

Figure 3. Mother Courage and Kattrin pause during Scene 10 of *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*. Production photograph 85. In *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 290. BBA FA 48-188. © unknown (likely Hainer Hill).

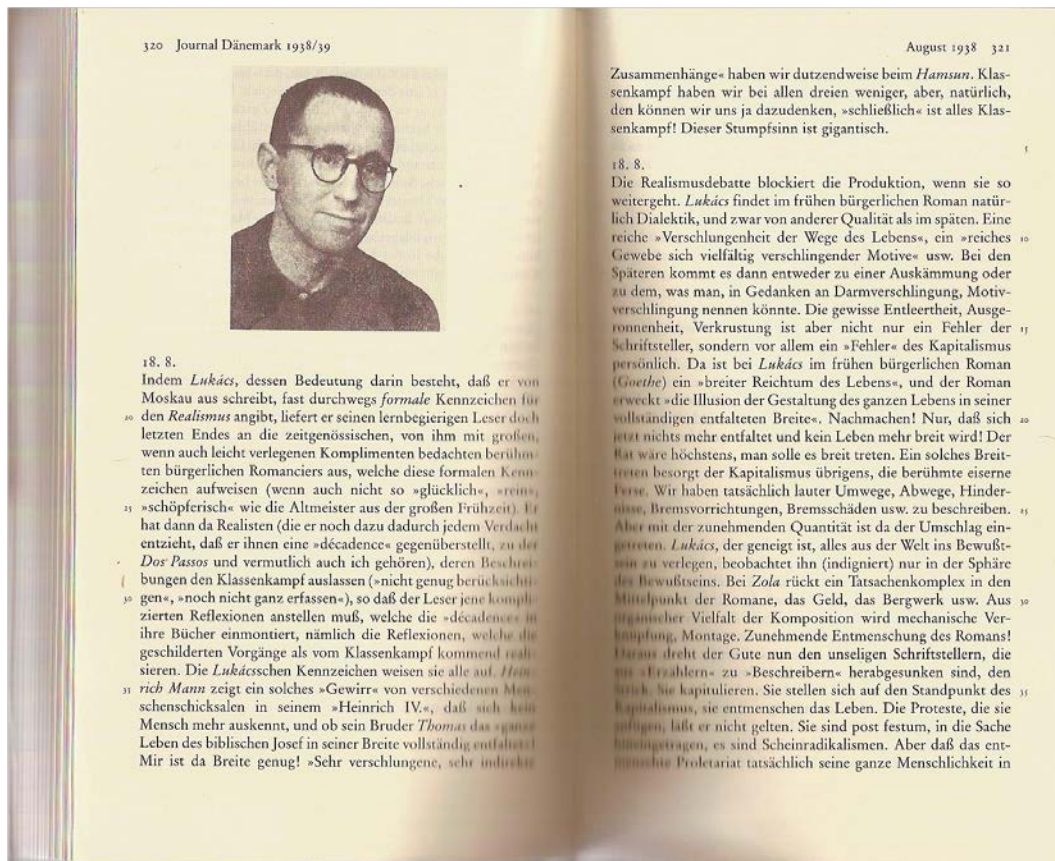


Ruth Berlau, along with the photographic production team of Hainer Hill and Ruth Wilhelmi, shot the photographs from this production in the *Couragemodell*.

Figure 4. Below is a listing of the materials pertaining to the *Arbeitsjournale* housed at the BBA. Each is listed by journal grouping and its corresponding call number (BBA-Signatur). Originals appear as typed manuscripts by Brecht with attached images and headings appearing in red.

Journal [folder number]	BFA vol: pages	BBA-Signatur / pages
Denmark (20.7.1938–15.3.1939)	26: 311-333	BBA 275 / 1-16
Sweden (23.4.1939–10.2.1940)	26: 337-363	BBA 276 / 1-20
Finland (17.4.1940–13.5.1941)	26: 371-486	BBA 277 / 1-80
America [1] (21.7.1941–31.12.1941)	27: 8-41	BBA 278 / 1-27
America [2] (6.1.1942–30.3.1942)	27: 45-76	BBA 279 / 1-24
America [3] (3.4.1942–20.11.1942)	27: 79-136	BBA 280 / 1-36
America [4] (17.11.1942–15.6.1944)	27:139-192	BBA 281 / 1-33
America [5] (20.6.1944–5.11.1947)	27: 194-251	BBA 282 / 1-40
Switzerland (16.12.1947–20.10.1948)	27: 255-275	BBA 283 / 1-14 BBA 2072 / 1-33
Berlin [1] (22.10.1948–20.2.1949)	27: 279-300	BBA 284 / 1-33 18-33 not included in BFA
Berlin [2] (7.5.1949–22.8. 1951)	27: 303-325	BBA 2072 / 1-33
Berlin [3] (5.1.1952–28.12.1952)	27: 329-341	BBA 2072 / 1-33
Berlin [4] (12.1.1953–18.7.1955)	27: 345-350	BBA 2072 / 1-33

Figure 5. First photograph of Brecht included in the *Arbeitsjournale* (Denmark 1938). Origin unknown, press photograph (likely). BFA 26: 320. BBA 275 / 9-10. © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag.



