

Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

The things in between: photographs from the Mariannhill Mission in KwaZulu-Natal and other objects in situations of intermediality

Rippe, C.

Citation

Rippe, C. (2021, July 1). *The things in between: photographs from the Mariannhill Mission in KwaZulu-Natal and other objects in situations of intermediality*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3193884

Version:	Publisher's Version
License:	Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3193884

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3193884 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Rippe, C.
Title: The things in between: photographs from the Mariannhill Mission in KwaZulu-Natal and other objects in situations of intermediality
Issue Date: 2021-07-01

PART ONE

-

FAITH IN IMAGES

CHAPTER ONE

-

Trust in Images

Introduction: Photography as Image, Object, Narrative, and Practice

Before, and still after the First World War, the general narrative in Mariannhill's periodicals employed imperialist tropes, like the "expansion of the kingdom of God". These were combined with agricultural tropes, such as the "vineyard of God", which is tended to, in order to be harvested for souls later. Many articles address benefactors to join in these efforts by donating money, goods, their sons and daughters as potential novices, or to join the ranks themselves. In 1897, the editorial of the *Mariannhill-Kalender* stated: "But mission is a war too, which costs a lot of money. And this campaign [*Feldzug*] goes against a dreadful foe, against Satan and his helpers and their cunning [*listig*] assaults" (Anon. 1897:34).[76] Just after the First World War, in 1919, the rhetoric became even stronger and still resonated with the experience of the past years: "Also Catholic Mission is a war—but one of honour. It is a war for God's plans. However, every war necessitates the three big M's: Men, Material, Money" (Anon. 1919:108).[77]

The common "conversion story" of Christian missions (cf. Cox 2005, Pels 1999:56-57, Thomas 1992, Thompson 2004) thus indicated a particular direction and movement of people, goods, and finances. Cox summarises the "providentialist master narrative" of conversion as follows:

> […] male clerical heroes, assisted occasionally by unnamed women or "natives," move from the Christian heartland into a kind of global religious vacuum peopled by non-Christians who are sometimes portrayed as noble, sometimes as vicious, but always as ignorant of the benefits of the Christian gospel. (Cox 2005:6)

Mariannhill Missionaries implied the basic dichotomy of this narrative since 1889, but epitomised it most clearly on the front cover of the *Mariannhill-Kalender* since 1905 with additional captions (Figure 10). In its top part, the frontispiece contains images of the two Saints St. Benedict and St. Bernardus, the mother of Jesus, Maria, and her mother, St. Ann.[78] At the bottom, a panorama of Mariannhill is shown with a nun and several African children encountering three monks, who are toiling away on a field. In the centre piece, next to the title lines, we can see two depictions of the supposed past and present situation on the ground of the mission: to the left, dancing men with shields and spears, dressed in fur and beadwork; to the right, a preaching Trappist priest, surrounded by a missionary sister, a Black bridal pair, a Black priest, a man with a book (likely a catechist with Bible) and a family with two children praying before the priest; all of them are dressed in European fashion. The image to the left is captioned "*Einst* [Once]", and the one to the right "*Jetzt* [Now]". The left image may relate to the earlier mentioned martial prowess of the Zulu, as well as the alleged shortcomings in both dress and architecture, while the right image directly suggests their replacement with a variety of Christian social achievements, institutions, and material culture.

---

[76] My own translation from the German original.
[77] My own translation from the German original: "*Mannschaft, Material, Moneten* [Geld]".
[78] Together they are the name patrons of "Mari-ann-hill".



Figure 10: frontispiece, *Mariannhill-Kalender für das Jahr 1906*.

Several authors noted that early mission projects visually expressed this narrative dichotomy of spiritual conversion in their photographic production through a material, and in particular through a sartorial transformation. While some identified this as the basic building block of mission narratives (Eckl 2006b:236, Geary 1991:49, Krüger 2011:134-136, Webb 1997:14, Wiener 1990:77, also see Hirsch 2007, Rippe 2018), Nicholas Thomas even considered it a "master caption" of the conversion process (Thomas 1992:372). But hardly anywhere does this dichotomy appear as such an explicit confrontation in both text and image, as on the frontispiece of the *Mariannhill-Kalender*.[79] In particular the co-presence of the two timeframes makes the intention of a master caption by the producers and its perception with consumers plausible.

As a critique of this dichotomy, Peter Pels (1989, 1999:65-66) observes that in the case of the periodicals published by the Dutch Missionary Fathers of the Holy Ghost[80] (C.S.Sp.) between the 1940s and 60s, there existed a third category of "exotic" images, which neither related judgementally to the negative tropes of colonialism on the one hand, nor to the supposedly positive influence of missionaries. Instead, they may have addressed the benefactor's sense and receptiveness for exotic Otherness. In my experience with Mariannhill several decades earlier, however, the missionaries easily transformed such neutral depictions of alterity into representations of obstinate paganism. Therefore, even more than Pels does, I insist on the importance of captions and articles to direct the message of images.

