

A Mutable “Type:” August Sander and the Politics of the Peasant Portrait in *Antlitz der Zeit*  
(*Face of Our Time*) (1929)

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## Abstract

A Mutable “Type:” August Sander and the Politics of the Peasant Portrait in *Antlitz der Zeit*  
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Published in 1929, August Sander’s photobook *Face of Our Time* is one of the most celebrated photographic documents of the ill-fated Weimar Republic. Although Sander’s photobook included a broad typological spectrum of Weimar society and was eventually censured under National Socialism in 1936, scholars such as Leesa Rittelmann and George Baker have argued that Sander’s decision to foreground six portraits of peasant farmers at the outset of *Face of Our Time* can be understood as comparable to the romanticization of rural Aryan “types” found in slightly later right-wing publications such as Erna Lendvai-Dirksen’s *Face of the German Race* of 1932. In response to this claim, I contend that this is a misinterpretation of Sander’s use of the peasant “type” which has cast the photographer’s oeuvre in an undeservedly reactionary light. By drawing attention to Sander’s inclusion of key images of social change within the typological category of the peasant, I argue that Sander’s foregrounding of the peasant “type” is, in fact, a progressive acknowledgment of modernization rather than a reactionary statement on the disappearance of traditional, rural ways of life. In support of my argument, I carry out close readings of the six photographs in question while also attending to the ways in which these images form a narrative that asserts social change over fixed typological continuity. In doing so, my research sheds light on the ambiguous politics at the heart of Sander’s body of work and the ideological mutability of the peasant “motif” within twentieth-century German visual culture.

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## Introduction

In 2024, August Sander's portraits of early twentieth-century Germans maintain a prominent position in the realm of photographic history. Born in Herdorf, Rhineland-Palatinate in 1876, Sander is celebrated as one of the great photographers of the twentieth century. His collective portrait of interwar Germany continues to provoke the interest of both scholars and institutions, particularly those who seek to probe for parallels between the precarity of democracy in the twenty-first century and the history of the ill-fated Weimar Republic (1918-1933). Recent public critical efforts to examine the photographer's legacy include an online series of Tate Papers in 2013 and the *August Sander Project* (2016-2021)—the Museum of Modern Art's five-year exploration of Sander's work—as well as large-scale exhibitions of Sander's photography at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.<sup>1</sup> Too often, however, these investigations of Sanders's broader legacy focus on the nature and form of his posthumously organized publication *People of Twentieth Century* (2002) at the expense of the smaller photobook produced during Sander's lifetime; the aptly titled *Antlitz der Zeit* (*Face of Our Time*) of 1929 (fig. 1). Published four years before the complete collapse of the Weimar Republic, *Face of Our Time* is, I would argue, the most appropriate vehicle for grasping the significance of Sander's oeuvre in relation to the complex politics of Weimar Germany.

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<sup>1</sup>See Wolfgang Brückle, "Face-Off in Weimar Culture: The Physiognomic Paradigm, Competing Portrait Anthologies, and August Sander's Face of Our Time," *Tate Papers*, no. 19 (Spring 2013), Rose-Carol Washon Long, "August Sander's Portraits of Persecuted Jews," *Tate Papers*, no. 19 (Spring 2013) and Christian Weikop, "August Sander's *Der Bauer* and the Pervasiveness of the Peasant Tradition," *Tate Papers*, no. 19 (Spring 2013); *August Sander*, a selection of 250 photographs drawn from the photographer's oeuvre, was shown as part of *The Cold Gaze – Germany in the 1920's* at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art from 14/10/2022 to 19/02/2023. *Allemagne, Années 1920, Nouvelle Objectivité, August Sander* was held at the Centre Pompidou from 11/05/2022 to 05/09/2022. These exhibitions demonstrate the continuing contemporary interest in Sander's work.

In the wake of the First World War, photographers in an increasingly self-reflective and destabilized Weimar Germany sought an archetypal countenance of the people. Efforts to capture a collective portrait of interwar German society were illustrated by the appearance of photobooks such as August Sander's *Face of Our Time*. Made available in 1929 by the Verlag of the noted publisher, Kurt Wolff, with an introduction by Alfred Döblin, the celebrated left-leaning German-Jewish novelist and author of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929), Sander's photobook comprised a taxonomic portfolio, organized by the sitters' socio-economic class, environment, and profession. At first glance, *Face* appears culturally progressive; Sander's willingness to photograph Weimar's "vast" typological spectrum, from the industrialist down to the humble labourer, has bolstered the photographer's reputation as one of the more inclusive image-makers of the period.<sup>2</sup> That Sander's publisher as well as Döblin were considered to be radically left-wing in their politics and cultural affiliations and that the photographer's son Erich, who had been a member of the *KPD* (Communist Party of Germany) since 1924, died of an "untreated, ruptured appendix" in a Nazi prison in 1944, has also helped sustain Sander's standing as a left-leaning photographer.<sup>3</sup> So too, of course, has the Nazi banning of *Face* in 1936 and the subsequent destruction of its plates.

Some scholars, however, have challenged this political reading of Sander's project. They argue instead that parallels can and should be drawn between Sander's photobook and those of his right-wing contemporaries. George Baker (1996) and Leesa Rittelmann (2010), for instance,

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<sup>2</sup> Janos Frecot, "Das Volksgesicht: The Face of a People," in *Portraits of an Age: Photography in Germany and Austria 1900-1938*, ed. Monika Faber and Janos Frecot (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2005), 82; Wolfgang Brückle, "Face-Off in Weimar Culture: The Physiognomic Paradigm, Competing Portrait Anthologies, and August Sander's *Face of Our Time*," *Tate Papers*, no. 19 (Spring 2013): para 22.

<sup>3</sup> Rose-Carol Washton Long, "August Sander's Portraits of Persecuted Jews," *Tate Papers*, no. 19 (Spring 2013): para 6.

contend that Sander's use of the peasant<sup>4</sup> motif in *Face of Our Time* can be understood as ideologically analogous to the romanticization of rural Aryan "types" found in contemporaneous, unambiguously reactionary publications such as Erna Lendvai-Dircksen's *Das deutsche Volksgesicht (Face of the German Race)* of 1932.<sup>5</sup> The foregrounding of the image of the German peasant in *Face of Our Time* does indeed present the viewer with a sense of ambiguity regarding the ideological underpinnings of Sander's project: by positioning the motif of the so-called "noble" or "rooted" farmer at the outset of his book, Sander *could* be understood as implying that the ensuing typological groupings are victims of industrial modernity and cultural "degeneration." The fact that Sander decided to begin his book with images of those closest to the land and then progressed towards more urban "types" certainly implies that he was intent on creating a visual metaphor for the unprecedented movement of nearly half of Germany's rural population from countryside to city in the first two decades of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> According to Baker and Rittelmann, Sander's visual metaphor is highly critical of Germany's abrupt shift from a rural society to a modern industrialized state, with the photographer taking the side of Weimar's reactionary right who denounced the corrupting effects of city life on the German people.

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<sup>4</sup> I have chosen to follow the example of Christian Weikop and translate the German word 'Bauer' to 'peasant' throughout the majority of this text. It is important to note that despite the seemingly pejorative and anachronistic connotations of the term, Sander's Westerwald 'peasants' are modern landowning farmers rather than impoverished serfs. For an in-depth analysis of the use of the term in a Sander-specific context see Weikop, "Der Bauer," para 2.

<sup>5</sup> George Baker, "Photography Between Narrative and Stasis: August Sander, Degeneration, and the Decay of the Portrait", *October*, no.76, 1996, 84; Leesa Rittelmann, "Facing Off: Photography, Physiognomy, and National Identity in the Modern German Photobook," *Radical History Review*, no. 106 (2010): 155. For more recent studies questioning the nature of Sander's politics see Hannah Shaw, "The Trouble with the Censorship of August Sander's *Antlitz der Zeit*," *PhotoResearcher*, no. 31 (2019): 193-206 and Hannah Shaw, "August Sander's Regional Photobook Series, Nazification, and the Politics of Cultural Landscape" *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 85, no. 3 (2022): 309-336. Like Rittelmann and Baker, Shaw concludes in her article of 2019 that Sander's work was, in fact, not so "out of place in the new visual landscape of Nazism" (194).

<sup>6</sup> Claudia Bohn-Spector, "Plates," in *In Focus: August Sander: Photographs from the J. Paul Getty Museum*, ed. Weston Naef (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2000), 16; Christian Weikop, "August Sander's *Der Bauer* and the Pervasiveness of the Peasant Tradition," *Tate Papers*, no. 19 (Spring 2013): para 6.

In response to this claim, I contend it to be a misrepresentation of Sander's use of the peasant "type," one which casts the photographer's oeuvre in an undeservedly reactionary light. By drawing attention to the inclusion of key images of social change within the typological category of the peasant, I argue that Sander's foregrounding of the peasant "type" in his 1929 photobook is, in fact, an acknowledgment of modernization rather than a conservative statement on the disappearance of traditional, rural ways of being. Considering Sander's six peasant portraits first as individual images, then in sequence (fig. 2), I illustrate how these images come together to form a narrative of socio-economic development before and during the Weimar period that is far from elegiac in nature. In order to do so, I draw on the work of John Berger, Christian Weikop and Andy Jones in particular to help elucidate the ideological significance of certain features of Sander's work. Finally, I demonstrate how Sander's intentional ordering of his peasant portraits undermines any reactionary myth of a "timeless" German peasantry by charting a visual narrative away from the aged, "unchanging" physiognomies of his first few sitters towards the acknowledgement of youth, urban culture and social change embodied by the photograph *Young Farmers* (1914).<sup>7</sup> Throughout the development of my argument, comparative readings between Sander's portraits and those of right-wing photographer Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, the other main protagonist in what I consider to be Rittelmann's reductive reading, help illustrate the key differences between their respective approaches to representing the German peasantry. Ultimately, my thesis offers fresh insights into the mutability of a photographic "type" that emerged at a critical moment in the history of the German nation while

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Jennings, "Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic." *October* 93, (July 2000): 32; Alfred Döblin, "Faces, Images, and Their Truth," in *Face of Our Time*, trans. Michael Robertson (Cologne: Schirmer Art Books, 2003), 13.

also contributing to a new wave of scholarship on the underlying politics of Sander's admittedly ambiguous photographic oeuvre.

### **Physiognomy, Photography and Politics during the Weimar Republic**

The emergence of the German portrait photobook is often attributed to the deep sense of anxiety that marked the country's collective cultural consciousness during the Weimar period.<sup>8</sup> Born out of the 1918-1919 revolution that took place in Germany during the final days of the First World War, the democratic republic of Weimar (1918-1933) was fraught with challenges from the start.<sup>9</sup> The punitive measures imposed by the Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919, including the enforced demilitarization and French occupation of the Rhineland, the territorial annexation of parts of West Prussia and Silesia, and the annual payment of war reparations, resulted in economic hardship, rampant hyperinflation, and sometimes violent political unrest. The Social Democrats under President Friedrich Ebert (1871-1925) were embattled on both sides, torn between the communist left and conservative monarchists and proto-fascists on the right. New approaches to German photography pioneered during the Weimar years reflect the tumultuous politics of the time. Art historian Monika Faber writes how "the people of the postwar period, deeply unsettled and searching for a new self-image, had lost their faith in the traditional portrait, the assumed pose."<sup>10</sup> In order to address the problem of postwar German national identity, many photographers abandoned the conventions of the traditional, individual portrait, focusing their

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<sup>8</sup> Monika Faber, "A Grand Finale and Off Into the Blue: Two Eras Reflected in Portrait Photography," in *Portraits of an Age: Photography in Germany and Austria 1900-1938*, ed. Monika Faber and Janos Frecot (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2005), 17.

<sup>9</sup> For an authoritative survey of the Weimar Republic and a collection of pertinent primary sources see Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007) and *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> Faber, "A Grand Finale," 17.



efforts instead on capturing a composite portrait of the times. A “coherent series” of pictures, the photobook proved the ideal vehicle with which to present a new, collective representation of the German nation.<sup>11</sup> Towards the end of the Weimar period, publications with titles such as *Das Antlitz des Alters (The Face of the Age)* by Erich Retzlaff (1930) and *Köpfe des Alltags: Unbekannte Menschen (Everyday Faces: Unknown People)* by Helmar Lerski (1931) began to proliferate.<sup>12</sup> “The characteristic use of the singular in all these titles is significant,” German scholar Matthias Uecker writes, “as it indicated the widespread belief that out of the presentation of a large number of individual faces... some underlying generalized characteristic would emerge.”<sup>13</sup> Despite widely different approaches and political positions, these publications of the early 1930s were likely to have been heavily influenced by an earlier photobook, namely August Sander’s *Face of Our Time*.

Published in 1929, as a preview of Sander’s then unfinished master project *People of the Twentieth Century (Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts)*, *Face* constitutes a collection of sixty portraits of German “types” representing various levels of Weimar society.<sup>14</sup> Starting with six

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<sup>11</sup> Matthias Uecker, “The Face of the Weimar Republic Photography, Physiognomy, and Propaganda in Weimar Germany,” *Monatshefte* 99, no. 4 (2007): 471.

<sup>12</sup> Faber, “A Grand Finale,” 18; see Wolfgang Brückle, “Face-Off in Weimar Culture: The Physiognomic Paradigm, Competing Portrait Anthologies, and August Sander’s *Face of Our Time*,” *Tate Papers*, no. 19 (Spring 2013) for an analysis of the differences between these physiognomic publications.

<sup>13</sup> Uecker, “The Face of the Weimar Republic,” 472.

<sup>14</sup> *People of the Twentieth Century*, Sander’s posthumously organized magnum opus, encapsulates the entirety of Sander’s photographic vision of German society. He begins the project with a “Portfolio of Archetypes” (all of whom are peasants from the Westerwald) followed by the subsequent categories: “the Farmer,” “the Skilled Tradesman,” “the Woman,” “Classes and Professions,” “the Artists,” “the City” and “the Last People” (made up of portraits of the elderly, the disabled and, ultimately, the dead). Plagued by a series of unfortunate events, including the official censorship of Sander’s 1929 photobook and the destruction of Sander’s negatives during WWII era bombing raids, *People* remained unfinished when Sander died in 1964. Assembled posthumously by Sander’s surviving son Gunther using his father’s notes, *People* should not be considered as a product of Sander’s mind alone. It is difficult, for instance, to separate Sander’s narrative intentions from those of his son. For this reason, it is my contention that a real defense of Sander’s peasant portraits is only possible by way of a reading of the six peasant portraits that open *Face of Our Time*. Significantly, and in contrast to the later more encyclopedic project, Sander was personally responsible for selecting and arranging the images that would make up *Face*’s visual narrative. Although Sander was able to expand *Face* to a broader selection of photographs in his *Deutschenspiegel* publication of 1962, that later work reflects the choices of a post-war Sander whose political opinions had by then moved even

portraits of shepherds and farmers, Sander proceeds through rural communities into the streets of the modern, industrialized city. Working his way through the ranks of the proletariat, he considers the middle-class and the changing roles of women before turning his attention to the wealthy and the cultural elite. The photobook ends with two portraits of Weimar's down and out—the “redundant” seaman and an unemployed man. Each portrait occupies a full page and is accompanied by a concise caption detailing the subject's (or subjects') professions and relationships to their fellow sitters. Most of these images are naturally lit, full or half-length likenesses that have been posed and cropped according to traditional nineteenth-century conventions of photographic portraiture.<sup>15</sup> The photographs were taken by Sander between 1911 and 1925, either outdoors (Sander was known to travel by bicycle from village to village in search of suitable subjects), in people's homes and places of work, or in Sander's commercial studio in Cologne-Lindenthal.