320 Journal Dänemark 1938/39



18. 8.

Indem *Lukács*, dessen Bedeutung darin besteht, daß er von Moskau aus schreibt, fast durchwegs *formale* Kennzeichen für den *Realismus* angibt, liefert er seinen lernbegierigen Leser doch letzten Endes an die zeitgenössischen, von ihm mit großen, wenn auch leicht verlegenen Komplimenten bedachten berühmten bürgerlichen Romanciers aus, welche diese formalen Kennzeichen aufweisen (wenn auch nicht so »glücklich«, »reins«, »schöpferisch« wie die Altmeister aus der großen Frühzeit). Er hat dann da Realisten (die er noch dazu dadurch jedem Verdacht entzieht, daß er ihnen eine »décadence« gegenüberstellt, zu der *Dos Passos* und vermutlich auch ich gehören), deren Beschreibungen den Klassenkampf auslassen (»nicht genug berücksichtigen«, »noch nicht ganz erfassen«), so daß der Leser jene komplizierten Reflexionen anstellen muß, welche die »décadence« in ihre Bücher einmontiert, nämlich die Reflexionen, welche die geschilderten Vorgänge als vom Klassenkampf kommend realisieren. Die *Lukács*schen Kennzeichen weisen sie alle auf *Heinrich Mann* zeigt ein solches »Gewirr« von verschiedenen Menschenschicksalen in seinem »Heinrich IV.«, daß sich kein Mensch mehr auskennt, und ob sein Bruder *Thomas* das »ganze Leben des biblischen Josef in seiner Breite vollständig entfaltet! Mir ist da Breite genug! »Sehr verschlungene, sehr indirekte

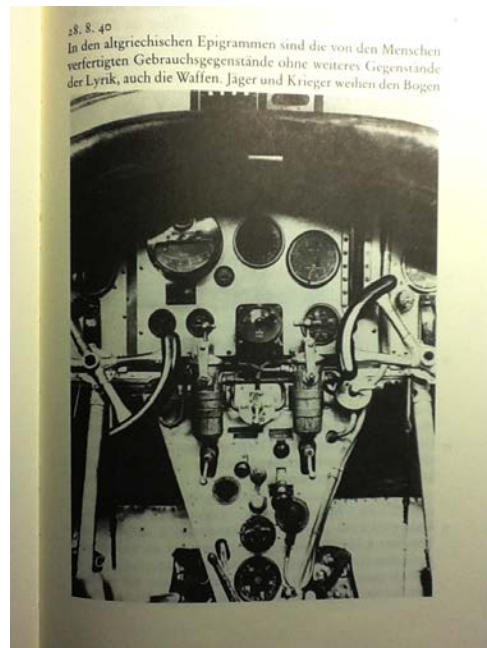
August 1938 321

Zusammenhänge« haben wir dutzendweise beim *Hamsun*. Klassenkampf haben wir bei allen dreien weniger, aber, natürlich, den können wir uns ja dazudenken, »schließlich« ist alles Klassenkampf! Dieser Stumpfsinn ist gigantisch.

18. 8.