Be this as it may, in the case of Mariannhill we have no possibility to retrace whether the targeted audiences indeed perceived these images as "exotic". Direct statements from two parties in this triangular relationship are no longer available: neither do we have firsthand records by the mission's subjects, nor a representative sample of the mission's benefactors in Europe or the US. Those whom the missionaries were speaking to and those whom they spoke about, thus rarely spoke for themselves in public. In an overview of Mariannhill's earliest publication activities, Fr. Paschalis Boneberg speculated during the mid-1930s under the heading "dissemination" that the *Vergißmeinnicht* was initially intended "[f]or the German-speaking readership of all sections of society, in particular in Germany, Austria, Switzerland etc. The main part of the readers, however, apparently belonged to the middle class, and in particular to the farming and working class" (Boneberg 1936).[81] The reception of Mariannhill's periodicals and photographs with this diverse interpretive community, however, can no longer be analysed, due to the lack of sources. It is therefore impossible to retrace all agencies in the colonial system. We can only hypothetically reconstruct the audience's collateral knowledge and try to delineate how the missionaries may have desired their benefactors to react. I therefore concentrate on those groups whose statements we can indeed follow and relate: missionaries and artistic photographers in the First Part; visitors to the monastery and administrators in Part Two; and ethnologists in Part Three.

---

79 For a detailed analysis of a particular illustrated article by Br. Aegidius Müller see Rippe (2018).

80 Also known as the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, or simply as "Spiritans".

81 My own translation from the German original.

In particular in Chapter Two of this Part, I will explain that—relative to the moment of conversion—Mariannhill Missionaries presented the dystopia of a "before" and the utopia of an "after" alternatively as a dichotomy of an "already/but still". On a regular basis they recalled the initial future promise of the "mission as a movement" from Europe to South Africa. In this way the stark dichotomy of the before/after is broken up once more. In order to amend their subjects' insufficiencies, not only in space, but also in time "[t]he mission as a religious movement, did not merely reproduce or salvage a past, it also envisioned a future for its participants" (Pels 1999:45). An important part of this process included the presentation of visual evidence as a transfer of knowledge about how those people who had so far been imagined in a state of the past had *already* been elevated to a state of close contemporaries (cf. Pels 1999, 2009). *But still*, so the narrative dichotomy, many potential converts resisted the efforts of the missionaries, who therefore required further help from benefactors.

The alleged fact that some converts indeed "prayed" and "worked" according to the Trappist motto (*ora et labora*), had to be communicated to the audiences who supported the mission financially. This had to be done, ideally not only in the form of drawings like the frontispiece, but preferably through the supposedly more realistic medium of photography. In order to do this most efficiently, Mariannhill's photographers refracted—or "africanised"—the contemporary matrix of European aesthetic conventions and photographic formats in South Africa. On the one hand, they presented Africans as possessing the ability to assimilate European culture well. On the other hand, as I will show in the next chapter, the missionaries presented this assimilation process within boundaries, by couching many narratives of how their African subjects engaged with the production process of photographs and other media as an ambivalent imitation. This they did, partially to retain their representative authority, partially to present entertainment according to European conventions.

In this process, the missionaries themselves imitated, copied, and even plagiarised European art and imagery by applying these to the situation in Natal. Such appropriations crucially conditioned and shaped the practice of production, and therefore the content of photographs, before these were eventually projected back to Europe. According to the title of this First Part, "Faith in Images", I discuss the hopes resting on photographs: not only did the missionaries attempt to disprove the original believes of some Africans with the help of photographs, while displaying the new faith of others; but they themselves trusted in the realism commonly attributed to photographs, in order to represent their project convincingly. At times, they even reflected at length on the authenticating capacities of photographs, asking their benefactors to share in the faith that their photographs were objective in an epistemological sense. As I shall argue in Chapter Two, this promise could best be fulfilled, and its effect even be enhanced, by cross-connecting photographs with several other media.[82] In this chapter and the

[82] Making a similar argument in her book *Faith in Objects*, Erin Hasinoff (2011) describes the mission exhibition "The World in Boston" of 1911. However, it is not possible to depict actions of faith with the help of objects, and thus to either *see* or *have* faith in objects *per se*. Hasinoff addresses photographs only tangentially, which I believe, must be analysed in conjunction with objects, in order to understand the working of either one in the

next we are concerned with processes of, first, interpictoriality, and, second, intermediality between media as diverse as photography, theatrical performance, film, and a stained-glass window.

As I will show in the course of this study, the very same images may indeed be used by different people for different projects; projects to convince others of particular goals. Mariannhill's editors, educators, photographers, architects, painters, and other artisans cooperated and worked towards the same goal: to turn outsiders into allies and financial supporters. They hoped to do this by improving and propping up various media against each other. Therefore it is insufficient to only study photographs in the case of Mariannhill, but instead we must address the broader landscape of media and the interest it was supposed to serve. Latour (1990:24) suggested to analyse such strategies as follows:

> Thus it is not all the anthropology of writing, nor all the history of visualization, that interests us in this context. Rather, we should concentrate on those aspects that help in the mustering, the presentation, the increase, the effective alignment, or ensuring the fidelity of new allies. We need, in other words, to look at the way in which someone convinces someone else to take up a statement, to pass it along, to make it more of a fact, and to recognize the first author's ownership and originality.

Mariannhill's photographs are what Latour goes on to describe as "immutable mobiles": in order to re-trace the very journey to South Africa, which the missionaries had made themselves, they sent photographs back from the alleged periphery to the centre. In this physical movement, photographs had to retain, or at least to suggest a certain "immutability" regarding the information they were supposed to convey. Even if this appears as a commonplace, it is crucial to point out that Mariannhill's photographers and editors continually attempted to certify and prop up the idea that their photographs and texts indeed represented what actually happened on a grass roots level. However, in order to make this transfer and translation process successful and effective, Mariannhill's photographers had to (re-)arrange and manipulate their work to a very high degree over various stages, in a performative, as well as in a technological sense. As we shall see, this process of stabilising photographs independently and within the periodicals, relied on references already familiar to European benefactors through various other media. The missionaries' expectation and anticipation of benefactors' experiences of intermediality were thus essential in the propaganda process, even if we can no longer retrace these very experiences themselves. According to the double meaning of "faith in images", I will therefore deal with epistemological questions around Mariannhill's photographs in this chapter. In the next chapter I deal with how the process of conversion at Mariannhill was performed through photographs, while being enhanced through other media.