From the beginning, Sander was deliberate about how he chose to arrange his images in a roughly non-chronological sequence. “Photography,” as he wrote in a 1951 letter to the painter Peter Abelen, “is like a mosaic that becomes a synthesis only when it is presented en masse.”<sup>16</sup> The meaning of *Face*'s synthesis has been subject to different interpretations. One of the most notable contemporary readings of Sander's publication was that of Alfred Döblin—the author of the photobook's introduction. “You have before you,” Döblin writes in his foreword titled “Faces, Images, and Their Truth,” “a kind of cultural history, better sociology of the last thirty

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further to the left. For this reason, I have, from a methodological perspective, decided to confine the majority of my argument on Sander's peasant portraits to his work in the years leading up to 1933. For an all-in-one authoritative volume of *People* assembled by Sander's archive see Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur, ed., *August Sander: People of the 20th Century*. (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Wolfgang Brückle, “Face-Off in Weimar Culture: The Physiognomic Paradigm, Competing Portrait Anthologies, and August Sander's Face of Our Time,” *Tate Papers*, no. 19 (Spring 2013), para 15, 28.

<sup>16</sup> August Sander, letter to the painter Peter Abelen, 16 January 1951, cited in Gunther Sander, ed., *August Sander: Citizens of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), p. 36.

years. How to write sociology without writing, but presenting photographs instead, photographs of faces and not national costumes.”<sup>17</sup> Asserting that Sander’s photographs are intended as sociological “raw material” ripe for interpretation, Döblin also notes the way Sander’s visual narrative reflects the then recent “economic development” of Germany from agrarian society to industrialized state.<sup>18</sup> Döblin then prompts the reader to ponder “the conclusion... reached by the figures from the workers’ council, the anarchists and revolutionaries,” alluding, evidently, to the possible progressive or even revolutionary readings of Sander’s project.<sup>19</sup> Significantly, moreover, the author locates Sander as one of “the conscious followers of Realism.”<sup>20</sup>

As Döblin observes, Sander considered photography as an “objective” and socially engaged medium capable of offering up “truthful” documentary images. In 1927, Sander himself wrote in a short piece titled “Seeing, Observing and Thinking,” that his primary goal was “to render through photography a picture of our times which is absolutely true to nature.”<sup>21</sup> Sander was, however, also conscious of his camera’s ability to distort: “It can reproduce things with impressive beauty, or even with cruel accuracy,” Sander writes, “but it can also be outrageously deceptive.”<sup>22</sup> In light of this comment, it is important to acknowledge that Sander’s portrait of Weimar society reflects his own authorial bias. Despite Sander’s claims to objectivity, it is apparent that he was solely in charge of selecting and posing his sitters, titling the finished images and arranging them by design in the pages of his 1929 photobook. The photographer himself had often little to say regarding his authorial intentions and the beliefs that informed his

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<sup>17</sup> Döblin, “Faces, Images, and Their Truth,” 13.

<sup>18</sup> Döblin, “Faces, Images, and Their Truth,” 14, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Döblin, “Faces, Images, and Their Truth,” 14.

<sup>20</sup> Döblin, “Faces, Images, and Their Truth,” 13.

<sup>21</sup> August Sander, “Seeing, Observing and Thinking,” Document REWE library, Die Photographische Stiftung/SK Stiftung Kultur – August Sander Archiv, Köln. English Translation by Shaun Whiteside.

<sup>22</sup> Sander, “Seeing, Observing and Thinking.”

work. As Rose-Carol Washton Long notes in her study of Sander's later portraits of persecuted Jews and political prisoners, "Sander did not openly write about his political beliefs and as a result they remain obscured."<sup>23</sup> *Face* is, therefore, anything but an objective or clear document, rather it is a relatively ambiguous work, most notably with regards to the underlying politics of its visual narrative.

One of the more contentious aspects of Sander's photobook is the project's basis in social typology. This interest in collecting, capturing, and analyzing faces in order to determine an "underlying general characteristic" demonstrates the prevalence of the then-prominent theory of physiognomy.<sup>24</sup> Grounded in the work of eighteenth-century Swiss theologian and poet Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801), physiognomic theory maintained that the external appearance of the human body reflected intrinsic interior qualities. According to Lavater, a close analysis of an individual's face could indicate his or her moral character and racial background: "Every minute part has the nature and character of the whole," he wrote in his *Essays on Physiognomy* (1792), requiring that one "study all, neglect no part of the countenance."<sup>25</sup> In his essay "The Traffic in Photographs" (1981), Allan Sekula notes how physiognomic method "proceeded by means of an analytic isolation of the anatomic features of the head and face—forehead, eyes, ears, nose, chin, and so on—and the assignment of a significance to each."<sup>26</sup> Photography proved the ideal medium with which to perform this kind of detailed physiognomic analysis. Despite having fallen out of favour in the late nineteenth century, the theory regained in popularity during the

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<sup>23</sup>Rose-Carol Washton Long, "August Sander's Portraits of Persecuted Jews," *Tate Papers*, no. 19 (Spring 2013): para 7.

<sup>24</sup> Uecker, "The Face of the Weimar Republic," 472.

<sup>25</sup> Johann Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, trans. Henry Hunter, London, 1792, preface; Allan Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," *Art Journal* 41, no. 1 (1981): 31.

<sup>26</sup> Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," 18.

Weimar period.<sup>27</sup> “Conservative, cultural critics lamented that contemporary people wore their dull faces like masks,” writes art historian Wolfgang Brückle.<sup>28</sup> “Physiognomy and typology... were crucial means with which photographers, critics and ideologues could diagnose the symptoms of the social and economic crisis that shook the country after its brief period of prosperity following the end of the First World War.”<sup>29</sup>

Although couched in non-factual and racist pseudoscience, physiognomy was embraced as a sociological tool across the political spectrum.<sup>30</sup> On the left, figures like Walter Benjamin and Kurt Tucholsky championed the revolutionary potential of physiognomic ways of seeing.<sup>31</sup> In his “Small History of Photography” essay of 1931, Benjamin went so far as to argue that the coupling of photography and physiognomy in Sander’s *Face* provided a tool with which to determine the outward appearance of a leftist revolutionary from that of a conservative reactionary.<sup>32</sup> In his view, the future of Europe would be decided by the ability to read the evidence of political affiliation on the faces of its inhabitants. “Shifts in power,” Benjamin writes, “such as have become due in our land, foster training and make the sharpening of physiognomic perception a vital necessity.”<sup>33</sup> Benjamin’s interest and faith in physiognomic pseudoscience was shared by Sander, who was genuinely intrigued by the prospect of finding meaning in the faces of the individuals who sat for his portraits. A well-read Social Democrat, Sander was, like many of the moderate middle-class intellectuals and artists of his time,

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<sup>27</sup> Faber, “A Grand Finale,” 18.

<sup>28</sup> Brückle, “Face-Off,” para 1.

<sup>29</sup> Brückle, “Face-Off,” para 3.

<sup>30</sup> Rittelmann, “Facing Off,” 147.

<sup>31</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Small History of Photography,” in *On Photography*, ed. Esther Leslie (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), 87; See also Peter Panter (Kurt Tucholsky), “Auf dem Nachttisch” (On the Bedside Table), *Die Weltbühne*, vol. 36 (1930): 466-72.

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin, “Small History,” 87.

<sup>33</sup> Benjamin, “Small History,” 87.

preoccupied with social typology and physiognomy.<sup>34</sup> Allan Sekula writes how “Sander shared the then still common belief... that the body, especially the face and head, bore the outward *signs* of inner character.”<sup>35</sup> Sekula is careful to note, however, that according to his reading of *Face*, Sander’s physiognomy “is revealed in the ensemble, in the attempt to delineate a social anatomy” rather than in any attempt to assert the racial superiority of one demographic over another.<sup>36</sup> “In contrast to his nineteenth-century predecessors,” Sekula writes, “[Sander] refused to link his belief in physiognomic science to biological determinism...he organized his portraiture in terms of a social, rather than a racial typology.”<sup>37</sup> It is significant, therefore, that Sander’s book contains a visual encyclopedia of 1920s German society. Whereas someone like Lendvai-Dircksen was selective about whom she chose to embody the collective “face” of her time, Sander photographed nearly every “type” he came across.<sup>38</sup> In this sense, *Face*’s physiognomy is sociological rather than biological in nature.<sup>39</sup> For this reason, Sander’s evident curiosity in physiognomic pseudoscience should not be read as evidence of the photographer’s interest in reactionary racism but rather as a sign of Sander’s sociological interests. This is not to excuse Sander’s enthusiasm for what was, at its core, a troubling pseudoscience, but to situate that interest in the unique political context of the late 1920s, when the spectre of Nazi eugenics was only just beginning to be raised.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> For more on Sander’s interest in physiognomy see August Sander, “Photography as a Universal Language (1931)” *Massachusetts Review*, vol.19, no.4 (Winter 1978): 674-9.

<sup>35</sup> Sekula, “The Traffic in Photographs,” 18.

<sup>36</sup> Sekula, “Traffic in Photographs,” 18.

<sup>37</sup> Sekula, “Traffic in Photographs,” 19; Despite this, Sekula concludes that Sander’s project remains problematic due to its naive positivism.

<sup>38</sup> Weikop, “*Der Bauer*,” para. 18

<sup>39</sup> Weikop, “*Der Bauer*,” para. 21

<sup>40</sup> For a full survey of the culturally complex history of physiognomy in the German context see Gray, Richard T. *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004).

Not all proponents of physiognomy, however, were as naively humanistic in their aims as Sander. Towards the end of the Weimar period, the widespread belief that modernisation was diluting the cultural “authenticity” of the German nation resulted in the rampant romanticization of the rural face. Conservative reactionaries argued that modernity was rendering German physiognomy—and, by proxy, the alleged “purity” of its culture—illegible.<sup>41</sup> Hans F. K. Günther—a eugenicist and writer who would later play an important role in the visual articulation of National Socialist ideology—was a leading, highly educated right-wing proponent of racial physiognomic theory during this period.<sup>42</sup> In the pages of his illustrated publications, Günther differentiated generalized ethnic “types” according to outward appearance as well as through moral and psychological characteristics and capacities.<sup>43</sup> In “Creating the Master Race” (2010), Anne Maxwell writes how “Günther obtained the images for his book from anthropologists and racial hygiene experts located throughout Germany.”<sup>44</sup> She notes how he chose images that were composed in profile in order to allow his readers to supposedly “determine a person’s racial origins at a glance, taking into account bone structure as well as hair, skin and eye color.”<sup>45</sup> In 1927, Günther assembled and co-authored a photographic compendium of fifty idealised “Nordic types” entitled *Deutsche Köpfe Nordischer Rasse: 50 Abbildungen mit Geleitworten von Professor Dr. Eugen Fischer und Dr. Hans F. K. Günther* (*German Head Types of the Nordic Race: 50 Figures with Forewords by Professor Dr. Eugen*

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<sup>41</sup> Brückle, “Face-Off,” para 8.

<sup>42</sup> Anne Maxwell, “Creating the Master Race: Photography and Racial Selection in Germany,” in *Photography and Eugenics 1970-1940*, (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), 150. In the absence of a monograph on Hans Günther, I have relied on Maxwell’s general overview of his career for contextualization.

<sup>43</sup> Maxwell, “Creating the Master Race,” 150.

<sup>44</sup> Maxwell, “Creating the Master Race,” 151.

<sup>45</sup> Maxwell, “Creating the Master Race,” 152.

*Fischer and Dr. Hans F. K. Günther*).<sup>46</sup> The publication contained numerous images of rural Germans “dressed in lavish folk costumes.”<sup>47</sup> The highly mediated nature of Günther’s photographic case studies, however, revealed the author’s evident prejudices towards non-Aryans: “Subjects of Nordic descent were represented in a flattering manner,” writes Maxwell, while the so-called “inferior races were photographed less sympathetically.”<sup>48</sup> Ultimately, the confluence of photography and physiognomy provided right-wing ideologues like Günther with an ideal tool with which to offer up the illusion of Aryan racial “superiority.” This nascent reactionary visual culture and the problematic pseudoscientific ideas it championed would go on to play an important role in the development of National Socialist racial ideology and eugenic policy. Importantly, these images were implicated in German programs of sterilization, euthanasia and mass murder throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s.

Precisely because of their charged racial content, Günther’s publications attracted a number of reactionary followers, including the photographer Erna Lendvai-Dircksen (1882-1963). Like Günther, Lendvai-Dircksen believed the hardened face of the earthbound peasant to be an ideal expression of the essence of the German people and landscape.<sup>49</sup> A 1916 graduate of Berlin’s Lette Verein technical school for girls, Lendvai-Dircksen (1883-1962) began photographing German peasants in the mid-1920s.<sup>50</sup> As a follower of the proto-fascist *Volkisch*

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<sup>46</sup> See Hans Günther, *Deutsche Köpfe Nordischer Rasse: 50 Abbildungen mit Geleitworten von Professor Dr. Eugen Fischer und Dr. Hans F. K. Günther (German Head Types of the Nordic Race: 50 Figures with Forewords by Professor Dr. Eugen Fischer and Dr. Hans F. K. Günther)* (Munich: Lehmann, 1927); Maxwell, “Creating the Master Race,” 154-155. Following his normal practice, Günther did not take these images himself but chose them from the work of anthropologists and anonymous amateur photographers.

<sup>47</sup> Maxwell, “Creating the Master Race,” 155.

<sup>48</sup> Maxwell, “Creating the Master Race,” 152.

<sup>49</sup> Rittelmann “Facing Off,” 138; Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, “Über deutsche Porträtfotographie,” in *Das Atelier des Photographen* 40 (1933): 72-74; 84-85.

<sup>50</sup> Andrés Mario Zervigón, “The Alluring Surface, 1933-1945,” in *Photography and Germany* (London: Reaktion Books, 2017), 142; Andrés Mario Zervigón, “The Timeless Imprint of Erna Lendvai-Dircksen’s Face of the German Race,” in *Photography in the Third Reich: Art, Physiognomy and Propaganda*, ed. Christopher Webster (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2021), para 17, <http://books.openedition.org/obp/18388>.



movement, a pre-1933 member of the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party), and a post-1933 Nazi Press Club member, Lendvai-Dircksen was a staunch proponent of reactionary physiognomic theory.<sup>51</sup> In 1932, Lendvai-Dircksen published her photographs of German peasants in the first volume of a multipart series titled *Das deutsche Volksgesicht (Face of the German Race)* (fig. 3).<sup>52</sup> As Leesa Rittelmann notes in "Facing Off: Photography, Physiognomy, and National Identity in the Modern German Photobook," this series "featured elderly German farmers and fishermen whose self-sacrifice and family values were, in visual terms, written across their faces."<sup>53</sup> Lendvai-Dircksen herself wrote in the 1932 introduction of her photobook that "the common man who, in his essence and possessions, resides near nature, bears a face that is true and authentic, a face that reveals the basis of his existence."<sup>54</sup> To Lendvai-Dircksen, the physiognomic "basis" of rural life was inherently racial in nature. Establishing the ethnic background of her sitters was an essential part of her photographic process.<sup>55</sup> Rittelmann writes how Lendvai-Dircksen's portraits are always "accompanied by a caption citing the subject's region of origin, occupation, and, occasionally, their familial role as a mother, father, daughter, or son."<sup>56</sup> Significantly, these captions helped Lendvai-Dircksen identify her subjects as "authentically" Germanic in both blood and place of residence.