Die Realismusdebatte blockiert die Produktion, wenn sie so weitergeht. *Lukács* findet im frühen bürgerlichen Roman natürlich Dialektik, und zwar von anderer Qualität als im späten. Eine reiche »Verschlungeneheit der Wege des Lebens«, ein »reiches Gewebe sich vielfältig verschlingender Motive« usw. Bei den Späteren kommt es dann entweder zu einer Auskämmung oder zu dem, was man, in Gedanken an Darmverschlingung, Motivverschlingung nennen könnte. Die gewisse Entleertheit, Ausgeronnenheit, Verkrustung ist aber nicht nur ein Fehler der Schriftsteller, sondern vor allem ein »Fehler« des Kapitalismus persönlich. Da ist bei *Lukács* im frühen bürgerlichen Roman (*Goethe*) ein »breiter Reichtum des Lebens«, und der Roman erweckt »die Illusion der Gestaltung des ganzen Lebens in seiner vollständigen entfaltenen Breite«. Nachmachen! Nur, daß sich jetzt nichts mehr entfaltet und kein Leben mehr breit wird! Der Hat wäre höchstens, man solle es breit treten. Ein solches Breitreten besorgt der Kapitalismus übrigens, die berühmte eiserne Fresse. Wir haben tatsächlich lauter Umwege, Abwege, Hindernisse, Bremsvorrichtungen, Bremschäden usw. zu beschreiben. Aber mit der zunehmenden Quantität ist da der Umschlag eingetreten. *Lukács*, der geneigt ist, alles aus der Welt ins Bewußtsein zu verlegen, beobachtet ihn (indigniert) nur in der Sphäre des Bewußtseins. Bei *Zola* rückt ein Tatsachenkomplex in den Mittelpunkt der Romane, das Geld, das Bergwerk usw. Aus organischer Vielfalt der Komposition wird mechanische Verknüpfung, Montage. Zunehmende Entmenschung des Romans! Daraus dreht der Gute nun den unseligen Schriftsteller, die die »Erzählern« zu »Beschreibern« herabgesunken sind, den Strich. Sie kapitulieren. Sie stellen sich auf den Standpunkt des Kapitalismus, sie entmenschten das Leben. Die Proteste, die sie aufbringen, läßt er nicht gelten. Sie sind post festum, in die Sache hineingewagen, es sind Scheinradikalismen. Aber daß das entmenschte Proletariat tatsächlich seine ganze Menschlichkeit in

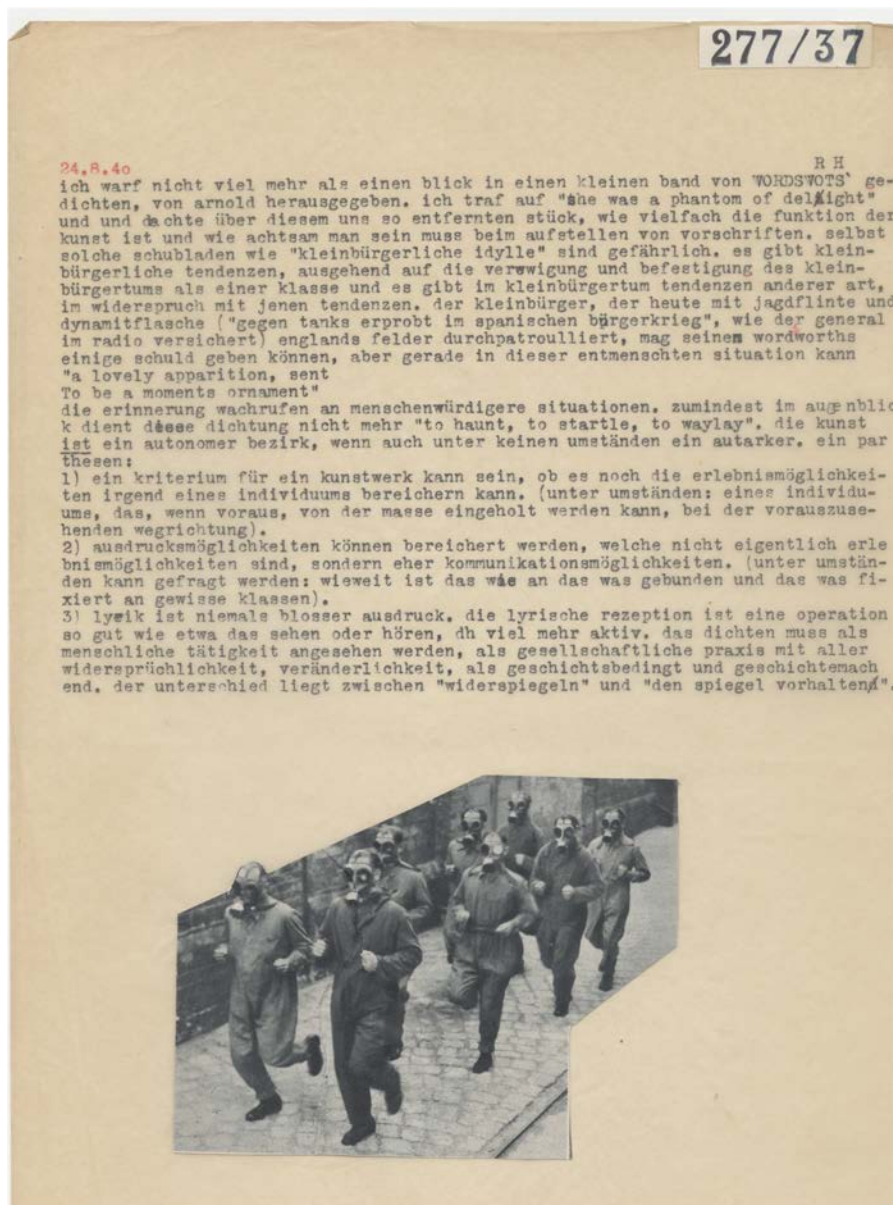
Figure 6. Three photograph-text entries found in the *Arbeitsjournale* (Finland 1940), BFA 26: 419-21. All © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag.