In order to study these otherwise untraceable experiences, I partially rely on the idea of "resemblance". Other than a randomly chosen concept, photographic "resemblance", or "*Ähnlichkeit*" in German, was a contemporary and commonly applied idea within European

---

case of mission exhibitions, and indeed mission projects at large (cf. Part Three).

photographic practice to establish a photographic sitter's "character" or "identity". Photographers and their clients alike used these terms to determine the success, and thus the "truthfulness" of a photographic portrait. As a Latourian "crisis" or "controversy" (Latour 2005), these concepts allow us to expand this idea from portraits to the contemporary discourse on so-called "genre photographs", which intended to depict the typical "daily life" of certain social groups. When audiences recognised, confirmed, or denied photographic "resemblances", this highly subjective process left traces. In the two cases of "portraits" and "genre photographs", photographers presented their work in the sense of artistic photography as "characteristic" and "typical". In order to operationalise the concept of "resemblance" for a historical study of the situation around 1900, we must treat it as what the semiotician Peirce considered as "collateral knowledge" (cf. Introduction): as specific contemporarily available knowledge about photographic images and technology which social actors would have had at the time when they engaged with photographs. This contemporary knowledge established the idea that images could show "resemblance" and thus supported faith in images.

First, we need to take a closer look at the image narratives, their claims, and the knowledge they intended to mediate to benefactors. I will do this in the first chapter by comparing several published examples from Mariannhill's photographic archive to the contemporary production of artistic photographs in Germany. Wherever possible I situate established conventional aesthetic formats in social action. I shall first present underlying views on the turn-of-the-century construction of "race" in Natal, and their expressions in the photographs of Mariannhill. After all, this is necessary in order to understand how the missionaries used photographs to reassemble the relationship with their subjects, and how they thereby fashioned Selves and Others. After relating the question of photographic authorship in Mariannhill's photographic production to the European discourse, I will introduce the six main photographers of Mariannhill Monastery, who were active between the 1880s and 1930s. Several of Mariannhill's photographers had experiences with the medium prior to their arrival in South Africa. In order to establish their points of departure and visual references, it is necessary to take a look at each individual biography. This will help us to better understand, not only the migration and appropriation of images, but also how the photographs may have been perceived by social actors in the past. I then explore the art historical background and technological conditions of image production, so to separate it from an analysis of the aspects related to space and material culture, which I discuss in Parts Two and Three respectively.

Here it should become clear that in particular Br. Aegidius Müller shifted between various discourses, which determined the production of his photographs. Müller not merely ran a simple portrait studio, but he simultaneously worked as an ambulant photographer who fashioned himself as an artist. Since the introduction of light-weight and commercially available cameras in the 1880s, professionals, lay people, and critics even more intensely quarrelled over the question whether photography could, or rather should be an art form. By establishing societies and journals, lobbyists attempted to establish interpretive authority, and thus upheld a

discourse on what photography was supposed to be (Kaufhold 1986, Plumpe 1990). This chapter is therefore not an attempt to determine what photography was, but to approximate what photographic practitioners of the Mariannhill Mission believed it to be.

We thus have to consider whether a photograph is discussed and distributed in the field of (art) photography, mission propaganda, or ethnology, and which role the idea of the author plays in each of these fields (cf. Bate 2007). In the field of art, the idea of the author was essential to social actors themselves. For missionaries, mostly the impact on the benefactors was of importance. Ethnologists, instead, focused on the knowledge they could gain from the photographic image about either objects or bodies. Throughout this study, I suggest that Br. Aegidius Müller tried to provide not necessarily "mechanically objective" representations (Daston and Galison 2007), but attempted to create an apparently *authentic* and ideal impression for each of his different customers and audiences. I suggest that he did so by providing an *aesthetic* experience through image and text. Furthermore, he added to this by presenting himself, his confreres, and his African contemporaries as having an authentic experience. For Müller, "aesthetic" therefore meant to find a working-balance of photographic style between (1) his social experiences with his photographic subjects, (2) the visual condensation and heightening of this experience through locally established exoticising visual conventions such as material culture, and (3) the employment of photographic aesthetic conventions already familiar to the targeted European audiences from experiences in urban photographic studios and popular print media.

The process of circulating photographs through various interpretive communities enhanced certain ideals, which often appeared as pairs, or even as seeming binaries: Black/White, African/ Western, colonized/colonizer, traditional/modern (eg. Tilley 2007:13), even though their relevance for audiences may at times be questioned. The circulation of colonial photographs also invoked the binaries periphery/centre, non-science/science, and craft/art. The gazes of the various involved communities through Mariannhill's photographs are therefore in many ways interlocked and therefore difficult—if not impossible—to disentangle. In all cases, a reconstruction of gazes relies on complex conversations and negotiations. These manifested in various other media than the mission's periodicals, such as for example postcards, which I discuss in various instances. In Part One I discuss the missionary gaze at Africans, in Part Two I introduce the outsider gaze by tourists, travellers, journalists, government officials and Africans, and in Part Three I discuss the ethnological/anthropological gaze, all *through* Mariannhill's photographs (cf. Edwards 2013).