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<sup>51</sup> Brückle, "Face-Off," para 4; Rittelmann, "Facing Off," 142.

<sup>52</sup> Note the difference between the dust jacket design of Sander's *Face of Our Time* (fig. 1) and the cover of Lendvai-Dircksen's photobook (fig. 3). While the emphasis of Sander's cover is on font and design, Lendvai-Dircksen's cover foregrounds a photograph of a farmer's profile in order to make an immediate appeal to the "nobility" of German peasant physiognomy.

<sup>53</sup> Rittelmann, "Facing Off," 140.

<sup>54</sup> Lendvai-Dircksen, *Das deutsche Volksgesicht* (Berlin: Drei-Masken Verlag, 1932), 5–6. cited in Mario Zervigón, "The Timeless Imprint," para 22.

<sup>55</sup> Rittelmann, "Facing Off," 141.

<sup>56</sup> Rittelmann. "Facing Off," 141.

## Towards a Re-examination of Sander's Peasants

Lendvai-Dircksen's fascination with racial typology, physiognomy and region of origin is not, however, the main subject of Leesa Rittelmann's essay on Sander. It is merely the tool with which Rittelmann aims to demonstrate a sense of continuity between the photographic output of Weimar and the early National Socialist period. By situating Lendvai-Dircksen's project within the broader, politically multifaceted development of physiognomic photography, Rittelmann argues that August Sander can be understood as Lendvai-Dircksen's "liberal" physiognomic precursor.<sup>57</sup> Sander's and Lendvai-Dircksen's photobooks have often been understood as diverging in terms of their respective ideologies: Sander's images are generally considered to embody a humanistic objectivity, whereas Lendvai-Dircksen's portraits are classified as blatant Nazi propaganda.<sup>58</sup> Rittelmann, however, disagrees with this interpretation: "Although *Face of Our Time* was clearly progressive in its inclusion of more modern urban types, it nevertheless betrayed a nostalgia for the traditional values embodied by the Westerwald peasants," she writes.<sup>59</sup> According to Rittelmann, Sander's foregrounding of the "rooted" peasant "type" can, therefore, be understood as his conforming with the same physiognomic theory that modernity renders the face increasingly difficult to read, a position upheld by conservatives and proto-fascists such as Günther and Lendvai-Dircksen.<sup>60</sup> The connections between Sander's and Lendvai-Dircksen's projects, however, go even deeper according to Rittelmann: "Both insisted that the region in which their subjects lived and toiled and the professions they undertook were irrevocably imprinted on their physical features".<sup>61</sup> Although Rittelmann acknowledges the

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<sup>57</sup> Rittelmann, "Facing Off," 154-155.

<sup>58</sup> Frecot, "*Das Volksgesicht*," 82.

<sup>59</sup> Rittelmann, "Facing Off," 153.

<sup>60</sup> Rittelmann, "Facing Off," 155.

<sup>61</sup> Rittelmann, "Facing Off," 155.

distinction between “the liberal, ‘scientific’ physiognomy employed to reveal social typologies and the conservative physiognomy used to establish the biological superiority of the Nordic race,” she still argues for a sense of continuity between Sander’s and Lendvai-Dircksen’s respective projects.<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, by suggesting that Sander’s 1929 publication inspired Lendvai-Dircksen’s reactionary celebration of the earthbound German peasant, Rittelmann locates Sander in a distinctly right-wing tradition of image-making.

Rittelmann is not the only scholar who has sought to draw substantive parallels between Sander’s images and those of his right-wing contemporaries. Somewhat earlier, in “Photography between Narrativity and Stasis: August Sander, Degeneration, and the Decay of the Portrait,” (1996) American art historian George Baker offers up a subtle, if ultimately damning, analysis of Sander’s photography and its allegedly problematic ideological undercurrents. He notes, for instance, how the 1936 banning of the photographer’s photobook coupled with the tragic death of Sander’s communist son Erich has “had an inordinate effect upon the reception of Sander’s work, acting in much of the existing literature on the photographer as ‘proof’ of Sander’s ‘politically engaged’ photographic practice.”<sup>63</sup> Claiming this as a reductive misrepresentation of the oeuvre in question, Baker surmises that Sander’s own politics were considerably “less radical” than Erich’s.<sup>64</sup> To Baker, Sander’s fascination with the German peasant “type” links the photographer’s work inextricably to the “Nazi philosophical emphasis on the *Stämme*, the originary Germanic tribes, rooted in the earth.”<sup>65</sup> Baker’s argument is not without nuance. He is careful to note that although Sander later chose to name the peasant portfolio that opens his

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<sup>62</sup> Rittelmann, “Facing Off,” 155.

<sup>63</sup> Baker, “Photography Between Narrativity,” 78.

<sup>64</sup> Baker, “Photography Between Narrativity,” 78.

<sup>65</sup> Baker, “Photography Between Narrativity,” 84.

unfinished project *People of the Twentieth Century* the “*Stämme-Mappe*” or “German Portfolio,” this could be read as indicative of the photographer’s interest in establishing an organic metaphor at the outset of his magnum opus.<sup>66</sup> *Stämme* can, after all, be translated somewhat more innocently as “trunk” (indicating a slightly less troubling organic metaphor) as well as the more reactionary “tribe.”<sup>67</sup> Despite this ambiguity, Baker remains intent on reframing Sander’s photography as fundamentally reactionary in nature. He takes issue, for instance, with the scholarly attention paid to Sander’s close association with the Cologne Progressives, a Cologne-based group of painters who championed constructivist style and left-wing politics.<sup>68</sup> Rather than interpret this association as proof of Sander’s Marxist *weltanschauung*, Baker contends that Sander merely shared with the Cologne Progressives an interest in “the typologies of trades and crafts” (*Ständegesellschaft*) that defined Medieval Germany.<sup>69</sup> In order to support this argument, Baker makes recourse to the concept of “reactionary modernism;” a theory concerning the close yet paradoxical relationship between modern technology and reactionary politics first advanced by Jeffrey Herf in his book *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (1984).<sup>70</sup> Drawing on Herf’s theory, George Baker denies Sander the socialist influence of the Cologne Progressives, claiming instead that the group’s interest in Medieval typologies entangles them, and by extension Sander, in the reactionary modernism that emerged as a cultural phenomenon during the late Weimar period.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Baker, “Photography Between Narrativity,” 48

<sup>67</sup> Baker, “Photography Between Narrativity,” 84

<sup>68</sup> Baker, “Photography Between Narrativity,” 87; For a comprehensive study on the Cologne Progressives see Lynette Roth, ed., *Painting As a Weapon: Progressive Cologne 1920-33: Seiwert, Hoerle, Arntz* (Köln: Museum Ludwig, 2008).

<sup>69</sup> Baker, “Photography Between Narrativity,” 88

<sup>70</sup> See Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, culture, and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>71</sup> Baker, “Photography Between Narrativity,” 88-89.

The crux of Baker's argument, however, lies in the author's assertion that Sander's project is couched in the same theories of physiognomy and cultural degeneration that dominated German reactionary thought throughout the late nineteenth century and again in the 1920s. Sander is known, for instance, to have had a keen interest in Oswald Spengler's two-volume *Der Untergang des Abendlandes (The Decline of the West)* (1918-1923), a reactionary tome that exposed many Germans to the idea that great civilizations begin and flourish in the country but eventually deteriorate towards the "complex and soulless bureaucracies of the metropolis."<sup>72</sup> Baker writes how, in that text, "Spengler had outlined not only an organic approach to culture but had used this approach to preach a moral message of the decline of Western man in the face of an 'uprooted' present."<sup>73</sup> To Baker, Sander's "embrace of physiognomy as a credible system of human truth directly links his work to Spengler's [reactionary and elegiac] approach to history."<sup>74</sup> To what extent, however, can the sequence of images that Sander presents to the public in *Face* be understood as what Baker deems "a narrative of the decay of social rootedness and fixed placement?"<sup>75</sup> In the following, I will demonstrate how Sander's unique photographic treatment of the German peasant, the key "type" found at the beginning of *Face*, points to a less damning reading of Sander's oeuvre and its underlying politics. Firstly, however, it is necessary to examine the nature of the peasant "type" during the late Weimar period.

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<sup>72</sup> Baker, "Photography Between Narrativity," 89; Claudia Bohn-Spector, "Plates," 18.

<sup>73</sup> Baker, "Photography Between Narrativity," 90.

<sup>74</sup> Baker, "Photography Between Narrativity," 89.

<sup>75</sup> Baker, "Photography Between Narrativity," 98.

## The Ideological Diversity of the German Peasant “Type”

From the sixteenth-century peasant engravings of Albrecht Dürer to Käthe Kollwitz's *Bauernkrieg* (*Peasant War*) etchings of 1903-1908, the figure of the peasant had long played a symbolic, political role in German art and visual culture.<sup>76</sup> In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for instance, the nationalist *Völkisch* (folk) movement adopted the peasant as a symbol of rooted German identity. In “Blood and Soil: The Serology of the Aryan Racial State,” Pauline Mazumdar notes how “the *völkisch* philosophers... emphasized that the race of the future should be bred not from the unstable and degenerate inhabitants of towns but from the sessile German peasantry.”<sup>77</sup> Across the political spectrum, however, artists and photographers from a variety of backgrounds were also employing the image of the peasant in order to further their own ideological agendas. In *August Sander’s Der Bauer and the Pervasiveness of the Peasant Tradition* (2013), art historian Christian Weikop illustrates how the German peasant “type” is a long-standing and ideologically diverse representational tradition, one employed in the 1920s by conservatives, left-wing modernists, and National Socialist proponents of “blood and soil” alike.<sup>78</sup> “Historically,” Weikop writes, “the idea and archaising image of the peasant has often had a cohering purpose and nostalgic resonance in Germany, both at times of unity and division.”<sup>79</sup> Weikop illustrates how the peasant motif was employed by “a wide range of artists of varied political persuasions and historical periods” and “not just those National Socialist proponents of racial purity.”<sup>80</sup> For instance, left-wing German modernists such as Käthe Kollwitz

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<sup>76</sup> Weikop, “*Der Bauer*,” para 3-4.

<sup>77</sup> Pauline Mazumdar, “Blood and Soil: The Serology of the Aryan Racial State,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 64, no. 2 (1990): 194.

<sup>78</sup> Weikop, “*Der Bauer*,” para 11, 13.

<sup>79</sup> Weikop, “*Der Bauer*,” para 3.

<sup>80</sup> Weikop, “*Der Bauer*,” para 21.

(1867-1945) regularly employed the peasant motif in their work.<sup>81</sup> Weikop points to Kollwitz's print *Outbreak* (fig. 4), from her 1901-1908 series of etchings on the German peasant revolt of the sixteenth century, as a prime example of the left-wing articulation of the peasant "type" as "heroic [and] revolutionary" rather than earthbound or reactionary.<sup>82</sup> The print shows a mob of armed peasants rushing into battle, led by a woman in black. Here, the German peasant is represented as an "agent of social change" instead of a marker of vanishing rural tradition—a recurring theme in Kollwitz's work that persisted into the Weimar period.<sup>83</sup> By situating Sander within this politically diffuse and stylistically multifaceted tradition of peasant portraiture, Weikop seeks to establish a distinction between Sander's "interest" in rural labour and the right-wing agendas of photographers and ideologues such as Hans F.K. Günther and Erna Lendvai-Dircksen. The fact that Sander is known to have owned "a painting called *The German Peasants War* (1932) in a constructivist style by his socialist friend and Cologne Progressive Frans Seiwert" lends strength to Weikop's thesis concerning Sander's progressive approach to representing the German peasant.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the merits of his argument, Weikop fails to locate Sander's imagery within more moderate traditions of peasant representation. Although Sander was exposed to revolutionary conceptions of the peasant "type" through the work of his friends in Cologne, it is, in my opinion, more likely that the photographer's interest in rural Germans was informed by a progressive confluence of moderate social democratic politics and middle-class agrarian romanticism. While I am and will be advocating for a more progressive reading of Sander's

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<sup>81</sup> Weikop, "Der Bauer," para 13.

<sup>82</sup> Weikop, "Der Bauer," para 13.

<sup>83</sup> Weikop, "Der Bauer," para 13.

<sup>84</sup> Weikop, "Der Bauer," para 14.

photography, I also want to make clear that Sander is best understood in contemporary terms as a kind of progressive conservative. There is little evidence in his work to locate him in either the reactionary camp of Lendvai-Dircksen or amongst the ranks of explicitly left-wing modernists such as Kollwitz. As a veteran of the First World War and a middling Social Democrat, Sander's view of German society is at once progressive and moderately conservative. A closer look at bourgeois depictions of the German peasant "type" will shed further light on Sander's distinct ideological approach to peasant portraiture in *Face*.

By the turn of the century, the German and Austrian middle-class had come, through a long history of evolving representations and stereotypes, to associate farmers and peasants with a specific set of moral characteristics. Magdalena Vuković of the Photoinstitut Bonartes writes how "the urban middle classes had projected a romantically veiled and nationalist image of man onto the rural population through the *Heimat* preservation movement of the late-nineteenth century; naturalness, diligence, toughness, and modesty were the qualities associated with peasants."<sup>85</sup> This bourgeois conception of the peasantry found its most lifelike expression in the work of late nineteenth-century German painters such as the Cologne-born realist Wilhelm Leibl (1844-1900). Leibl's oil on panel *Girl with a Carnation* (c. 1880) (fig. 5) is characteristic of the naturalistic yet sentimental style of peasant portraiture intended to appeal to the educated German middle-class.<sup>86</sup> Resting against a chiaroscuro background, the sitter's facial expression evokes a Madonna-like piety and innocence—her features have been rendered in exquisite, almost photographic detail. Leibl's choice to paint his female subject in decorative folk costume

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<sup>85</sup> Magdalena Vuković. "Embodied Ideology: Anna Koppitz's Propaganda Photographs," in *Serving Racial Politics: Anna Koppitz's Photographs for Reich Minister R. Walther Darré*, ed. Magdalena Vuković (Vienna: Photoinstitut Bonartes, 2017), 77.