Swedish press photograph of German bomber, origin unknown. BFA 26: 419. BBA 277 / 39.



Press photograph from *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 34 (1940). BFA 26: 421. BBA 277 / 40.



Press photograph from *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 34 (1940). BFA 26: 418. BBA 277 / 37. The reader can identify distinct cropping with this photograph where Brecht had cut around the text in the *BIZ* to include in the journal. This photograph closely resembles the photomontage cover by John Heartfield from the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*, vol. 12, number 42 (26 October 1933).

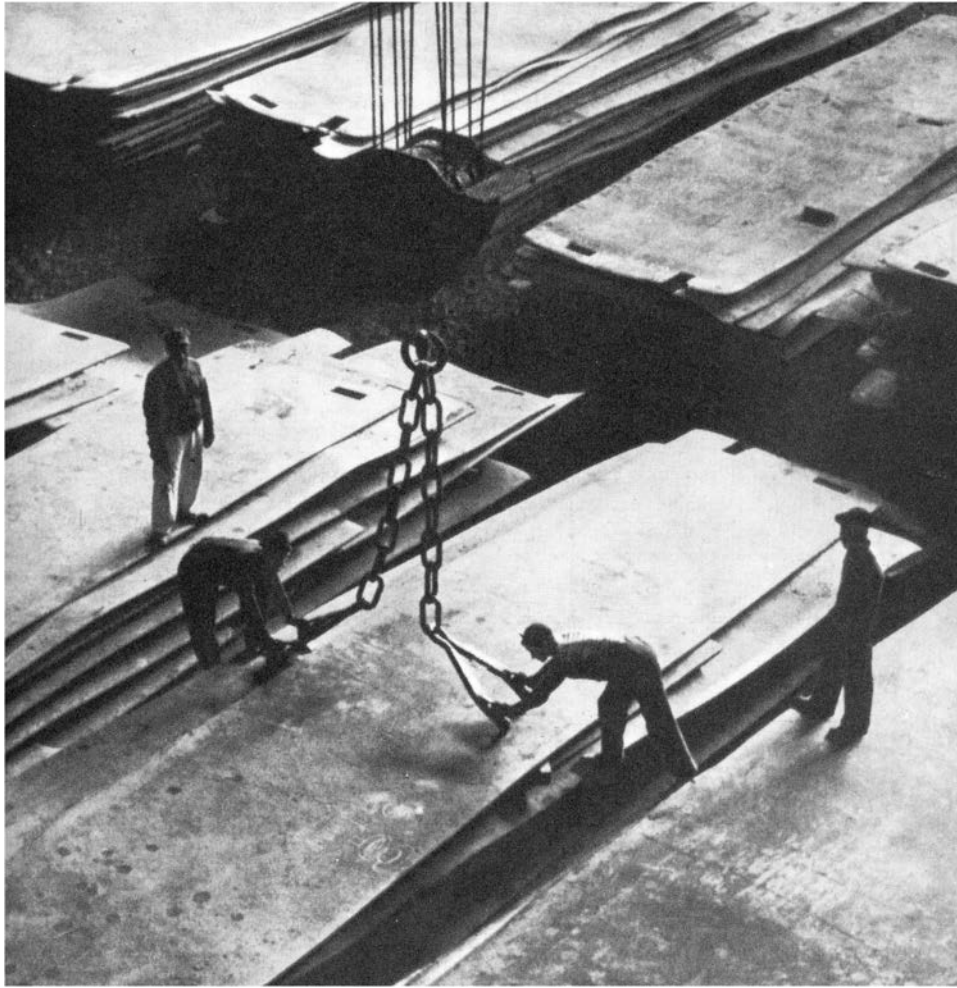
Figure 7. Final photograph of Brecht in Klein-Köitzig (Lausitz), 1952. BFA 27: 336. BBA FA 09-100a. This photograph corresponds to the journal entry labeled “Nov. 1952.” Here Brecht is photographed wearing the national medal of the GDR (“Nationalpreis 1. Klasse” received 7 October 1951). © R. Berlau/Hoffmann.