Similar to their "writing cultures" (Clifford and Marcus 1986), the agendas and related "picturing cultures" (Geary 1990:290) of urban photographers, missionaries, anthropologists, and ethnologists around 1900 were different, if not diametrically opposed. Professional photographers attempted to please the immediate aesthetic likings of their customers according to conventional standards. Also Mariannhill Missionaries had the aesthetic interests of a European middle-class of benefactors in mind when composing photographs. As I will show in

Chapter Six, the photographic preferences of some ethnologists instead became rather eclectic. Even if initially clearly defined, they often relied on the photographs provided by others (cf. Griffiths 2002:111). Within the "visual economy" connecting these three groups (Poole 1997), the same photographs eventually circulated promiscuously and were appropriated widely (cf. Edwards 2009, Zimmerman 2001, also see Chapter Six). In order to understand Mariannhill's photographs, we therefore have to study all three photographic practices and discourses in conjunction, especially regarding the parallel development of photography, physical anthropology, and ethnology (cf. Pinney 1992).

In all three cases the photographic focus shifted between bodies, environments, objects, and combinations in relation to how material culture was used in supposedly customary routines or environments. Along the line, practitioners within the three overlapping discourses cooperated and benefited from each other's achievements. Anthropologists, ethnologists, as well as colonial administrators utilised the established intimacy, infrastructures, and the logistic networks of missionaries to approach their subjects (Chapters Four and Seven). Missionaries inserted themselves into already established popular and scientific discourses, and also extracted tropes to make their arguments towards their allies. Photography as an industry benefited from the established needs and developments through travellers' experiences and experiments with photographic chemicals and technologies. Missionaries, ethnologists and anthropologists produced photographs in the tropics under extreme climatic conditions, and some reported back, for example via photographic journals.

As we will see throughout this study, in particular Mariannhill's photographer Br. Aegidius Müller was actively involved in all of these conversations. Immediately after taking over the photographic studio in late 1897, he started advertising his photographs with European ethnologists and anthropologists. In 1900, for example, he also addressed fellow photographers in the tropics through the journal *Photographische Chronik*, asking them to attend to a problem he had with chemical developers. In return he offered "interesting things and facts worth knowing" from Natal (Müller 1900). At the same time, Müller engaged in a side project, by publishing his "artistic" photographs in both South African and German journals.

“*Südafrikanisches Rassengemisch*”: Objectivity and the Subjectivity of Race



Figure 11: collage by the author, showing all 13 photographs illustrating Müller’s article in their order of appearance (Müller 1909); some have been resized to fit the frame.

Early on, the editors of Mariannhill's periodicals made explicit claims to the "truth" and "objectivity" of their occasional reports on the mission's spiritual and material development ["*Rechenschaftsberichte*"]. "Race" was one encompassing framework against which the missionaries had to objectify the mindset and nature of their subjects. Often, they formulated their claims for the truth of their reports as replies to criticism by readers and benefactors, who had complained about the style of writing, the lack of entertainment, and the lack of information how money had been spent. In an appendix to the *Mariannhill-Kalender* of 1891, the editor explained that

> […] the Mariannhill Kalender will strictly remain with the truth and will neither be deceived, nor deceive its dear readers: it only reports on the things which are self-seen, self-heard and self-experienced. […] Everything that relates to mission work in the whole of Natal, the neighbouring areas, as well as the areas of South Africa further away, and of which we believe that it is trustworthy and certain, eventually is fitting material for the Mariannhiller Kalender and will concern us, as far as there is space.—Easily we could paint people according to our fantasy (and would not lack the natural inclination), describe Africa's tropical life like a novel and place it in the realm of fairy tales. But by doing so, neither god, the mission, nor the truth would be served; we are here as the *ambassadors of truth,* placed right in between the two [god and mission subjects], and both of them would see right through any lack of love for truth. (Anon. 1891:149)

As proof for the attention paid to the truth by the mission's converts, the editor remarked in a footnote that two Black boys, who worked at the printshop, had criticised one report as untrue. In the light of such corrections, the missionaries were not at all in a position to print any exaggerations, so the editor, as this would destroy the Trappists' morality in the eyes of their converts. Several more editorials of the *Mariannhiller Kalender* discussed the conundrum to present only "sheer objectivity [*reinste Objektivität*]" (eg. 1894).

In 1909, the photographer Br. Aegidius Müller still made sure to present his work as "objective" representation. However, the fact that it involved performance, staging, and retouching is not in contradiction to this claim. Once we compare the archival stock of annotated prints to their negatives, we realise the exact repetition of scenes and poses, and at times even the repeated attempt to re-create the very same image during the same photographic occasion. I hope to show that the posing of scenes and the manipulation of photographs was well accepted in the contemporary photographic common sense, and could therefore be considered, if not as "objective", nevertheless as "typical". Müller took many photographs for the purpose of propaganda in the periodicals, which therefore have to be considered within this context. It will be a central question in this chapter how an epistemological analysis of photographs complicates a historical analysis of claims to "truth". As the process of conversion from the perspective of the missionaries inherently involved questions about what defines Selves and Others, the contemporary South African discourse on "race" became an influential factor (cf. Ashforth 1990). Others have dealt with the constitution of segregation in South Africa, and Natal, in particular before the 1920s. Against the backdrop provided by these authors, I now focus on the ambivalences in the process of objectifying race in Mariannhill's photographs.