<sup>86</sup> Bernhard von Waldkirch, "Seeing What is True I: Leibl and the Peasant Genre," in *Wilhelm Leibl: The Art of Seeing*, ed. Marianne von Manstein and Bernhard von Waldkirch (Munich: Hirmer, 2019), 39.



and jewelry rather than the everyday garb of a working farmer, however, is telling. It is evident that despite the artist's attempts at unvarnished realism, Leibl's peasant work remains informed by an idealized, middle-class understanding of rural life. For an early twentieth-century example of a liberal, bourgeois artist who regularly painted the peasantry, one can also look to the work of the German-Jewish Impressionist Max Liebermann (1847-1935). An enormously influential member of the Berlin Secession, Liebermann was known for his "Francophile" renderings of peasants at work or at rest.<sup>87</sup> Artists such as Leibl and Liebermann reimagined country life for a cultivated urban audience intent on ascribing a sense of unaffected "authenticity" to the rural German face. This so-called "authenticity," although necessarily entangled, at least from our contemporary perspective, with the right-wing myths of the time, was not necessarily reactionary in nature. It was, rather, a nostalgic and culturally conservative response to the sweeping changes wrought by industrialization on the newly formed German nation in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.<sup>88</sup> Sander himself, as we shall see shortly, viewed the peasantry as closer to nature than the inhabitants of Germany's growing cities.<sup>89</sup> Intriguingly in *Face*, however, the peasant portrait is coded as both a symbol of "naturalness" *and* a progressive marker of socio-cultural change. In the following close analysis of the six peasant portraits that open *Face*, I will illustrate how Sander's peasant images are, despite what I view as their evident middle-class romanticism, also distinctly forward-looking in nature.

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<sup>87</sup> Weikop, "Der Bauer," para 44; For an authoritative English-language text on Liebermann see Marion F. Deshmukh, *Max Liebermann: Modern Art and Modern Germany* (London: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>88</sup> Weikop, "Der Bauer," para 4; See also Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft (Community and Society)* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications Inc, 2002) for a seminal sociological articulation of this response first published in 1887.

<sup>89</sup> August Sander cited in Bohn-Spector, "Plates," 12.

### Reading Sander's Peasant Portraits in *Face of Our Time*

*Farmer Westerwald* (1913) (fig. 6), the first image in *Face of Our Time*, exhibits many of the romantic qualities associated with the German bourgeois peasant “type.” Although not the first of Sander’s peasant portraits—the photographer had been capturing rural subjects since 1910 when the planning of his broader project was still in its infancy—*Farmer Westerwald* remains a key image in Sander’s portfolio. Depicted as an older man of property, seated on an open-weave cane chair and wearing his Sunday best, this farmer is photographed looking sternly into Sander’s lens. In his hands he holds reading glasses and a book—a recurring prop in Sander’s peasant portraits. The sitter’s brow is furrowed and the combination of his physiognomy and the closed book resting in his lap implies a stern and sagacious nature. The image title indicates that this man is a resident of the Westerwald—a region of gently rolling hills situated between Cologne and Frankfurt. The place of Sander’s birth, this area and its people held a certain fascination for the photographer. The son of a carpenter, Sander had been surrounded by farmers, miners and shepherds since he was a boy. In 1954, Sander wrote in his characteristically ambiguous manner about how his early interest in the Westerwald peasantry influenced the narrative development of his broader photographic project:

The models for the scheme arose from the small area around my birthplace in the Westerwald. People whose habits I had known from my youth seemed, by virtue of their strong connections with nature, ideally suited to the realization of my idea. That was how I started, and I classified all the types I encountered in relation to one basic type, who had all the characteristics of mankind in general.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> August Sander, 1954, cited in Bohn-Spector, “Plates,” 12.

Given Sander's 1954 characterization of the peasant as the most "basic" or universal of "types," it is easy to see how some scholars have confused his romantic view of the German farmer with the reactionary approach to peasant photography championed by right-wing photographers like Erna Lendvai-Dircksen. Portraits such as *Farmer Westerwald*, however, differ in significant ways. Consider, for instance, Lendvai-Dircksen's *Woman from Regensburg Region*, included in her book *The Face of the German Race* (1932) (fig. 7), in comparison to Sander's *Farmer Westerwald*. At first glance, these images appear somewhat similar in nature. Both portraits depict elderly rural Germans with specific physiognomic traits. Lives of hard labour have inscribed deep lines into each face; their expressions *could* be read as indicative of both a "rooted" wisdom and a close relationship to the soil. Neither subject is named, though their regions of residence are made evident in their respective captions. The emphasis in both images, therefore, appears to be on the region and "type" of sitter. Note, though, the different approaches to framing employed by each photographer. As Michael Jennings has argued, Sander does not employ the "same tight framing and close-up perspective" for his photographs as "Lendvai-Dircksen did for her own head-and-shoulder portraits."<sup>91</sup> Whereas Lendvai-Dircksen's

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It is important to recognize that Sander's postwar views do not necessarily reflect the reality of the beliefs held by the photographer in the 1910s and 20s, or, for that matter, between 1933 and 1945. The political and aesthetic attitudes of many German artists evolved considerably over the course of the first half of the twentieth century. By 1954, for instance, Sander had experienced two world wars, the political and social upheaval of the Weimar years, the official banning of his first photobook, the experience of inner emigration under National Socialism and the death of his son in a Nazi prison. Sander's personal politics (and their expression in his photography) likely shifted due to these events. In "August Sander's Regional Photobook Series, Nazification, and the Politics of Cultural Landscape" (2022), for instance, Hannah Shaw has analyzed the presence of reactionary themes in Sander's post-1933 *Deutsche Lande, deutsche Menschen* (*German Lands, German People*) publication series. According to Shaw's study, it is evident that Sander tried, at least for a short period of time, to make his work less offensive to Nazi censors following the banning of *Face*. After 1945, however, Sander was once again free to return to his distinctly humanistic style of portraiture and continue assembling his broader sociological project (including, tellingly, portraits of Jews and political prisoners who had been persecuted under National Socialism). It is likely that much of Sander's commentary on his own oeuvre was thus shaped by the capricious political climate of his time. For this reason, I have intentionally focused most of my analysis on Sander's pre-1933 work. The content of this particular statement, though, is ultimately too pertinent to leave unaddressed.

<sup>91</sup> Jennings, "Agriculture," 32.

sitter is displayed up close in quarter profile, Sander's farmer is photographed head-on, and from some distance, making it significantly harder to read his physiognomic "type" according to the methods laid out in pseudoscientific manuals such as Hans F.K. Gunther's *German Head Types of the Nordic Race* (1927). It is impossible, for instance, to see and "read" the shape of this man's forehead, nose and chin without a clear view of his profile. By avoiding conventional physiognomic framing, Sander forces his viewer to look elsewhere in the image for meaning. Whether chosen by the photographer or intentionally incorporated by his sitter, details such as the closed book, the eyeglasses, and decorative wooden chair all point to a certain individuality on the part of the elderly farmer. The face of Lendvai-Dirksen's woman, in contrast, floats passively against a black background. The face is the "literal" and primary site of "meaning" in Lendvai-Dirksen's image, whereas Sander spreads important information throughout his portrait.

To my eyes, the book is the most important symbolic detail in *Farmer Westerwald*. The pseudoscientific racial "meaning" communicated via the face of the woman from Regensburg is ostensibly "innate"—according to reactionary physiognomic theory, this racial "meaning" is determined by nature ("blood and soil") rather than nurture. The knowledge possessed by Sander's farmer is, in contrast, garnered through reading and worldly experience. Whether a Bible or a volume of stories—the scholarly literature on Sander has yet to identify the specificity of the text—the book in this image is undoubtedly a bourgeois symbol of *learned* knowledge and ways of being in the world.<sup>92</sup> Sander may associate the aged physiognomy of his farmer with an "earthy," elemental wisdom, but that wisdom is earned through both physical trial and exposure

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<sup>92</sup> Sander was not religious but he was an avid reader of German philosophy and poetry, including the work of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Hölderlin and Oswald Spengler, among others. If the sitter is indeed holding a Bible, it could be either Protestant or Catholic, given the strength of both Christian traditions in the Westerwald.

to written ideas rather than through racial or ethnic background. The inclusion of both the book and the man's eyeglasses clearly demonstrate his ability to read. Here, earthbound "naturalness" is determined not through closeness to the earth but by way of middle-class aspirations to literacy, intellectual inquiry and religious study. The presence of another book in *Westerwald Farming Woman* (1913) (fig. 8), the third peasant image in *Face*, further supports my argument. In this portrait, an older woman sits in an equally ornate open-weave cane chair, holding a leather-bound volume. Given Claudia Bohn Spector's assertion that "this picture of a farmer's widow from the village of Ottershagen may have been commissioned by her family [in 1912]," it is likely that Sander later chose to incorporate this image into his photobook as an anonymous representative of the peasant "type."<sup>93</sup> Although it is not known what text the sitter holds in her hands—the size suggests a prayer book—the book's foregrounding within the image demonstrates Sander's interest in depicting his peasant sitters as learned or devout.<sup>94</sup> Although not included in *Face*, a similar image depicting an elderly peasant woman romantically titled *The Philosopher* (1913) (fig. 9) also exists in Sander's photographic archive. The thematic affinity between these images is telling. Evidently, Sander considered these women, and his older Westerwald subjects more broadly, as philosopher-like figures. Philosophy ("philo" meaning "love" and "sophos" "wisdom") implies a process of open-ended intellectual inquiry at odds with the deterministic pseudoscience that defined the reactionary thought championed by photographers like Lendvai-Dircksen. By associating his rural sitters with the book-based "philosophical" knowledge championed by the middle-class German *burgher*, Sander

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<sup>93</sup> Bohn-Spector, "Plates," 12.

<sup>94</sup> A prayer book would suggest a more personal object, indicating that this text was already in the woman's possession before her portrait was conceived. Whether the sitter intentionally chose to have her photograph taken holding the book or Sander wanted it included as a prop, the mere presence of the book in this portrait supports my contention that Sander's peasants should not be viewed as one-dimensional physiognomic "types."

distinguishes his approach to the peasant “type” from the explicit biological racism that characterized the reactionary peasant “type.” *Farmer Westerwald* and *Westerwald Farming Woman* may exhibit similar physiognomic traits to Lendvai-Dirksen’s *Woman from Regensburg Region*, but the content and composition of Sander’s portraits points to an entirely different set of political meanings. These are German peasants viewed through a lens of moderate bourgeois romanticism rather than the racial imaginations of the far right. What, though, of the remaining four peasant portraits in Sander’s *Face*; can they too be distinguished from the work of right-wing photographers?

Although I have considered the first and third of Sander’s peasant portraits together in order to draw conclusions from the presence of a book in both photographs, it is also necessary to account for *Shepherd* (1913) (fig. 10)—the second image in *Face*. This half-length portrait of “the shepherd Hermann Pithahn from the small Westerwald village of Giesenhausen” depicts the elderly Pithahn sporting a battered peasant smock, a white beard and an old hat.<sup>95</sup> With its close cropping and emphasis on the weathered physiognomy of its subject, *Shepherd* appears to the casual eye as perhaps the most troubling of Sander’s peasant likenesses in the way that it echoes similar portraits by right-wing photographers like Lendvai-Dirksen. There are, nevertheless, some crucial disparities between this image and photographs like *Woman from the Brandenburg Region* (fig. 11), found on page 109 of Lendvai-Dirksen’s *Face of the German Race* (1932). In his recent analysis of this publication and specific image, Andrés Mario Zervigón’s writes how Lendvai-Dirksen’s “prints themselves lavish their photographic attention principally on older peasants, particularly those whose wrinkled flesh created a tangled dance of light and shadow

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<sup>95</sup> Bohn-Spector, “Plates,” 14.

before... [her] dramatically raking light and sharply focused lens.”<sup>96</sup> As Zervigón notes, *Woman from the Brandenburg Region* is a good example of Lendvai-Dircksen’s tendency to accentuate the timeworn features of her elderly sitters by way of experimentation with dramatic lighting. Sander, on the other hand, emphasises natural lighting in his documentary-like images.<sup>97</sup> *Shepherd*, for instance, was taken outdoors, resulting in a significantly softer rendering of Pithahn’s features. This formal treatment of the peasant’s face indicates Sander’s lack of interest in playing up to excess the aged “rootedness” of his sitter. Whereas Lendvai-Dircksen employs artificial lighting to “reveal,” in the words of Christian Weikop, “every line of the weather-worn faces of her rural subjects [in order to] impart a sense of monumentality and timelessness,” Sander aims for unvarnished realism.<sup>98</sup> While both approaches constitute deliberate aesthetic strategies, it is significantly harder to read reactionary ideas into the softened physiognomy of Pithahn’s face. This desire on Sander’s part to represent different kinds of rural faces subverts the strict typological continuity later found in Lendvai-Dircksen’s peasant work.

Like *Shepherd*, *Westerwald Farming Couple* (1912) (fig. 12) does not conform to the typological standard of the German *bauernschaft* promoted by Lendvai-Dircksen. The fourth photograph in Sander’s photobook, *Westerwald Farming Couple* depicts an elderly man sitting beside his standing wife, against a forested backdrop. The man’s arthritic hands clasp the handle of a rustic walking stick. The verticality of the pine trees is reiterated in the wooden stick and the upright solidity of Sander’s sitters. Leesa Rittelmann claims that a parallel can be drawn between this image and similar portraits by Erna Lendvai-Dircksen: “Dressed in their Sunday best...,” Rittelmann writes, “their status as rural laborers is revealed via slippages in the bourgeois masks

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<sup>96</sup> Zervigón, “The Timeless Imprint,” para 14.

<sup>97</sup> Brückle, “Face-Off,” para 15.

<sup>98</sup> Weikop, “*Der Bauer*,” para 18.

they assume.”<sup>99</sup> To Rittelmann, these “slippages” in Sander’s photograph are the key to understanding its reactionary nature. “From the abbreviated ill-fitting length of the woman’s sleeves to the husband’s gnarled, arthritic hands,” she contends, “their bodies betray a kind of economic and physical hardship that links them to Dircksen’s peasant farmers.”<sup>100</sup> *Westerwald Farming Couple* is, indeed, worth a closer look. I take issue with Rittelmann’s claim, however, that Sander’s peasants can be likened to those of Lendvai-Dircksen by way of their purported experience of “economic and physical hardship.” Although it is true that Lendvai-Dircksen often photographed peasants at work—see, for example, *Farmer from the Swalm* (ca.1932) (fig. 13)—these images tend to celebrate, rather than bemoan, the hardened physicality (and relative prosperity) of the German peasant stock. In fact, and perhaps due to the propagandistic nature of her realist style, Lendvai-Dircksen’s peasants are rarely depicted as wretched or impoverished. Even her older subjects, though certainly wizened and worn down by age, are often photographed smiling, as in *Late harvest wine at Mosel: old woman drinking a “Bubbel”, celtic traditional beverage* (1932) (fig. 14) or *Portrait of an old man from the Free State Mecklenburg-Schwerin* (1932) (fig. 15). Given the lack of evidence of adversity in Lendvai-Dircksen’s choice of cheery subjects, it is misleading for Rittelmann to identify “economic and physical hardship” as a legitimate link between Sander’s *Westerwald Farming Couple* and Lendvai-Dircksen’s imagery.

It is also important to address Rittelmann’s comment regarding the clothing worn by Sander’s couple. She observes, correctly, that the couple has donned their Sunday best in order to sit for a bourgeois-style portrait. As a commercial photographer with a studio in Cologne, Sander

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<sup>99</sup> Rittelmann, “Facing Off,” 150.