Figure 8. “Dialogues”: *Kriegsfibel* photogram 27 / *Kriegsfibel* photogram 2

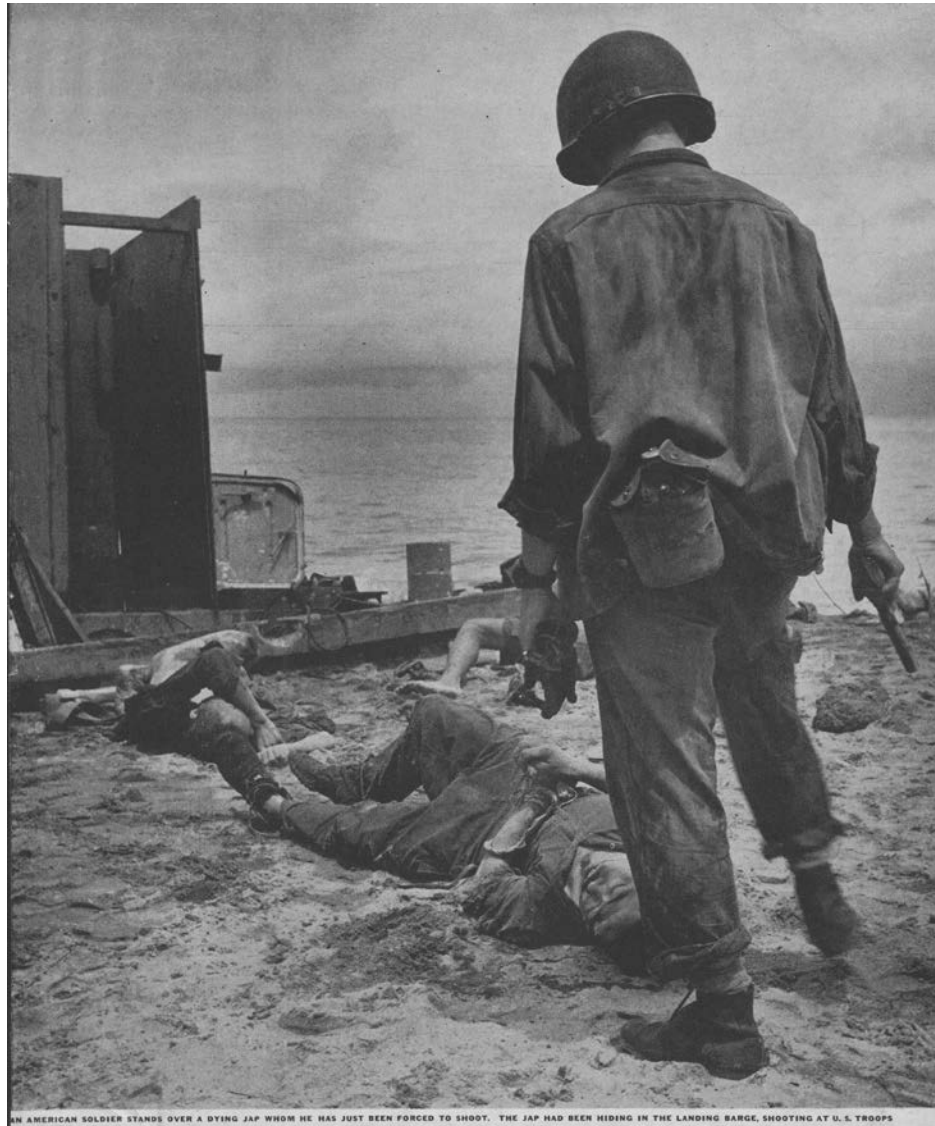


Press photograph from *Life* magazine (appeared as the cover image) dated 3 February 1941. Dr. Joseph Goebbels (left) conversing with Hermann Goering (right). BFA 12: 183. BBA 2096 / 57. © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag, with kind permission from Eulenspiegel Verlag.



Press photograph from *Life* magazine, dated 30 December 1940. BFA 12: 133. BBA 2096 / 72-73. © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag, with kind permission from Eulenspiegel Verlag.

Figure 9. *Kriegsfibel* photogram 47



Press photograph of an American soldier standing over a dead Japanese soldier. *Life* magazine dated 15 February 1943. BFA 12: 223. BBA 2096 / 66. © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag, with kind permission from Eulenspiegel Verlag.