Towards the end of his career, Müller wrote an article in the *Vergißmeinnicht* of 1909,

titled "*Südafrikanisches Rassengemisch* [A South African Mixture of Races]". Here he presented an almost encyclopaedic view on the heterogeneity, not only of South Africans at large, but in particular of their photographic appearances. Encyclopaedias of human races were a common genre at the time, and also well-known to Müller (cf. Chapter Six). Furthermore, there was a difference between the reports before and after the *Vergißmeinnicht* received illustrations from 1907 onward: Müller now directly referred to his photographs, integrated them into his story, not merely as illustrations, but as an essential part of storytelling. This also distinguished Müller's use of photographs from other contemporary mission propaganda (cf. Rippe 2018). As author of both text and photographs he could combine them most efficiently. Nevertheless, in the following example, like in many of his articles and letters, he spoke of himself in the third person:[83]

> From the great sample card [*Musterkarte*] for facial types of the various countries and races, we could here only present a small selection. Our photographer, who made the images presented here, would be able to show to our readers many more interesting types, because human beings of the most varied differences in standing, rank, race and religion have to leave their likenesses [*Konterfei*][84] with his camera in colourful succession. Today he takes photographs of several bishops in full attire, tomorrow of a Protestant minister with his bride in full ornament. In the morning a gay wedding party is the aim of his "snapshot" [Engl. in original]; in the afternoon a pious broken monk, who only has a few steps towards the grave, and whose old, far-away mother longs once more for an image of her child. The man with the semitic nose is followed by the Muslim with a fez, the Hottentot by a missionary, the viceroy [*Vizekönig*] of South Africa by a poor Indian family. The very same lens, which eternalises a prince of royal blood next to his entourage, performs the same work 24 hours later on an old and wrinkled heathen diviner. The photographic lens does not know difference, even less so than the undertaker; the lens is really democratic and truthful [*wahr*] to the extent of being rude, as it sketches [*zeichnet*] everyone, without exception, as he really is. To the one it leaves the crooked nose, to the other the lopsided mouth, to the third his chagrin, and to the fourth her beauty wart. And just like the undertaker, the lens may surprise one or another in a situation in which he no longer wants to find himself at a later point. Therefore, also today's images represent the named races true to nature [*naturgetreu*].[85] (Müller 1909:176-177)

It is the photographs' relation to the main text and their captions that frame and classify the subjects. Eventually, this relation presents the classifications as objective identities. In previous parts of his article, Müller had distinguished the inhabitants of South Africa as "Zulus, Basutos, Hottentots, Fingoes, Betshuans, Bushmen, and the various Kafir-tribes, such as the Tembu Kafirs, who often divert immensely from the pure Zulus". He then went on to enumerate the English, Dutch and Indians, Germans and French, Griqua, Portuguese, Swedes and Norwegians, Malays, Russian Jews, and Chinese, who all constitute social strata in South Africa: "From all these races, black, yellow and white, thus evolve mixed races". Müller not only claimed this diversity in his text, but he also demonstrated it with the help of his own photographs (Figures 11 and 12).

---

[83] Even though the author is not identified by name, according to the particular knowledge presented, it must have been Br. Aegidius Müller. I address the question of authorship in the next section.

[84] The antiquated German term "*Konterfei*" is derived from the Latin "*contra-facere* [*nach-bilden*], which can be translated with "to imitate" (cf. Kluge 1963). The term is not yet present in the dictionary's versions of 1899 and 1905.

[85] My own translation from the German original.

As Müller saw "mixed races" not only as the inevitable future of South Africa, but already as a reality, he announced that also Mariannhill had kept a keen eye on their conversion to Catholicism. He added polemically that this mixed race will certainly evolve, despite "the blustering and whining by members of the white master race [*Herrenmenschen*], who frown upon miscegenation [*Rassenmischung*] in the newspapers" (Müller 1909:174). One year before the South African Union, the urban centres of Natal were predominantly British. By using the term "master race", Müller probably referred to Whites at large, even though some representatives of British and Boers at the time considered each other as races apart.

The identities, which Müller applied to photographs showing Black Africans, may not have always matched the actual historical self-identifications of the depicted subject. It is crucial to observe that "racial" ideas were not only perpetuated through photographic practice and representation, but they also determined who had access to the means of photographic productions in the first place, and under which circumstances. Some of the people appearing in front of Müller's camera actively sought out his services, some merely tolerated his curiosity, while yet others even tried to avoid it. Nevertheless, all of them must be considered active protagonists within the changing social system around 1900, parts of which are today merely accessible to us through photographs. In photographs, however, people's contemporary racial identities remain ambivalent. It is therefore necessary to introduce the inherent uncertainties regarding the concept of "race" at the time, and the resulting need White society saw in distinguishing and defining people within the contemporary colonial common sense.

The "Natal Native Code", first issued in 1891, stated: "The word 'Native' shall be deemed to mean, and to include, any member of the aboriginal races or tribes of Africa south of the Equator" (Mitchell 1893:5). As a juridical term, "Native" did thus not by definition exclude people of "mixed" descent, as referred to by Müller. This categorisation was therefore explicitly reconsidered to include "mixed people" between 1904 and 1911, in order to maximise "native" tax revenue. Further developments, however, firmly established three categorisations (Posel 2001:90). These ranged on a spectrum from "Native" or "Black", over "Coloured", to "White". According to the contemporary racist discourse, people falling under these categories differed not only in their biological setup and physical appearance, but regarding "civilisation", education, and training. Accordingly they lacked sufficient skills for both intellectual and manual work. As a result, there was a perceived difference in the racist discourse regarding "native" skills in relation to the execution of most crafts and arts, including photography. Just after 1900, many commenters on race relations mentioned the Trappists of Mariannhill in their capacity to educate "the Native" through both their schools and training facilities. The full extent of Mariannhill's involvement in the "native question" still has to be explored, and is beyond the scope of this study (but see Gütl 2005). We will nevertheless return to the question of photographic training in the next two sections on authorship.