<sup>100</sup> Rittelmann, “Facing Off,” 150.



was anything but a stranger to the conventions of middle-class photographic portraiture. Rittelmann, however, detects cracks in the sitter's performance of bourgeois propriety, including the ill-fitting sleeves of the woman's jacket. It is true that the sitter's sleeves do not reach her wrists. This is nevertheless not a convincing way to link Sander's subjects with those of Lendvai-Dirksen, particularly as Lendvai-Dirksen's peasants are rarely presented as threadbare or shabby. More importantly, Lendvai-Dirksen's farmers do not aspire to middle-class behaviours or manners of dress of contemporary society. Consider, for example, Lendvai-Dirksen's image *Germany Free State Prussia: Bueckeburger Farmwoman* of 1935 (fig. 16). In contrast to Sander, who took the majority of his peasant portraits in the Westerwald, Lendvai-Dirksen photographed peasants from all over Germany and Northern Europe. In typical reactionary fashion, she viewed her chosen subjects as regional "types" and often photographed them wearing antiquated nineteenth-century folk costumes. The Bueckeburger woman is a good case study in Lendvai-Dirksen's approach to styling peasants. Once again, she has selected a tightly cropped composition with the sitter in quarter profile so as to offer us, the viewer, a clear look at her chosen subject's physiognomy. What truly stands out in this image, however, is the ornate ruffled collar, *Schlips* necktie and pointed Bueckeburger hood. In comparison, the conservative garments worn by Sander's farming couple look decidedly bourgeois. Whereas Sander's portrait aspires, however unsuccessfully, to a bourgeois ideal of middle-class propriety, Lendvai-Dirksen's image presents the peasant as a cultural symbol of archaic Germanic tradition. The short sleeves Rittelmann notices in Sander's portrait are, therefore, a marker of difference rather than similarity with the reactionary peasant "type." For this reason, and in spite of Rittelmann's argument, Sander's *Westerwald Farming Couple* has little in common with the work of Lendvai-Dirksen.

This argument can be extended to the fifth image in Sander's photobook, *Three Generations of a Farming Family* (1912) (fig. 17). In this sober family portrait, an elderly German couple sits surrounded by their son and grandchildren, framed against another forested background. Although interpreted in the past as evidence of Sander's thematic preoccupation with "generational renewal and regeneration," I argue that this image speaks to social mobility and middle-class aspiration on the part of Germany's peasantry in the early twentieth century rather than the continuity of peasant traditions.<sup>101</sup> The clues are once again present in the garments worn by Sander's sitters.<sup>102</sup> It is true that the older couple present themselves as decidedly more traditional in appearance than their descendants. The patriarch's voluminous peasant smock and stout work boots, for instance, contrast clearly with his son's neatly parted hair, dark Sunday suit and pocket watch. The grandmother is dressed conservatively in black, with her hands clasped in her lap and a plain wool scarf fixed firmly under her chin while her elder granddaughter wears an ornately embroidered dress and a bouffant-like up-do. Both granddaughters sport jewelry and the younger girl has ribbons tied in her hair. Although each sitter has donned their Sunday best in order to sit for the photograph, it is evident that this is a relatively well-to-do, multi-generational farming family. Sander's chosen title seems, at first, to appeal to generational renewal and rooted ancestral heritage but this is not, to my mind, a nostalgic celebration of three generations of hardy German peasant stock. For instance, the glaring absence of the girls' mother, whether through death in childbirth or some other tragedy, troubles any saccharine narrative of generational renewal. A comparison between the image in question and Lendvai-Dirksen's *Two Generations Compared* (1932) (fig. 18) from a double-

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<sup>101</sup> Bohn-Spector, "Plates," 16.

<sup>102</sup> There is great potential for a future study that delves deeply into the specifics of the garments worn by Sander's Westerwald sitters and how they might have fed into contemporaneous readings of individual portraits and the relationship between images.

page spread of *Face of the German Race* is further instructive. In *Two Generations Compared*, Lendvai-Dircksen juxtaposes two images; one of a young girl dressed in traditional peasant attire and another of a smiling older woman with a well-lined face. Given their proximity to one another in the layout of her book and the chosen title, it is obvious that Lendvai-Dircksen is encouraging a close comparison between these portraits. Here, the emphasis is most definitely on generational renewal and the continuity of peasant tradition. The folk costume worn by the girl on the left indicates her intention to carry on the traditions of her forebearers and, with the passing of time, take the place of the older woman on her right. The self-assured smile on the matriarch's face implies that this is a natural and time-honored transition and that continuity and contentment go hand in hand in rural Germany. Sander's image of a farming family is, in contrast, considerably less saccharine and teleological in nature. These are not ersatz folk peasants but modern people intent on taking their place in contemporary society. The modern suit and white collar of the younger man on the far left of Sander's portrait as well as the coiffure of the man's older daughter point to an imitation of urban middle-class styles. Notice the similarity, for example, between the younger man's stiff white collar and the collar worn by the bourgeois patriarch in Sander's later portrait *Middle-Class Family* (ca. 1923) (fig. 19). Or, for that matter, the distinct semblance between the hairstyle of the elder girl in *Three Generations* and that of the young woman in *Middle-Class Family*. Though captured eleven years apart, the stylistic affinity between these two families further demonstrates the material aspirations of Sander's peasant family in 1912. The older couple in *Three Generations* may, like the pine trees behind them, remain firmly rooted in the past, but their children and grandchildren are evidently moving forward into a rapidly changing twentieth century of industrialization, urbanization and mass culture. Unlike Lendvai-Dircksen's girl in peasant costume, neither of Sander's younger

sitters appears to be beholden to the traditions of the past. Their clasped hands and formal bearings echo the propriety exhibited by their grandmother but their garments locate them in a specific historical moment where folk costume had mostly vanished from rural Germany. There is, moreover, little trace of nostalgia or elegy in this portrait. The younger man, in particular, with his determined gaze and balled fist, appears confident in the way his family now sits at the intersection between country and city, peasantry and bourgeois. Unlike the blank-faced girl in Lendvai-Dirksen's portrait, his facial expression identifies him as an individual rather than a "type"—one with aspirations and thoughts of his own. This observation can be extended to the irritated expression on the face of the man's youngest daughter, who seems quite frustrated by this interruption in her play. As art historian Andy Jones has insisted, Sander's portraits undermine the very basis of reactionary physiognomic theory through their subtle assertion of individual subjectivity over traditional typological continuity.<sup>103</sup> "His peasants are presented as bearers of knowledge in their own right," Jones writes.<sup>104</sup> "If physiognomists sought to marginalize the discourse of those they photographed, then Sander places that marginalized discourse at center stage... his sitters are not objectified, but retain their status as subjects."<sup>105</sup> In other words, instead of depicting variations on the same theme like Lendvai-Dirksen, Sander allows for physiognomic disparity within his typological categories; the varied facial expressions of the sitters in *Three Generations* demonstrate individuality rather than blank continuity. The confluence of physiognomic disparity and modern clothing in this portrait illustrates Sander's progressive attitude towards depicting rural Germans in the early twentieth century. The fact that Sander himself selected this specific image to include in the opening pages of *Face* could be

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<sup>103</sup> Andy Jones, "Reading August Sander's Archive," *Oxford Art Journal* 23, no. 1 (2000): 5, 7. Weikop, "Der Bauer," para 15.

<sup>104</sup> Jones, "Reading," 5.

<sup>105</sup> Jones, "Reading," 5.

understood as implying his own willingness to reframe the peasant “type” as mutable and forward-looking rather than elegiac or reactionary in nature at the outset of his 1929 photobook.

Themes of physiognomic disparity, working class aspiration and social change are also evident in Sander’s best known and most celebrated peasant portrait. The key culminating image in *Face’s* peasant sequence, *Young Farmers* (fig. 20) depicts three young men in suits and hats on their way to a country dance in the summer of 1914.<sup>106</sup> As though interrupted in their journey across an open expanse of country, each man holds a walking stick in his right hand and looks back knowingly towards Sander’s camera. The most striking of Sander’s portraits of rural labourers, this is decidedly *not* a depiction of the rooted German *bauernschaft*. As noted by art historians like Christian Weikop, Sander fails to conform to the typological stereotype of the “unchanging” German peasant perpetrated by photographers such as Lendvai-Dircksen by depicting his subjects wearing modern suits.<sup>107</sup> In his concise yet insightful essay “The Suit and the Photograph,” art historian John Berger considers the symbolic significance of the suits worn by the three young men in this photograph. Drawing on a series of close comparative readings of three of Sander’s images, Berger illustrates the complex class dynamics at play in the garb and manner of Sander’s three young farmers on their way to a country dance.<sup>108</sup> According to Berger, the mass-produced and ill-fitting quality of the suits worn by Sander’s young peasants identify them as members of the rural working class. By seeking to conform to the standards of dress adopted by the European upper classes, he argues, the men in Sander’s image unintentionally code themselves as “second-rate, clumsy [and] uncouth.”<sup>109</sup> The tailored suit, Berger claims, may

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<sup>106</sup> Weikop “*Der Bauer*,” para 20.

<sup>107</sup> Weikop “*Der Bauer*,” para 20.

<sup>108</sup> Berger draws his conclusions from a close analysis of Sander’s *Young Farmers* (1913), *Country Band* (1913) and *Urban Missionaries* (1931).

<sup>109</sup> John Berger, “The Suit and the Photograph.” in *Understanding a Photograph*, ed. Geoff Dyer (London: Penguin Books), 42.

enhance the body of the sedentary, well-fed barrister but it deforms and belittles the sturdy, mobile body of the rural labourer. For this reason, Berger concludes that the suit succeeds only in singling out, rather than disguising, the working-class body. Berger's analysis of the photograph in question helps demonstrate how the mass-produced, working-class suit, however awkwardly worn and ill-fitting, became a symbol of social mobility in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Significant for my argument, it helps demonstrate Sander's interest in photographing peasants embracing change through their choice of garments. As in *Three Generations of a Farming Family*, Sander's three farmers are moving away from the trappings of rural tradition rather than returning to them. These are not the traditionally dressed peasants celebrated by Lendvai-Dirksen but modern and youthful individuals on a literal (to the dance) as well as metaphorical (towards modernization and ultimately war) journey. Dress is not, however, the only facet of social change exemplified in *Young Farmers*.

Physiognomically speaking, *Young Farmers* is the most intriguing of the peasant portraits included in Sander's photobook. In his introduction to *Face*, novelist Alfred Döblin considers the photographer's treatment of the peasant face: "Even without seeing their ploughs and fields one can see that the work they do is rough, hard, and monotonous," Döblin writes.<sup>110</sup> "It is work that makes their faces tough and weather-beaten... one can see, too, how they change under new conditions, how their faces are softened by wealth and easier forms of activity."<sup>111</sup> Döblin's observations are telling. On the one hand, he alludes to the conservative physiognomic theory that considered the "weather-beaten" face of the German peasant as the "authentic" face of the *Volk*.<sup>112</sup> On the other hand, Döblin illustrates Sander's subversion of this particular "type"

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<sup>110</sup> Döblin, "Faces, Images, and Their Truth," 13.

<sup>111</sup> Döblin, "Faces, Images, and Their Truth," 13.

<sup>112</sup> Weikop, "*Der Bauer*," para. 6.

through his implicit assertion of social and physiognomic change, manifested in his photograph of the three farmers on their way to a country dance.<sup>113</sup> It is true that the softened faces of Sander's farmers lack the hard lines and worn expressions of the reactionary peasant "type." These men's faces are developing away from the weather-beaten appearance characteristic of their fathers and grandfathers. For this reason, their countenances can be read as communicative of socio-physiognomic change rather than as fixed expressions of traditional Germanic ideals. The implicit narrative of change within the very frame of *Young Farmers* is best described by Michael Jennings, Professor of German at Princeton University, in his essay "Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo Essay in the Late Weimar Republic":

Within the photograph, a certain 'progression' is to be discerned. The leftmost figure is clearly the one with the deepest, presumably permanent roots in the rural environment. His wrinkled clothing, unkempt hair, and the uncertainty mixed with dawning hostility with which he meets the camera eye all contrast tellingly with the habitus of the two remaining figures. If the first figure leans ever so slightly backward, toward the country, the lead figure looks forward in anticipation. Not just the clothing, but especially the physiognomies of these figures point to a more or less successful imitation of urban styles. The arched eyebrow of the third figure, claiming a status as an urban aristocrat in the making, finishes the gestural repertoire, a repertoire that articulates a societal direction and its contradictions.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Döblin, "Faces, Images, and Their Truth," 13; Weikop "*Der Bauer*," para 20.

<sup>114</sup> Jennings, "Agriculture," 32.

Like Döblin, Jennings identifies a “progression” or “societal direction” in the physiognomies of Sander’s young farmers.<sup>115</sup> The physiognomic narrative of *Young Farmers* guides the viewer from left to right across the softening faces of three men who are using this moment of leisure to experiment with the affectations, gestures and trappings (note the dangling cigarette rather than the expected traditional pipe) of urban life. Here, physiognomy is employed not as a tool to establish racial superiority or mourn the disappearance of tradition by way of the wrinkled brow of the elderly German peasant but as a means of tracking a momentous shift in the way young rural Germans were refashioning themselves just prior to the First World War. Rather than repeatedly photographing the same handpicked physiognomies in the manner of Lendvai-Dircksen, Sander allows for physiognomic mutability within the typological category of the peasant. Note, for instance, the confidence in the way that at least two of Sander’s *Young Farmers* look back at the camera. It is true, as both Michael Jennings and John Berger have argued, that these men are experimenting in a somewhat humorous and perhaps unsuccessful fashion with the attire and “gestural repertoire” of upper class urban life; the two men on the right, however, appear despite this to be remarkably self-assured in the way that they gaze back directly into the eyes of the viewer.<sup>116</sup> Considered together, these details point to Sander’s progressive attitude towards the mutability of the peasant “type.” Whereas photographers like Lendvai-Dircksen sought a return to traditional rural ways of being, Sander was evidently unafraid to face the future through images like *Young Farmers*. For this reason, I see no evidence in this portrait of what Leesa Rittelmann deems Sander’s “nostalgia for the traditional values embodied by the Westerwald peasants.”<sup>117</sup> If there were any sense of nostalgia induced by this

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<sup>115</sup> Jennings, “Agriculture,” 32.

<sup>116</sup> Jennings, “Agriculture,” 32; Berger, “The Suit,” 42.

<sup>117</sup> Rittelmann, “Facing Off,” 153.



image as it was published in 1929, it would have been related to the loss of life of German youth in the First World War. As a veteran of that world-altering conflict, Sander was never uncritical in his acknowledgement of modernity. His portraits of Weimar's homeless and sick attest to that fact. Although *Young Farmers* was taken in the spring of 1914, months before its three subjects, who have since been identified as Otto Krieger (left), August Klein (middle) and Ewald Klein (right), were called up to fight, the photograph is now replete with the specificity of August Klein's death at the age of twenty-two, somewhere on the Western Front.<sup>118</sup> Significantly, as author John Green has revealed in his book *The Anthropocene Reviewed: Essays on a Human-Centered Planet* (2021), neither Otto Krieger nor August nor Ewald Klein were, in fact, farmers.<sup>119</sup> All three men worked in an iron ore mine near the village of Dünebusch and Ewald Klein was Sander's cousin, indicating that Sander knew his true profession but decided to identify him as a farmer instead.<sup>120</sup> Sander's intentional labeling of Krieger and the Kleins as farmers can be understood as further proof of the photographer's wish to craft for his viewers a modern and mutable version of the peasant "type." In the context of Sander's intentional layout and labelling of *Face's* images, *Young Farmers* remains an image of three young men who, as I have shown, do not conform to the reactionary stereotype of the German peasant promoted by right-wing photographers like Erna Lendvai-Dircksen.