Figure 10. *Kriegsfibel* photogram 44

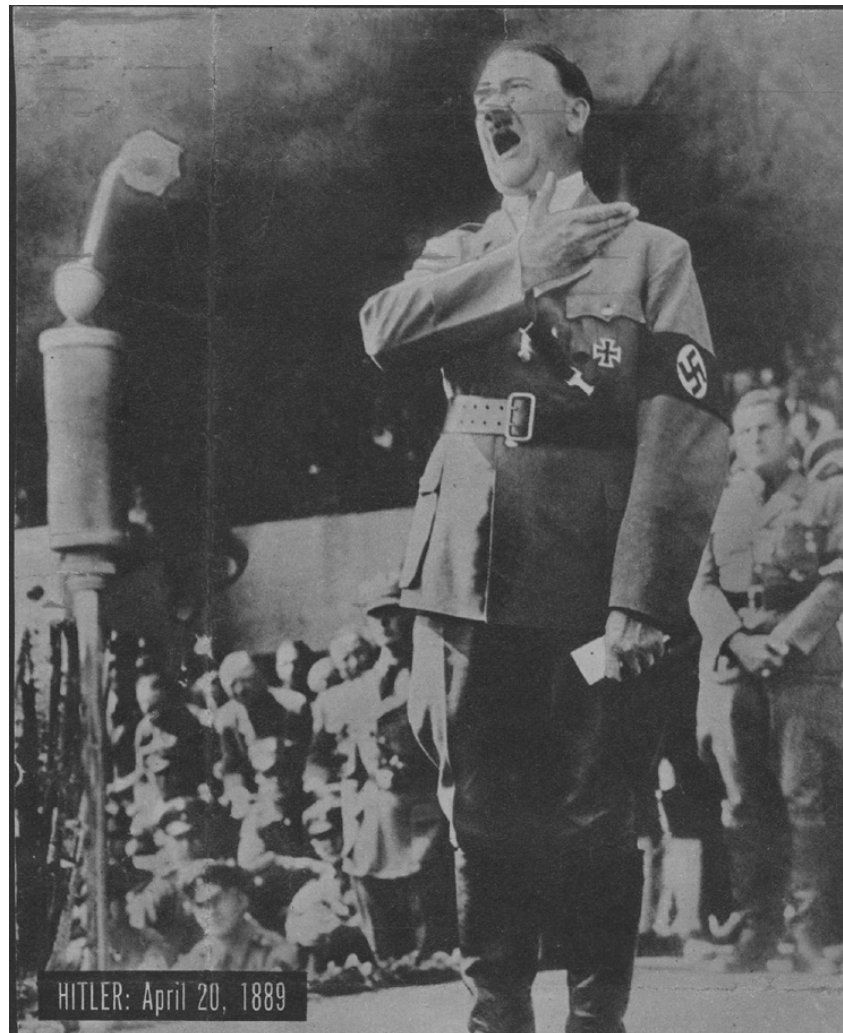


Press photograph of Japanese soldier's head on a tank. *Life* magazine dated 1 February 1943. BFA 12: 217. BBA 2096 / 62. © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag, with kind permission from Eulenspiegel Verlag.

Figure 11. Hitler: *Kriegsfibel* photogram 1 / *Kriegsfibel* photogram 69



Adolf Hitler delivering a speech. Press photograph dated 1940 from unknown origin. BFA 12: 131. BBA 2096 / 14. © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag, with kind permission from Eulenspiegel Verlag.