Increasingly after 1900, "mixed races" became part of the general administrative problem, usually referred to as the "native question" or the "native problem" in South Africa.

According to Legassick "[t]he dynamics of the situation were created by such factors as comparative rates of racial population increase, the degree and character of miscegenation and the extent and character of the workrole distribution in industry (by skills and race)" (1995:50-51). This contemporary discourse on how (or how not) to integrate the growing population of Africans into society, politics, and the economy, did bear resemblance to the contemporary discourse on the "social question" in Europe. Both were concerned with the alleged lack and even the degeneration of "morals", "civilisation", and genetic material in terms of "eugenics". Therefore both discourses supplied opportunities for religious missions to compare social issues in the lands of their activities to those "at home" when addressing their benefactor audiences in their periodicals (cf. Habermas 2011). Especially Mariannhill's first Abbot, Franz Pfanner, was highly concerned with both discourses and published on the comparison throughout his time in South Africa (Pfanner 1890, 1894; also see Denis 2015; Gütl 2005). In Chapter Two I discuss in more detail how Mariannhill's photographers articulated this particular discourse through photographs.

Both the Cape and Natal governments undertook several inquiries just after 1900 to determine inter-racial relationships and practical solutions to the "native question". Many missionaries, including the former Mariannhill priest A.T. Bryant, Mariannhill's missionaries Fr. Bruno Schrimpf and Fr. Theoderich (Langa) Sonnen[86] (cf. Brain 1982:254), as well as Abbot Gerard Wolpert were called upon for their expertise on the "Natives". The results of these inquiries were published as *The Natives of South Africa* (The South African Native Races Committee 1901), the *Report of the South African Native Affairs Commission 1903-1905* (The South African Native Affairs Commission 1905) and the *Natal. Report of the Native Affairs Commission, 1906-7* (The Natal Native Affairs Commission 1908).[87] As an update to the 1901 evaluation, *The Natives of South Africa: Their Economic and Social Condition* was published just one year before Müller's article. It critically reevaluated inscriptions of "race" since the late 19th century by stating that it had been up to repeated court cases to (re-)define the legal status of children from parents of different and mixed race groups (The South African Native Races Committee 1908:126-128). These evaluations circled around matters regarding economic power and its dependence on skin colour, by addressing issues such as "land, labour, political differentiation, and urban control" (Maylam 2001:147). While Africans were supposed to be brought into the fold as a working force, they were at the same time not supposed to become too similar and indistinguishable from Europeans, as to endanger the clear segregation in this power relation. In this way "miscegenation" was not only framed in moral terms, but also related to juridical questions of descent. The time period between the Second Boer War of 1899-1902 and the beginning of the Apartheid regime in 1948, is therefore often referred to as the "segregation era" (ibid.:143, Dubow 1989, Legassick 1995).

[86] Schrimpf was American by birth and Sonnen a studied Zulu linguist (see below). Apparently they had been chosen as informants due to their language competence.

[87] These reports consisted of various volumes: the reports as such, as well as collections of "evidence" in the form of transcribed interviews with Black and White informants.

The expression of an anxiety within the colonial discourse that the colonised became too similar, is often referred to as "mimicry", as introduced by Homi Bhabha (1984). This was the European fear of Africans mimicking Europeans in terms of dress, manners, consumption patterns, and other forms of expression. Colonial society often considered social imitation as a potential precondition for "miscegenation". The White society of Natal expressed this anxiety about inter-racial intercourse and reproduction partially through constructing Black males as sexually aggressive against White women during the so-called "rape scares" of the late 19th century. This anxiety flared up once more in South African media just before the time Br. Aegidius Müller wrote his article (Maylam 2001:170). Relationships between Black men and White women thus stirred much greater public anxiety (ibid.:170-171), even if they were not yet explicitly prohibited by law.[88] The "blustering and whining", described by Müller, furthermore resulted from the fear of resurfacing Black aggression after the so-called Bambatha Rebellion in Natal between 1906 and 1907.

"Racial" fear, however, worked in more than one direction, in so far that also Europeans would socially "imitate" Africans by "going native", as it were. Like the sexual availability of White women to Blacks was seen as lessening White authority, also White male promiscuity was considered a detriment. In the discourse on the German colonies, for example, this phenomenon was referred to as "*Verkaffern*"[89] (Axster 2005). The prime example for colonial Natal is the Scottish John Dunn, who had been fully integrated as a White chief into the regime of Zulu King Cetshwayo, and thus became the progenitor of the extensive Dunn family of Euro-African descent. In particular the photographic performances by Whites depicting such "transgressions" could become problematic. Even if they only mimicked "Blackness", due to their potential to circulate, such photographs could have a powerful social impact (cf. Chapters Four and Seven).

Mariannhill's photographic oeuvre indeed contains evidence that "mixed" families had their photographs taken at the Mariannhill Studio at about the same time as Müller's article was published in 1909. Even though they are rare, the remaining oeuvre contains photographs of White men with their Black women and children (Figure 12), and of Indian men in intimate contact with White women, such as poses which are commonly reserved to married couples or lovers in the contemporary photographic canon. In his article, Müller even promoted the idea that some White small-scale farmers in Natal practically had no other choice than taking a Black woman as a spouse. According to Müller, Black women were much "sturdier" and thus more resistant to the hardships of South African farm life than their British contemporaries (1909:174).