### **Cityward Movement and Narrative in Sander's Peasant Portraits**

How, though, does the progressive depiction of the German peasantry in *Young Farmers* relate to the other five peasant portraits found at the outset of *Face*? In the following, I will

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<sup>118</sup> John Green, *The Anthropocene Reviewed: Essays on a Human-Centered Planet* (New York: Dutton, 2021), 276-280.

<sup>119</sup> Green, *The Anthropocene*, 276.

<sup>120</sup> Green, *The Anthropocene*, 276.

demonstrate how *Young Farmers* can be understood as the key concluding image in a six-portrait narrative assembled by Sander in the first six pages of his first publication. Defined by the evolution from elderly peasant to modern young farmer, this miniature peasant narrative is socially progressive rather than reactionary as it foregrounds the visual symbols of socio-cultural change.<sup>121</sup>

Considered in isolation, the first three photographs in *Face—Farmer Westerwald* (1913), *Shepherd* (1913), and *Westerwald Farming Woman* (1913)—appear, at first glance, to conform to reactionary stereotypes of the “rooted” German peasant.<sup>122</sup> As I have already shown in my analyses of *Farmer Westerwald* and *Westerwald Farming Woman*, however, there are important clues in these images that point to more moderate political readings of their contents. Even the close-up portrait of the weathered “Shepherd” interrupts any easy reading of Sander’s peasants as right-wing “types.” The location of *Shepherd*, moreover, between *Farmer Westerwald* and *Westerwald Farming Women*, indicates Sander’s willingness to explore different approaches to representing the German peasant. Pithahn’s portrait looks considerably more candid than the two aforementioned images. The subject appears to have paused only momentarily in his work to turn towards Sander’s lens. The naturalness of this image is astounding. If the stiff posing and inclusion of props in *Farmer Westerwald* and *Westerwald Farming Women* illustrate Sander’s wish to reframe the farmer as a philosopher-like figure, the unaffected simplicity of *Shepherd* demonstrates that Sander also believed the German peasant could be multiple things at once. The photographer’s decision to downplay the aged physiognomy of his sitter by shooting outdoors in natural light, as well as his willingness to experiment with a more natural approach

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<sup>121</sup> See fig. 1 for a composite image of Sander's Peasants.

<sup>122</sup> Weikop “*Der Bauer*,” para 6.

to posing his subjects indicate Sander's lack of interest in the reactionary conventions of physiognomic peasant portraiture. The next two images in Sander's portfolio, *Westerwald Farming Couple* (1912), and *Three Generations of a Farming Family* (1912), illustrate a distinct movement away from any lingering idea of "rooted" tradition towards youth and modernity. The focus here is increasingly on generational change and cityward movement; Sander's sequence of peasant images charts a progression away from the old towards the young, from agriculture to urbanity. The older daughter in *Three Generations*, for instance, would be only a little younger than the women the men in *Young Farmers* would have met at the dance. As the key culminating image in Sander's sequence, *Young Farmers* is fundamentally an acknowledgment of modern change and its effect on the German peasantry. This is communicated not only by way of the young men's modern garb, manner and softened physiognomy but also through the presence of an open horizon in the image's background. The backdrop of solid pine trees that rooted the sitters of *Westerwald Farming Couple* and *Three Generations* has disappeared, replaced instead by open country and sky, suggesting the peasants' movement away from their roots in the soil towards newly urban horizons. This grouping of images can thus be read as an acknowledgement of change rather than an elegiac effort to bemoan the loss of continuity in the modern world.

As I have shown in my close reading of the images in question, the six peasant portraits that open *Face* are not intended to form a traditional typological portfolio—there is, after all, little to no emphasis on the continuity of identifiable characteristics such as wrinkles, facial expressions or clothing—rather, they are intended to form a physiognomic *narrative* that charts a cityward movement from older peasant to young farmer. The emphasis here is on narrative movement rather than typological stasis; each of Sander's peasants is an individual (rather than a "type") moving the narrative forward towards the self-conscious modernity of *Young Farmers*

(1914). This image is concerned not with the degeneration of the peasant “type”—what reactionaries of the time would have considered the corrupting effects of modernisation—but rather its mutability. Sander’s peasant subjects evolve with the times. In *Young Farmers*, this change is acknowledged and offered up as a contemporary sociological phenomenon rather than an irreversible decline. For this reason, Sander’s portfolio of peasant “types” should be understood as a clear-eyed acknowledgment of modernisation rather than, as Leesa Rittelmann and George Baker have argued, a fixed reactionary statement on traditional rural values and their degeneration in the face of industrial urbanization.

The key to this reading of *Face*’s peasant portrait “portfolio” rests on the assertion that Sander’s images are intended to be read as a sequence rather than as individual statements. Sander was, of course, not the first twentieth-century German to use a narrative of peasant images in this manner. Käthe Kollwitz’s *Bauernkrieg (Peasant War)* etchings of 1903-1908 (fig. 21) can be understood as a specifically German precedent for this kind of visual storytelling. A product of Kollwitz’s revolutionary politics during the Wilhelmian era, this inflammatory series illustrates how poverty, back-breaking labour and mistreatment led Germany’s rural population to take up arms in the ill-fated German Peasants’ War of 1524-1525. Each etching in Kollwitz’s seven-part series builds on the image before it, in order to tell the story of the origins of the revolt and its eventual violent repression. Although considerably less incendiary (and explicitly political) in nature, the six-image peasant narrative that opens *Face* functions much in the same way as Kollwitz’s series.<sup>123</sup> As I have shown, Sander’s portraits come together to chart a visual

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<sup>123</sup> Whether or not Sander was familiar with this specific series of etchings, it is apparent that the photographer was exposed to similarly revolutionary conceptions of the German peasant through the work of his friend and member of the Cologne Progressives Frans Seiwert.

cityward narrative away from rural tradition. Each photograph is meant to be considered in relation to the next.

Sander himself appears to have encouraged this comparative aspect of his photography. Two years before the publication of *Face*, a selection of Sander's photographs were shown at the 1927 Cologne *Kunstverein* exhibition.<sup>124</sup> Organized by the Cologne Artists' Circle, the exhibition would constitute the first major "public presentation" of Sander's work.<sup>125</sup> Gabriele Conrath-Scholl and Susanne Lange write how "a photograph documenting the exhibition shows the elongated exhibition space at the Kunstverein in Cologne where Sander displayed his photographs."<sup>126</sup> "What [the photograph] reveals," they write, "is that Sander presented most of his pictures in pairs, mounted in frames set edge to edge in double rows."<sup>127</sup> Even at this early stage of putting forward parts of his collective portrait, Sander was already prompting his viewers to think about the relationship *between* his images.<sup>128</sup> It is likely, therefore, that the photographer's tendency towards comparison and sequence is also reflected in the layout of his 1929 publication. This comparative aspect of Sander's photography, coupled with the photobook medium's emphasis on presenting images in sequence rather than as individual pieces of visual information, helps further support my argument for the existence of a progressive, rather than reactionary, visual narrative within *Face*. As Michael Jennings has noted, the photobook is organized according to a "smooth flow of images from countryside through small town to city."<sup>129</sup> By expanding Jennings' analysis of the physiognomic narrative in *Young Farmers* to the

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<sup>124</sup> Gabrielle Conrath-Scholl and Susanne Lange. "August Sander: *People of the 20th Century* The Development of a Concept," in *August Sander: People of the 20th Century*, ed. Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur (Cologne:Schirmer/Mosel, 2017), 12.

<sup>125</sup> Conrath-Scholl, Lange, "August Sander," 12.

<sup>126</sup> Conrath-Scholl, Lange, "August Sander," 13.

<sup>127</sup> Conrath-Scholl, Lange, "August Sander," 13.

<sup>128</sup> Conrath-Scholl, Lange, "August Sander," 13.

<sup>129</sup> Jennings, "Birth of the Photo-Essay," 29.

sequence of six peasant portraits in *Face*, I have shown how these photographs come together to demonstrate Sander's progressive attitude towards the evolution of the peasant "type" and, more broadly, to social change. This attitude is clear in a radio address given by Sander himself in 1931, a mere two years after *Face* had been published: "Human beings, unlike animals, live in societies that are constantly changing. Thus people develop, adjusting to their changing conditions, and are subjected to more change in their environment than other living beings."<sup>130</sup> These remarks underscore what his work had already argued—that Sander shared little in terms of values with his reactionary contemporaries who sought to slow rather than acknowledge the changes brought on by modernity in order to return, at least through their imagery, to an idyllic Germanic past.

### Conclusion

August Sander's decision to include six images of German peasants at the outset of his 1929 photobook *Face of Our Time* continues to provoke disagreement amongst art historians intent on deciphering the photographer's ideologically ambiguous body of work. In my individual analyses of *Farmer Westerwald*, *Westerwald Farming Women*, *Shepherd*, *Westerwald Farming Couple*, *Three Generations of a Farming* and *Young Farmers*, I have demonstrated through a scrutiny of attire, props, physiognomy, composition and venue, the essential differences between these images and the reactionary portraits of Erna Lendvai-Dircksen. Firstly, I have shown how Sander's choice to frame his elderly peasant sitters as literate in an appeal to educated middle-class sensibilities, differentiates his farmers from the vacuous physiognomic stereotypes of Lendvai-Dircksen. Secondly, I have demonstrated how the modern clothing worn

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<sup>130</sup> August Sander "Photography as a Universal language," trans. Anne Halley, *Massachusetts Review* (1978): 46.

by many of Sander's peasants contrasts heavily with the traditional folk costumes of Lendvai-Dircksen's sitters, indicating Sander's progressive attitude towards the mutability of the peasant "type." Furthermore, I have pointed to the ways in which Sander's willingness to subvert the expectations of reactionary physiognomy in his photograph *Young Farmers* effectively separates his work from those who sought to promote the idea of an unchanging and earthbound peasant physiognomy. Finally, I have illustrated how these images come together to form a progressive sequence that, with the inclusion of *Young Farmers* as its key concluding image, indicates Sander's rejection of the reactionary stereotype of the "rooted" German peasant. Characterized by the progression from aged peasant to modern rural *flâneur*, Sander's 1929 narrative is not culturally pessimistic, as it acknowledges rather than bemoans the visual symbols of socio-cultural change, effectively separating Sander from those right-wing photographers who worked to further the "mythologization" of an immutable peasant physiognomy. Perhaps a product of his having grown up in the Westerwald—a region of Germany that experienced early industrialization—Sander's progressive attitude towards modernization is evident across his body of work.<sup>131</sup> Although the movement from country to city evident throughout *Face of Our Time* is far from an uncritical celebration of modernism—the photobook's final photograph *Unemployed Man* (1928) (fig. 22) implies that Sander was aware of the grim realities of urban life—there is nothing elegiac or damning in Sander's account of early twentieth-century German life. Rather than settling for the reactionary stereotypes championed by many of his right-wing peers, Sander offers the viewer awarts and all portrait of his time that is both balanced and humanistic in nature.

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<sup>131</sup> Gabriele Conrath-Scholl, "Portrait of a People: The Photographs of August Sander," in *In Focus: August Sander*, ed. Weston Naef (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2000), 101–2.

Ultimately, it is for these characteristics that *Face* was banned by the Nazis in 1936 and the photographic plates subsequently confiscated and destroyed. Although some have claimed that Sander's photobook was censored because of the photographer's choice to include an introduction by German-Jewish novelist and socialist Alfred Döblin, rather than the publication's ostensibly "subversive" subject matter, it is evident given the right-wing reception of *Face* upon its release in 1929 that Sander's collective "face" did not reflect the nation-state envisioned under the sought-after world of National Socialism.<sup>132</sup> In a 1930 review of *Face* for the widely-read publication *Der Tag*, for instance, critic Franz Evers wrote: "It is a work of revolt and evidently intended as such. It thus stands as a physiognomic testimonial to a lack of leadership, a testimonial to poor instinct and ruthless ambition, not a testimonial to upswing, enthusiasm, or even life..." "We want," he continued, "to see the other face of our time, too. A physiognomic collection of truly regal farmers of the present is currently being put together and will hopefully be published in the near future."<sup>133</sup> It is telling that Evers directs his readers' attention to Sander's less than "regal" treatment of the German farmer as evidence of *Face*'s "subversion." Sander's Westerwald peasants evidently failed to live up to the reactionary stereotype of the earthbound rural "type." The harsh tone of this review, moreover, demonstrates the right-wing resistance to Sander's photobook when it first appeared in 1929. This is not surprising, for, as Rose-Carol Washton Long has established, *Face* also contains portraits of important left-wing

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<sup>132</sup> Hannah Shaw has argued in "The Trouble with the Censorship of August Sander's *Antlitz der Zeit*," *PhotoResearcher*, no. 31 (2019): 204-205, that, given Döblin's work was strictly censored under National Socialism, his introduction to Sander's photobook likely resulted in the publication being banned and the unsold copies and plates destroyed when the Nazis rose to power. To Shaw, this raises the question of whether Sander's photographs were even considered to be "subversive" by Nazi standards.

<sup>133</sup> Franz Evers, "Physiognomische Querschnitte," *Der Tag*, Berlin, September 4, 1930 cited in Gabriele Conrath-Scholl, Susanne Lange, "August Sander: People of the 20th Century: The Development of a Concept" in: Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur (ed.), *August Sander: People of the 20th Century: A Cultural Work of Photographs Divided into Seven Groups*, Munich 2013, 16. Conrath-Scholl and Lange note that Evers is referring in his final sentence to the photobook by Erich Retzlaff, *Die Von der Scholle*, published in 1931 in Düsseldorf.



figures such as the German anarchist and antimilitarist Erich Mühsam (1878-1934) and the political activist and founding member of the KPD Paul Fröhlich (1884-1953).<sup>134</sup> There can be little doubt that the presence of these recognizable individuals in Sander's photobook irritated conservative and right-wing readers of his work. The complex mosaic of Weimar-era society pictured in Sander's publication was, fundamentally, too contradictory and at times incendiary to serve National Socialist propaganda.<sup>135</sup>

Ultimately, however, the ideological ambiguity evident throughout Sander's body of work can only be addressed up to a point. The scope of Sander's 1929 photobook is vast. This inquiry has only addressed the role of one "type" in what is a much larger, sociological compendium. The subsequent groupings of images that make up *Face* almost certainly contain a number of contradictions and enigmas. As Michael Jennings notes, "exactly where the depicted society has come from... and where it is going, and where its proper center should lie remain subjects of debate."<sup>136</sup> The final photographs of the redundant seaman or the unemployed man, for instance, could be interpreted as a symbolic representation of the undeniable cost of modernity, what Jennings deems the "unavoidable results of societal transition."<sup>137</sup> The broader organization of *Face* does seem to present more questions than answers.