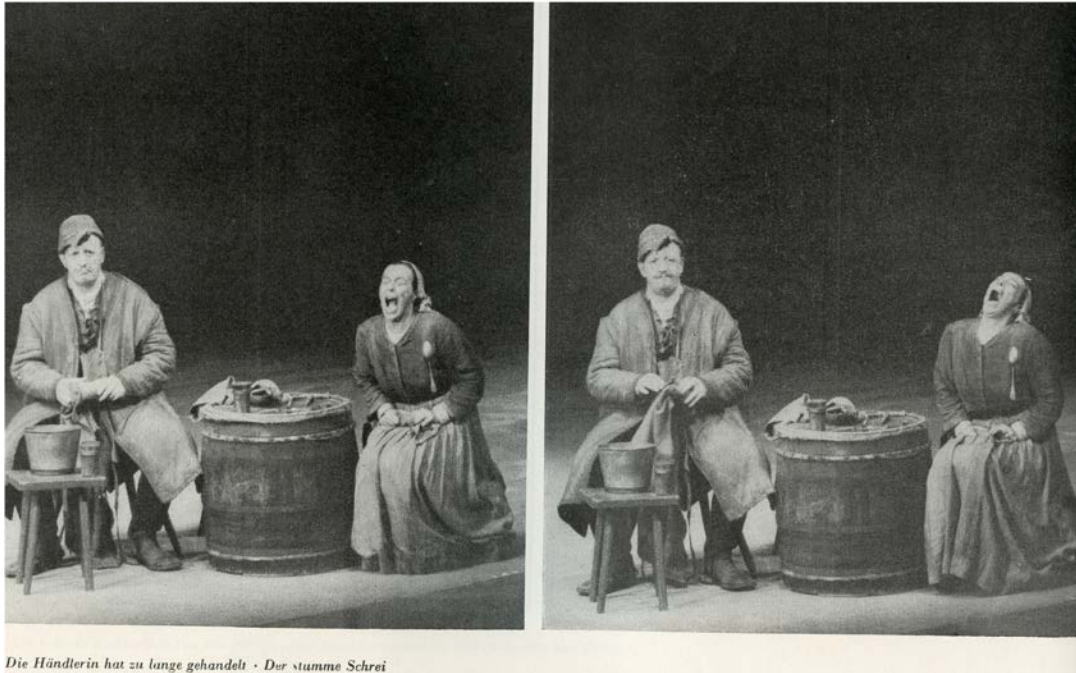


Adolf Hitler delivering a speech. Press photograph from an unknown American publication. The caption in the bottom left corner alludes to Hitler's birthdate. BFA 12: 267. BBA 2096 / 61. © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag, with kind permission from Eulenspiegel Verlag.

Figure 12. “Silent Scream”: *Kriegsfibel*, *Arbeitsjournale*, *Couragemodell*



Press photograph from *Life* magazine, dated 23 March 1942, showing the aftermath of a Japanese bomb attack on a British Army base in Singapore. This appears in the *Arbeitsjournal* (America 1942) with Brecht's journal entry. BFA 27: 80. BBA 280 / 01. © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag.



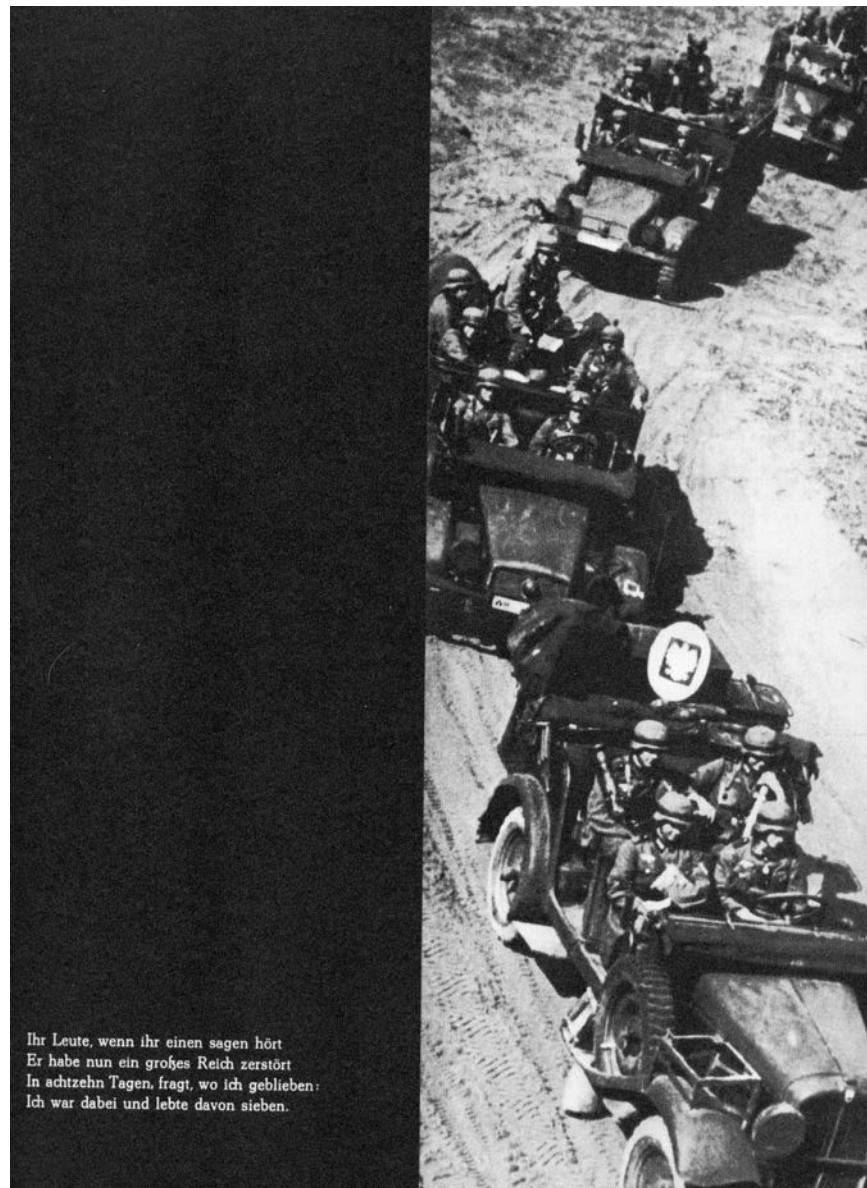
Die Händlerin hat zu lange gehandelt · Der stumme Schrei

Helene Weigel's "silent scream" in *Mutter Courage*. See the "Sequenzen" in *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 317-18. © unknown (likely Hainer Hill).