---

[88] The 1903 Criminal Law Amendment Act has been repeatedly interpreted in recent literature as if it generally prohibited sexual intercourse between White women and Black or Coloured men (eg. Ramsay 1992, Gütl 2005). However, the act only mentioned *illicit* sexual intercourse between White women and Coloured people, in particular within the context of prostitution. It does therefore not explicitly include sexual relationships in wedlock, even though relations between White women and Coloured men may have been very rare anyway (also see Morrell 2001:262).

[89] A German Mariannhill Missionary once explained the phenomenon to me as "*Verbuschen*" (lit.: spending too much time in "the bush"), which was perceived as a problem for every missionary spending prolonged periods at remote mission stations. This not only had sexual connotations, but also a general degrading in morals.

According to Morrell (2001:260) informants for the above-mentioned commission report voiced such concern about forms of miscegenation increasingly by 1906-7. Morrell explains that there existed a White concern in the Natal Midlands about cross-racial inheritance of property through miscegenation at the time (ibid.:263).

Müller nevertheless tried to support his argument by pointing to the first and second photograph of his article as evidence: showing such "sturdy" women, he praised both their physical constitution and their performance at work (cf. Figure 11). Figure 12 is not included in Müller's article, but shows such a "mixed" couple with their six children sitting for their portrait at the Mariannhill Studio. As the eldest daughter and her mother consciously displayed rosaries during the photographic occasion, they were likely members of the Catholic parish. Apparently, Müller's studio was sufficiently liberal to constitute an intermediary space between public, as well as private performances. In this space "mixed" families indeed perceived of themselves as socially respectable and therefore as photographically representable.



Figure 12: a family in the Mariannhill studio, approx. 1905 (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives).

Unlike the affiliate Br. Aegidius Müller, Mariannhill's priests and lay brothers were celibate. In so far, they were not officially engaged with the questions and results of economic inheritance in terms of (biological) descent regarding their own land and enterprises, like other Natal colonists. As a result they may have been in a better position to perceive the situation through the eyes of their subjects. This may also explain Müller's rather amused perspective on the anxious public discourse on "race". However, the editors of the above mentioned *The Natives of South Africa* also pointed out the Trappist's inclination not to involve Africans in any ecclesiastical matters, while their Protestant colleagues even trained Africans as ministers (1908:215). This may be regarded as a similar discourse of descent and inheritance, if only in an institutional sense. Mariannhill in fact had sent four of their pupils to Rome already during the 1890s. The four priests eventually did not become members of the Reformed Cistercians (Trappists), but worked under the Bishop of Durban as so-called "diocesan" or "secular" priests. Due to struggles over matters of authority, the attempt was discontinued after 1900, and only taken up again several decades later (Brain 1982:253, Mukuka 2005).

A liberal view on the discourse of "miscegenation" at Mariannhill did thus effectively not mean a total inclusion of Africans in every respect. We do not know enough yet about the opinions of individual Mariannhill Missionaries—leading and writing individuals in particular—and their opinions on various political questions on race over time.[90] At least on a political frontstage, Mariannhill diplomatically adjusted to the colonial racial common sense. Even if the coeducation of Black and White children was intended in the beginning, it never became common practice at Mariannhill and its stations, due to external critique by White commentators (Gütl 2005:313). Mariannhill's photographic record of school children nevertheless still shows exceptions after 1900. Furthermore, the monastery diplomatically adjusted to the colonial common sense by hosting segregationist politicians with great respect; for example, the British High Commissioner to South Africa, the Earl of Selborne in 1908 (cf. Maylam 2001:144, Chapter Three), and Charles T. Loram during the 1920s (Chapter Seven), at both Mariannhill Monastery and Centocow Mission respectively. Like Mariannhill's general involvement in education and the economy, the wide-ranging relationships to many well-known architects of segregation are still in need of more research.

We realise that "race" had a highly ambivalent status. Also terms like "native" had a socially defined juridical dimension (cf. Legassick 1995), as well as one in daily social practice (cf. Dubow 1995), which were not necessarily identical. As Bowker and Star (1999), Posel (2001), and M'charek (2013) have shown, "race" is indeed a product of common sense fictions, constituted through the social practice of objectifying biological and visual "facts". In the contemporary public discourse, and in Müller's article in particular, "race" was presented as a visual fact that could be observed and therefore be hardly disputed. Once we look at the photographs from a considerable spatial and temporal distance, they are far from "racially"

[90] But see Denis (2015) for a first attempt at analysing Pfanner's opinions in this regard.

distinct, as there hardly ever was a definite standard or bottomline for either "Black" or "White".[91] A close analysis of photographs in conjunction with other sources thus allows for a destabilisation and reconsideration of "racial" ideas, if we consider photography among the social practices regarding race, as indicated by Dubow (1995). The resemblance to, and the deviation from imagined racial ideals was therefore always open to contestation and thus social anxiety. In the case of Müller's article, the photographs only *appear* and *work* as racial types through a textual explanation.

In the article's 13 portraits, Müller analysed several of the 27 sitters according to their "racial composition", and the resulting qualities of character (cf. Figure 11). Almost every sitter looks directly at the camera. All appear to be relatively comfortable, and six of the 27 depicted individuals even smile. Three portraits had been taken during the early 1890s by one of Müller's predecessors, and are either in profile, or, even more often three-quarter portraits.[92] These were two conventional formats, which Müller himself no longer employed after 1900. Instead, he favoured full-body *en face* portraits (cf. Chapter Six). The photographers at Mariannhill handled various photographic conventional portrait styles over the years, of which I will explore several more throughout this chapter.