What then do scholars stand to gain from further inquiry into Sander's body of work, both in terms of *Face* and later iterations of his project? Andy Jones has offered an answer to this question: "Contradiction is the essence of *Antlitz der Zeit*," he writes.<sup>138</sup> "These contradictions

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<sup>134</sup> Washton Long, "August Sander," para 9.

<sup>135</sup> Claudia Bohn-Spector, "Introduction," in *In Focus: August Sander: Photographs from the J. Paul Getty Museum*, ed. Weston Naef (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2000), 9; Brückle, "Face-Off," para 4.

<sup>136</sup> Jennings, "Agriculture," 30.

<sup>137</sup> Jennings, "Agriculture," 33.

<sup>138</sup> Jones, "Reading," 21.

do not exist only within the pages of the book; they are real social contradictions. We should resist the desire to iron those paradoxes out, but rather be prepared to think them through.”<sup>139</sup> I agree with Jones that the goal is not to reach a definite conclusion with regards to Sander’s politics but to engage with the potential meanings embedded in his photographic legacy. The first step towards this kind of scholarly engagement is an acknowledgment of the extraordinarily complex political landscape that defined Germany during the 1920s. When it comes to analyzing the work of Weimar-era artists and cultural figures, the tendency is often to try to locate them on either the right or left of the political spectrum. The artistic production of the period is, for contemporary political reasons, often reframed as an ideological and aesthetic battleground between the reactionary right and the communist left. In reality, like many of his contemporaries, August Sander does not fit wholly into either of these seemingly distinct political camps. Sander’s work, rather, demonstrates both conservative and progressive tendencies. The photographer was certainly no revolutionary. Neither, as I have aimed to demonstrate through my analysis of Sander’s treatment of the peasant “type”, was he a reactionary racialist. Despite the claims of scholars like George Baker and Leesa Rittelman, Sander’s work is best understood as occupying a moderate political grey zone. A reader of Oswald Spengler, with a censored photobook and a son with communist ties, Sander himself appears relatively early on to have been aware of his own contradictions. In a rare commentary on his own work, Sander wrote in 1927: “I have been a photographer for thirty years and have taken photography very seriously; I have followed good and bad paths and have recognized my mistakes.”<sup>140</sup> “I hope,” he asks, “I will be forgiven.”<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Jones “Reading,” 21.

<sup>140</sup> August Sander, “Remarks on My Exhibition at the Cologne Art Union,” (1927) in *Photography In the Modern Era*, ed. Christopher Phillips (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Aperture, 1989), 107.

<sup>141</sup> Sander, “Remarks,” 107.

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Figures



Fig. 1 August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit* (*Face of Our Time*). Munich: Transmare Verlag/Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1929.



Fig. 2 *Antlitz der Zeit (Face of Our Time) Peasant Portfolio* assembled by Emmett Mackay with images drawn from August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit (Face of Our Time)* (Munich: Transmare Verlag/Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1929).





Fig. 3 Erna Lendvai-Dirksen, dust jacket to *Das Deutsche Volksgesicht* (*The Face of the German Race*) (Berlin: Kulturelle Verlag-Gesellschaft, 1932).



Fig. 4 Käthe Kollwitz, *Losbruch (Outbreak)*, sheet five of the *Bauernkrieg (Peasants War)* Cycle, 1921, etching and soft-ground etching, 55.25 × 68.26 cm, Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham.





Fig. 5 Wilhelm Leibl, *Das Mädchen mit der Nelke (Girl with a Carnation)*, c.1880, oil on wood, 1880, 30 × 27.5 cm, Belvedere Museum, Vienna.

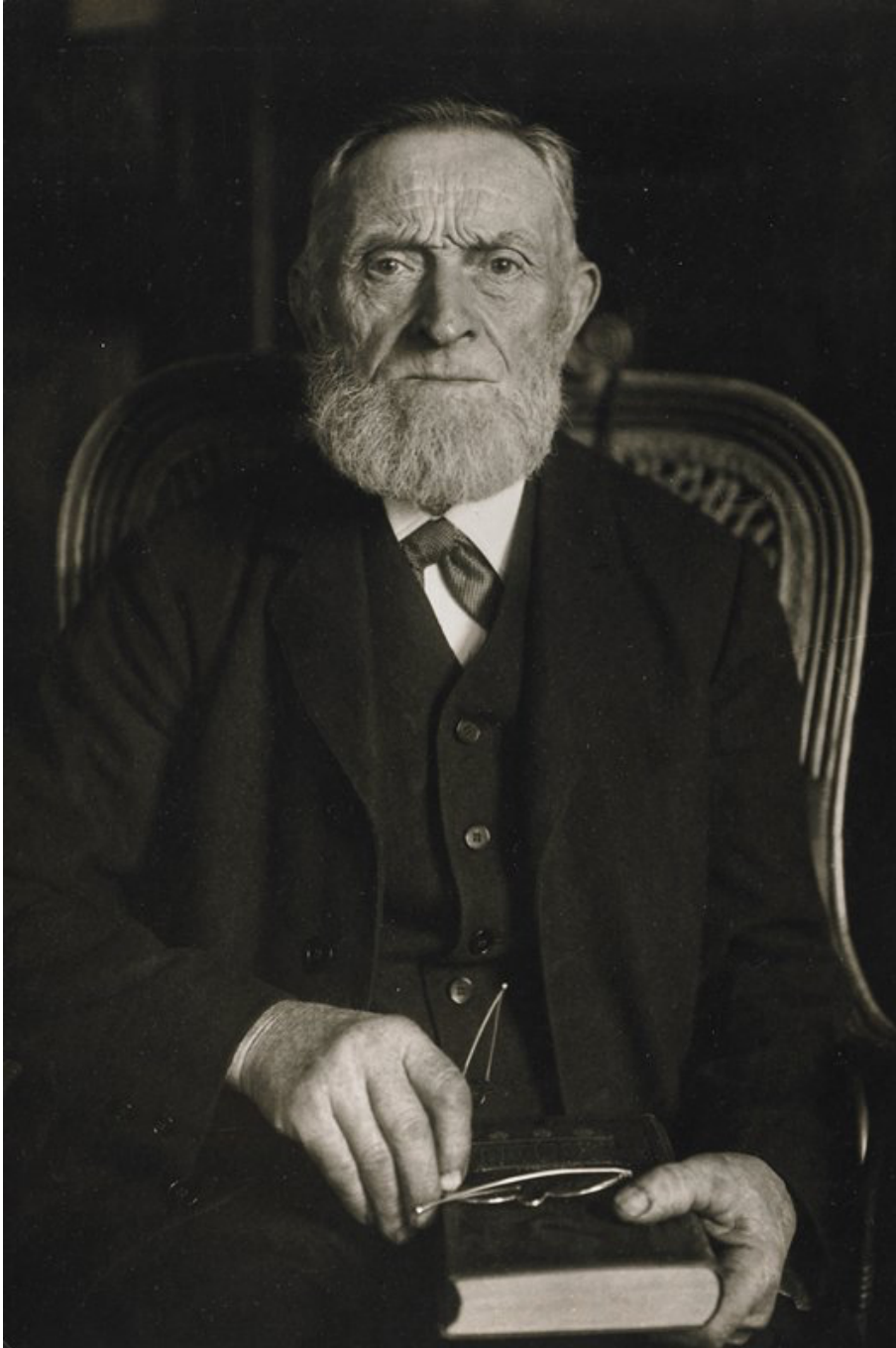


Fig. 6 August Sander, *Westerwälder Bauer (Farmer Westerwald)*, 1913, From August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit (Face of Our Time)* (Munich: Transmare Verlag/Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1929).



Fig. 7 Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, *Frau aus der Regensburger Gegend* (*Woman from Regensburg Region*) From Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, *Das deutsche Volksgesicht* (*The Face of the German Race*) (Berlin: Kulturelle Verlag-Gesellschaft, 1932), p. 155. (Image taken from Mario Zervigón, Andrés. "The Timeless Imprint of Erna Lendvai-Dircksen's *Face of the German Race*." In *Photography in the Third Reich: Art, Physiognomy and Propaganda*, edited by Christopher Webster, 97-128. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2021. <http://books.openedition.org/obp/18388>, Fig 3.6.)





Fig. 8 August Sander, *Bäuerin aus dem Westerwald* (Westerwald Farming Woman), 1913, From August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit* (*Face of Our Time*) (Munich: Transmare Verlag/Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1929).



Fig. 9 August Sander, *Die Philosophin (The Philosopher)*, 1913, From August Sander *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts (People of the Twentieth Century)* (Cologne: Schirmer/Mosel, 2017).

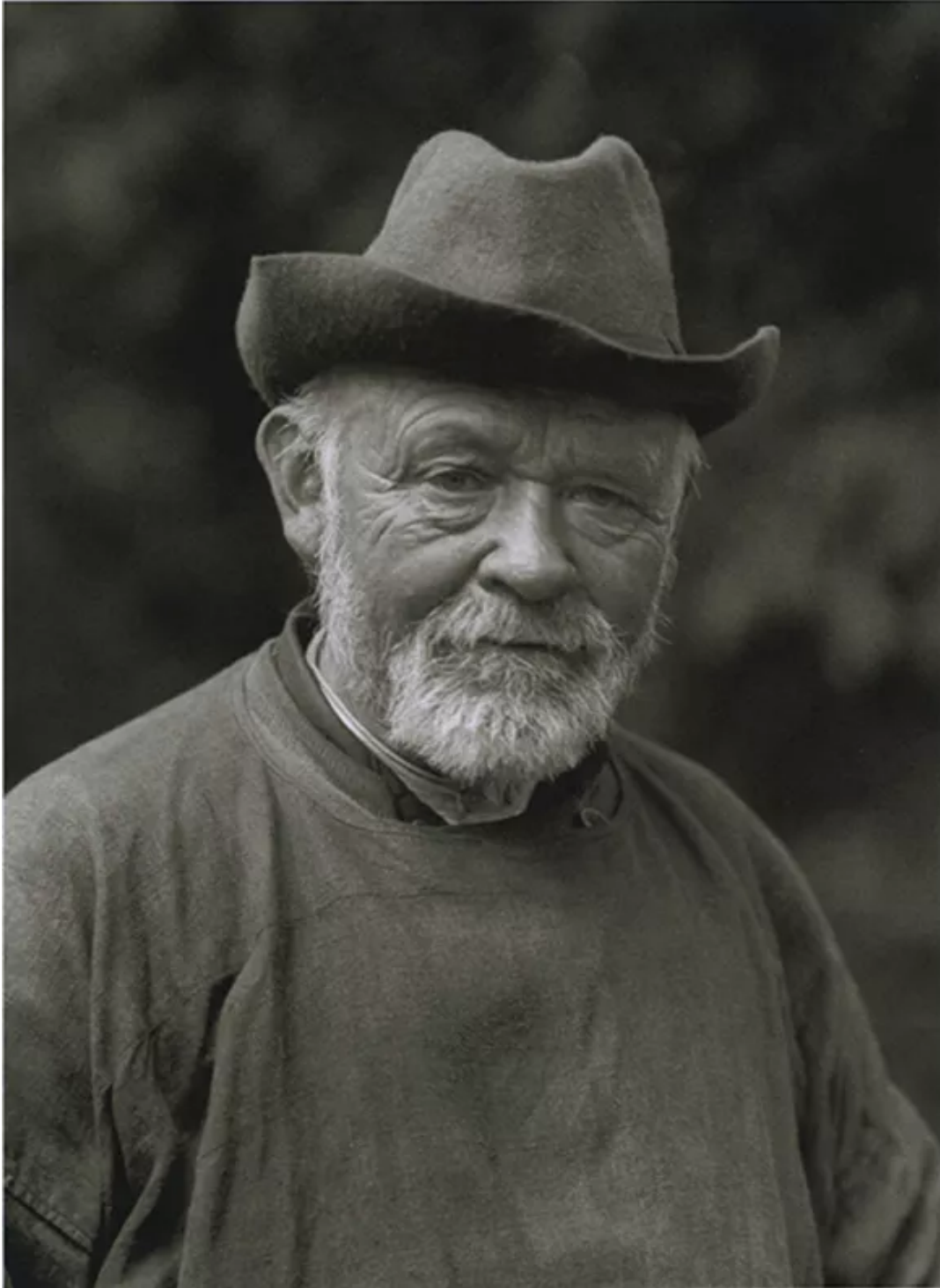


Fig. 10 August Sander, *Hirte (Shepherd)*, 1913, From August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit (Face of Our Time)* (Munich: Transmare Verlag/Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1929).



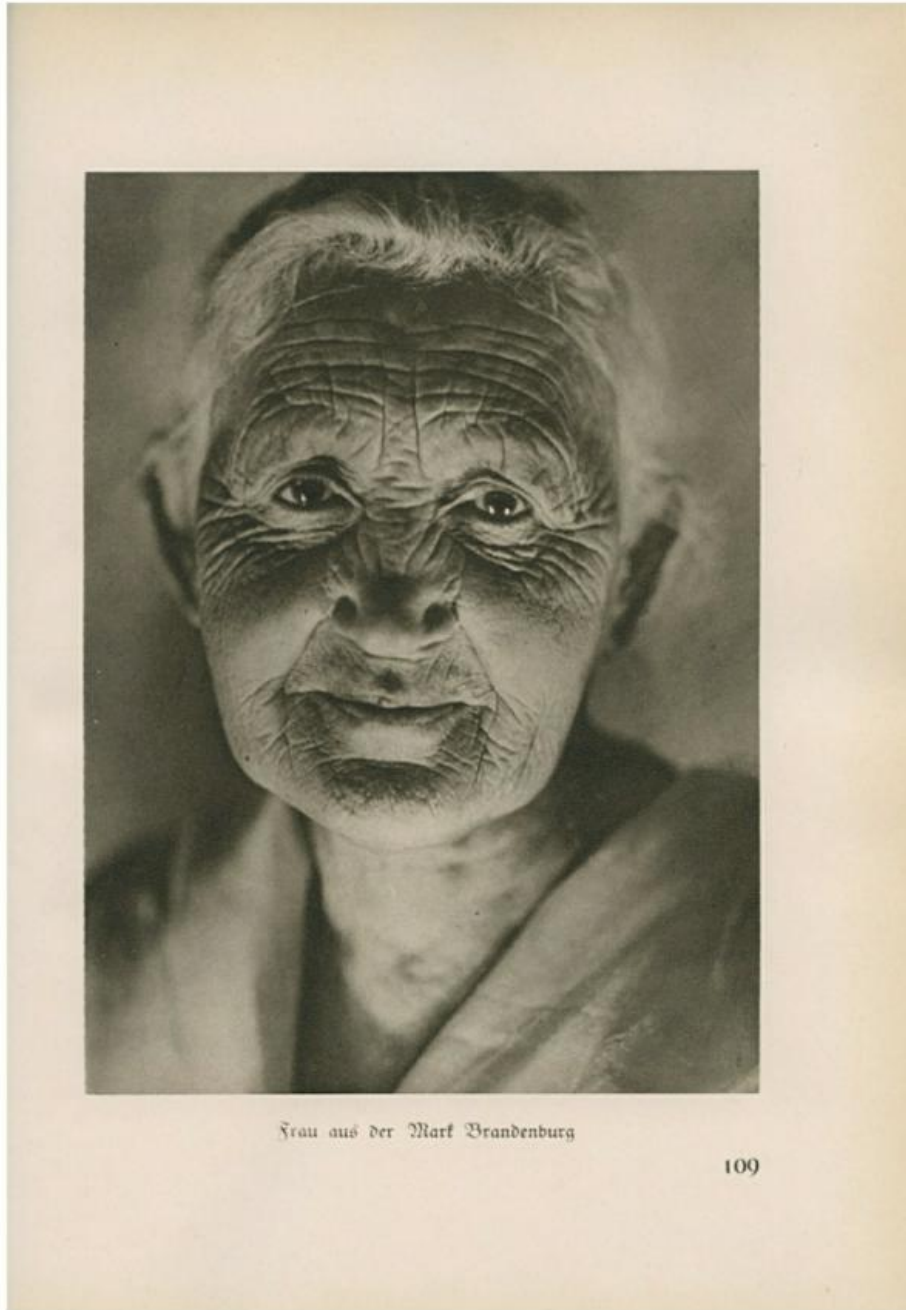


Fig. 11 Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, *Frau aus der Mark Brandenburg* (*Woman from the Brandenburg Region*), From Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, *Das deutsche Volksgesicht* (*The Face of the German Race*) (Berlin: Kulturelle Verlag-Gesellschaft, 1932), p. 109. (Image taken from Mario Zervigón, Andrés. "The Timeless Imprint of Erna Lendvai-Dircksen's *Face of the German Race*." In *Photography in the Third Reich: Art, Physiognomy and Propaganda*, edited by Christopher Webster, 97-128. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2021. <http://books.openedition.org/obp/18388>, Fig. 3.3.)