Kriegsfibel photogram 39 using the press photograph that appears in the *Arbeitsjournal* (America 1942). BBA 2096 / 43. Brecht attached the title "Singapore Lament" from a different clipping for the final photogram. © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag, with kind permission from Eulenspiegel Verlag.

Figure 13. Theater and theatricality of war: *Kriegsfibel* photogram 5 / First photograph from the *Couragemodell* / German invasion of Paris / Fascist leaders as “epic” actors



Kriegsfibel photogram 5. Press photograph appeared originally in an unknown Swedish publication, dated around 1940. BFA 12: 139. BBA 2096 / 78-79. © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag, with kind permission from Eulenspiegel Verlag.



Production photograph 1 from *Couragemodell*. Courage, Kattrin, Schweizerkas, and Eilif roll onto the stage with a song about the business of war. BFA 25: 247. BBA FA 48-018. © R. Berlau/Hoffmann.



Press photograph from an unknown Swedish publication, dated 14 June 1940. German troops march unopposed into Paris through the symbol of French national pride, the Arc de Triomphe. BFA 26: 376. BBA 277 / 07. © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag.

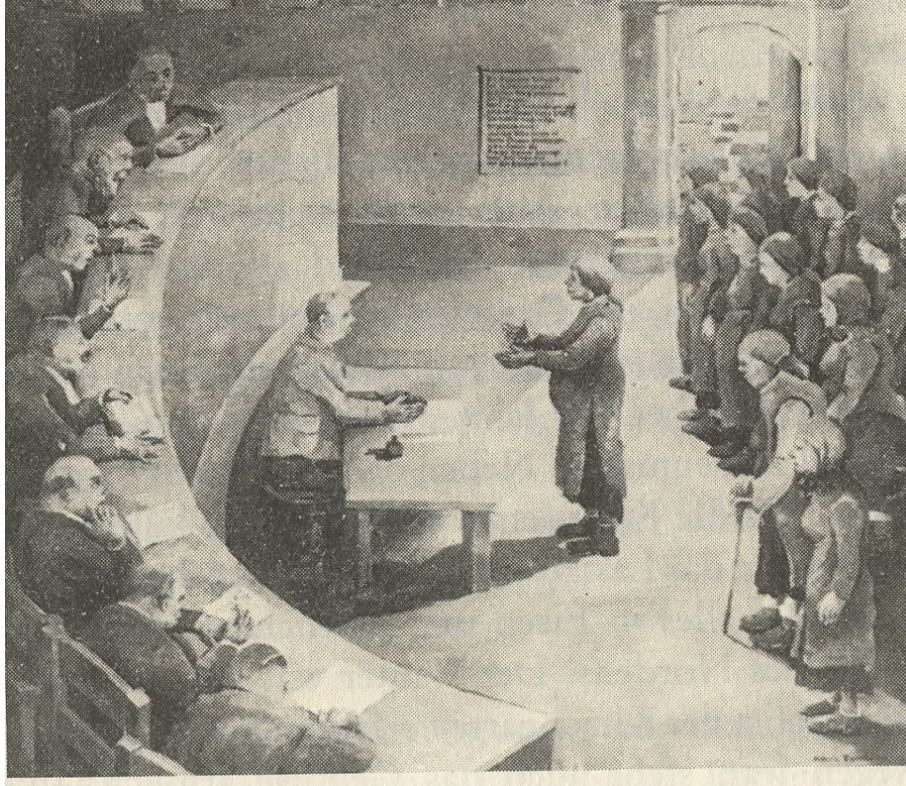


Press photograph from the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, dated 3 October 1940. This appears in the *Arbeitsjournal (America)*, BFA 26: 432. BBA 277 / 47. The image is part of a “Bildbericht” showing German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop (middle in white) during his state visit to Italy with dictator Benito Mussolini (to the right of von Ribbentrop in black). © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag.

Figure 14. Spatial arrangements: *Kriegsfiibel* photogram 50 / Tombrock's painting "Die Witwen von Osseg" / Courage's "Widersprüchlichkeit der Figur"



Press photograph from an unknown American publication appearing in *Kriegsfiibel* photogram 50. BFA 12: 229. BBA 2096 / 27. © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag, with kind permission from Eulenspiegel Verlag.



Reproduction of Hans Tombrock's painting "Die Witwen von Osseg vor dem Prager Magistrat" (1940). Appears in the *Arbeitsjournal* (Finland), BFA 26: 397. BBA 280 / 01. © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag.



Production photograph 107 from *Couragemodell*, BFA 25: 302. BBA Mutter Courage Theaterdokumentation 655 / 223. © unknown (likely Hainer Hill).

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