Fig. 12 August Sander, *Bauernpaar aus dem Westerwald (Westerwald Farming Couple)*, 1912, From August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit* (Munich: Transmare Verlag/Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1929).



Fig. 13 Erna Lendvai-Dirksen, *Farmer from the Swalm - in the northwest of the Rhoen Mountains - in the corn harvest - ca. 1932*, From *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* No. 39/1933.

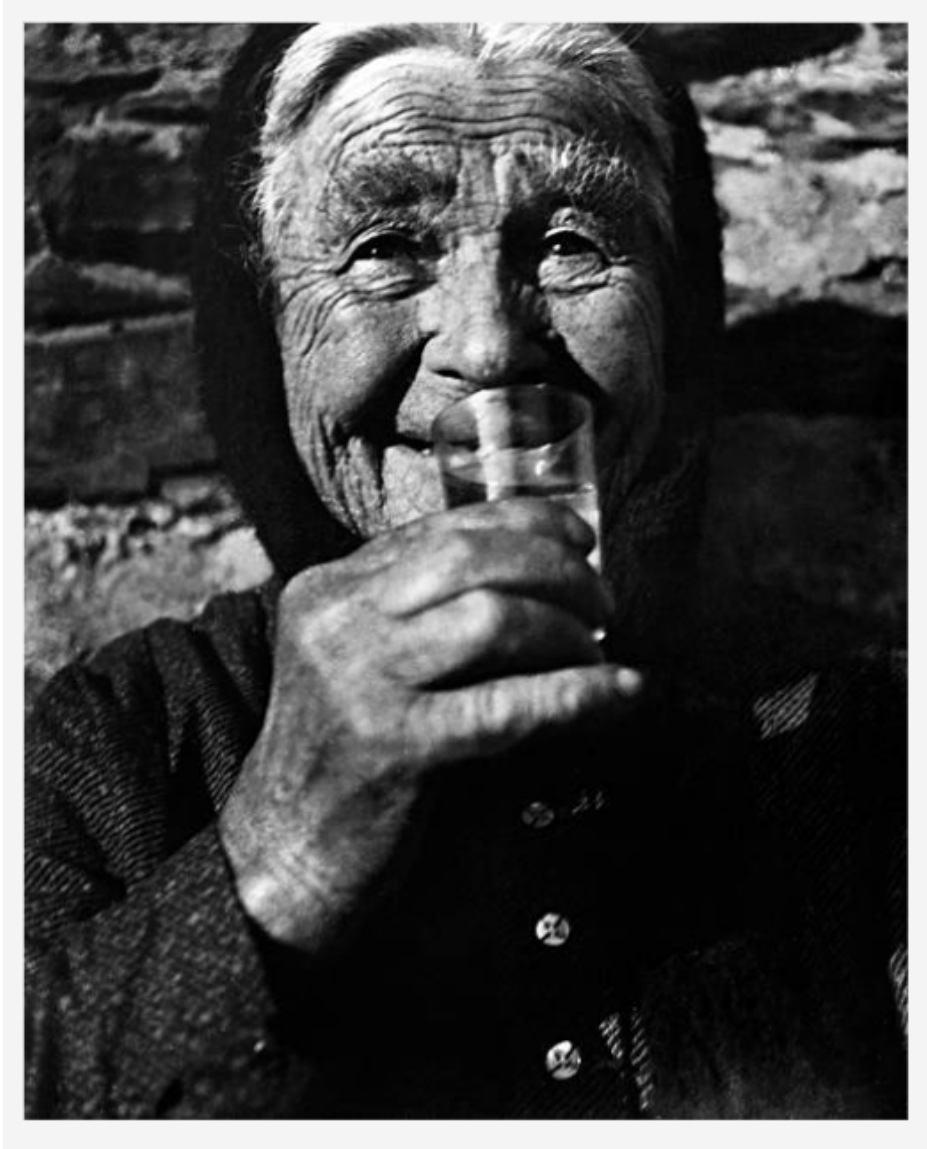


Fig. 14 Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, *Late harvest wine at Mosel: old woman drinking a 'Bubbel', celtic traditional beverage*, 1932, From *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* No. 48/1932.

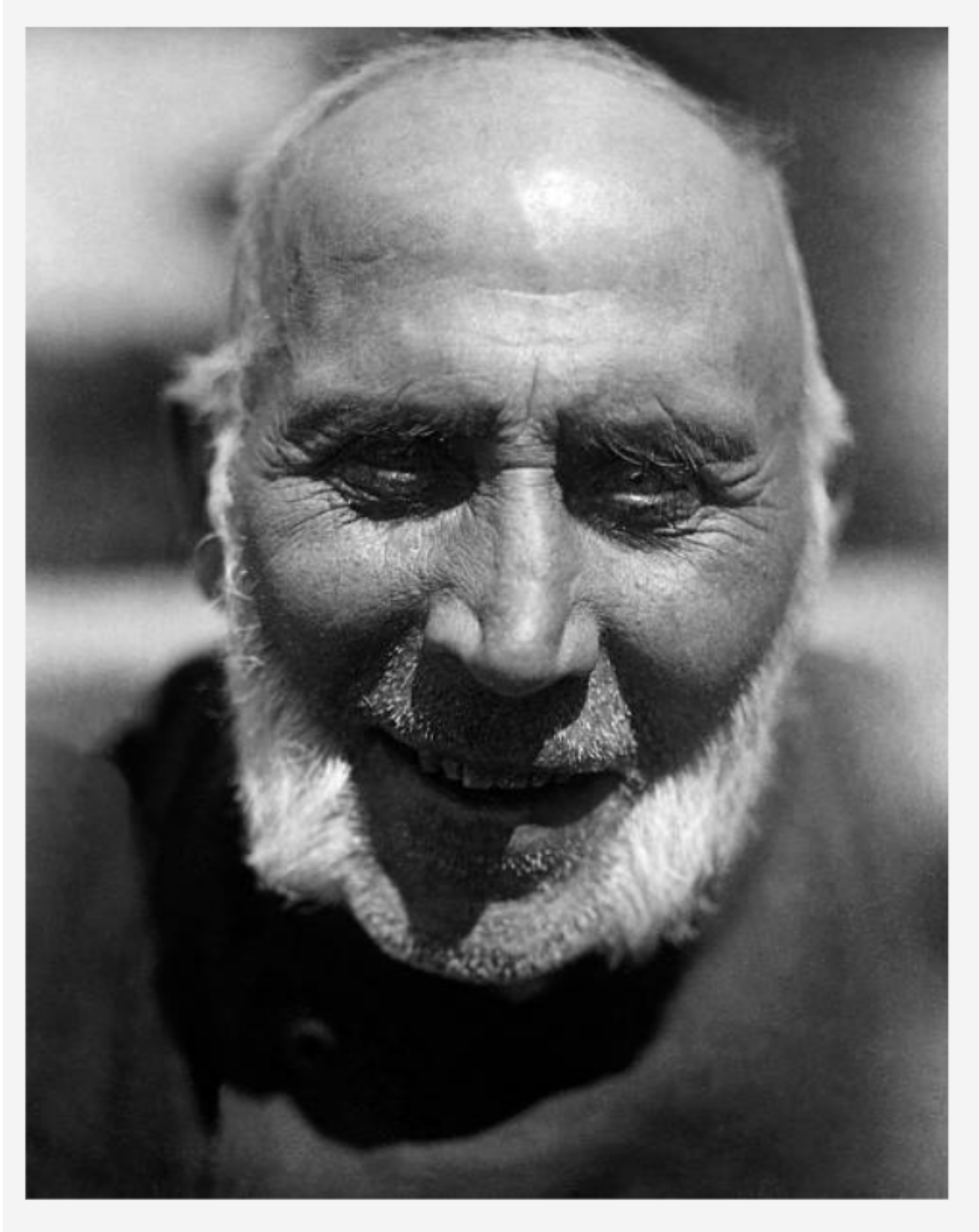


Fig. 15 Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, *Portrait of an old man from the Free State Mecklenburg-Schwerin*, 1932, From *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* No. 24/1932.





Fig. 16 Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, *Bueckeburger Farmwoman*, 1935, From *Sieben Tage* No. 23/1935.



Fig. 17 August Sander, *Bauerngeneration (Three Generations of a Farming Family)*, 1912, From August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit (Face of Our Time)* (Munich: Transmare Verlag/Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1929)



Fig. 18 Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, *Zwei Generationen gegenübergestellt* (*Two Generations Compared*), 1932. From Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, *Das deutsche Volksgesicht* (*Face of the German Race*) (Berlin: Drei Masken Verlag, 1934), pp. 140–141.





Fig. 19 August Sander, *Bürgerliche Familie* (*Middle-Class Family*), ca. 1923, From August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit* (*Face of Our Time*) (Munich: Transmare Verlag/Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1929).



Fig. 20 August Sander, *Jungbauern (Young Farmers)*, 1914. From August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit (Face of Our Time)* (Munich: Transmare Verlag/Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1929).



Fig. 21 Käthe Kollwitz, *Bauernkrieg (Peasants War)* Cycle, 1903-1908, Sheets 1/7. *The Ploughmen* (1907), *Raped* (1907-1908), *Sharpening the Scythe* (1908), *Arming in a Vault* (1906), *Charge* (1902-1903), *Battlefield* (1907), *The Prisoners* (1908). Assembled by Emmett Mackay with images drawn from the website of the *Käthe Kollwitz Museum*, Cologne. <https://www.kollwitz.de/en/cycle-peasants-war-overview>



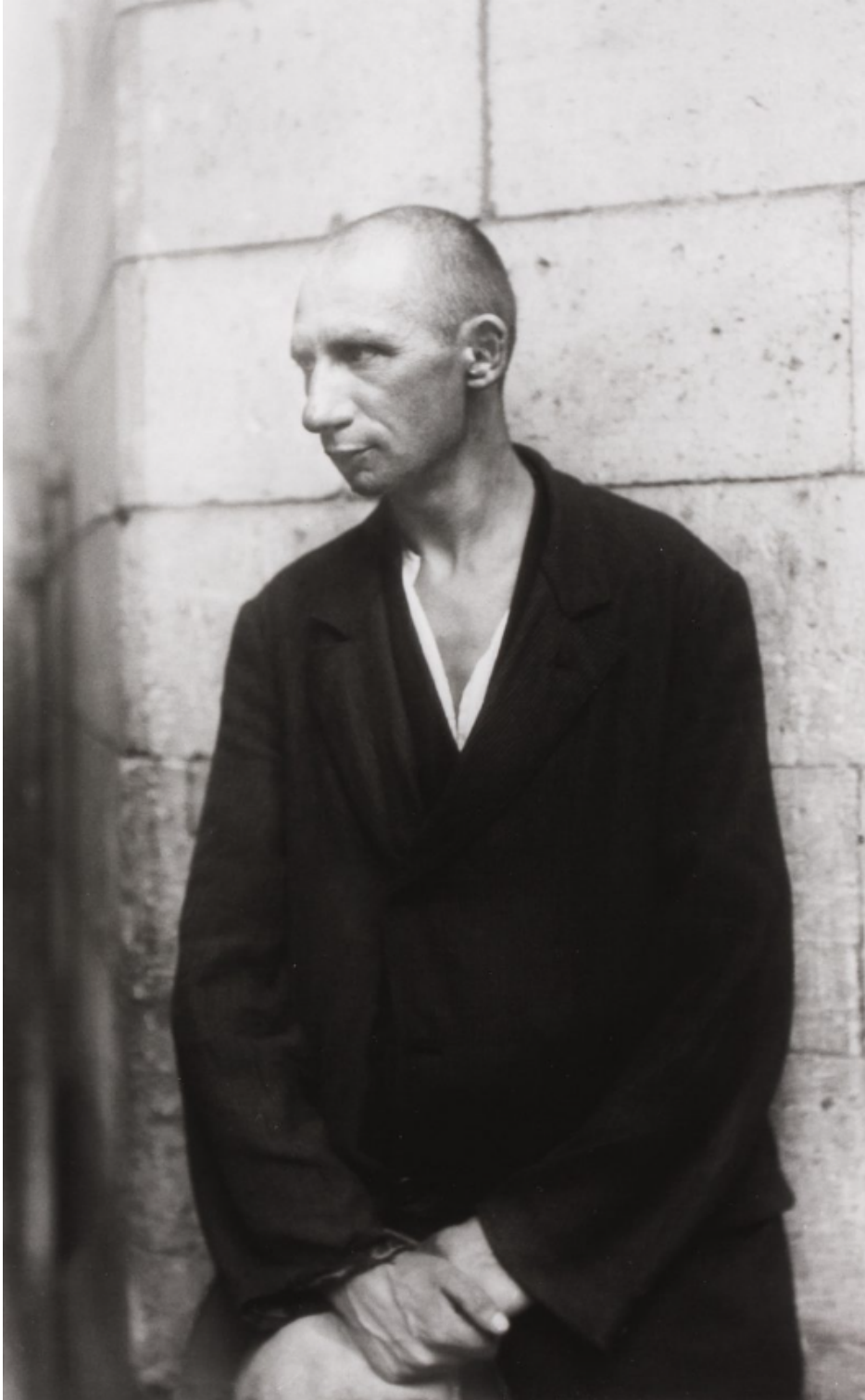


Fig. 22 August Sander, *Arbeitslos (Unemployed)* (1928) From August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit (Face of Our Time)* (Munich: Transmare Verlag/Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1929).