[91] But see Bowker and Star (1999) and M'charek (2013) for the introduction of artificial standards during Apartheid.

[92] "Three-quarter" denoted an angle of the face half-way between "*en face*" (frontal), and "profile".



Figure 13: digitally inverted glass plate negative of image 3 in Figure 12. Original caption in article: "*Nr. 3 Mischrassen (Siehe Text)*"—"Nr. 3 Mixed races (see text)" (CMM Archives, published in Müller 1909:175).

In one group portrait (Figure 13) Müller identified from left to right a "Zulu-Dutch girl of the rough type", a "15-year old Zulu-French girl of impulsive sanguine temperament", a "Zulu girl of pure race" and a "girl with the soft and melancholic traits of the Zulu-Indian race". The fact that Müller had already inscribed very similar identifications as informal notes to himself on the photograph's glass plate negative, not only confirms his authorship of the article, but also the degree to which he considered this interpretation as a factual reality.[93] In the article he went on to identify the girls in the same order as "representatives of the phlegmatic, sanguine, and melancholic temperaments". For the girl of the "pure Zulu race" (Figure 13, lower right), so he wrote, one would have to invent a new temperament, for which he suggested "thick-skinned", because "it is so difficult to teach them reason". Müller eventually omitted the "choleric", the last of the "four temperaments". This pseudo-scientific framework for interpreting the physiognomy of human faces in terms of their "character" was still as popular at the time in order to judge personality, as it had been when Prior Franz Pfanner used it to classify desired novices in 1874 for his foundation in Bosnia, and in 1886 for Mariannhill: he appreciated phlegmatic and choleric people, was suspicious of the sanguine type, and refused melancholic candidates.[94] This convention of analysing "appearances" in order to deduce "character" was also common in contemporary photographic instructions, as I shall explain below. In the particular publication on the practice of retouching photographs that was at the disposal of Müller (see Arnold 1892), the author treated the framework of physiognomy as an ideal way according to which photographers should manipulate sitters' photographic appearances in order to achieve a balance between a social ideal on the one hand, and the "resemblance" to the sitter's own ideal of appearance on the other.[95]

Müller thus applied popular and allegedly scientific ideas to his photographs. Instead of clear visual indicators, he based his interpretation on his personal knowledge regarding the particular "racial mixtures" supposedly displayed in the photograph. Like so many other experts working in "native affairs" before and during Apartheid, he engaged in the ambivalent and risky business of defining "races". Based on his definitions of individuals in photographs, he furthermore attempted to evoke humorist aspects for European benefactor audiences, supposedly emerging from the knowledge created within the particular relationship between missionaries

---

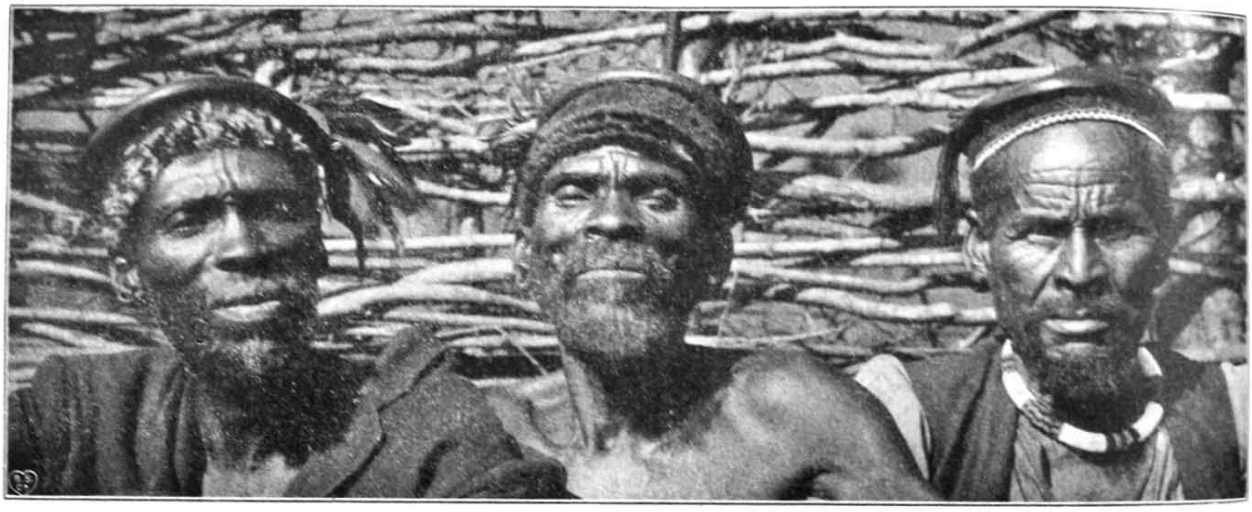
[93] The inscription on the negative reads: *"(1.) Indisch (Kuli) Germanish [sic], (2.) reine Zulurasse, (3.) Zulu französ. Rasse, (4.) Germanish [sic] Zulu Rasse*" [accordingly, this caption has to be applied to the positive image in reverse order].

[94] Pfanner (1874), *Die Klostergeschichte von Maria Stern*, cited in Gütl (2005:118); also see Pfanner (1886).

[95] In the 18th century, scientific writers such as Carl von Linné and Johann Lavater conceived of the "four temperaments" as scientific categories. Von Linné even applied the four temperaments to classify the various traits of "races" worldwide (cf. Pratt 2008:32, Said 2003:119). Still in the 1880s, Theodor Piderit presented them as a convenient way to codify alleged sentiments through portraits. For the missionaries it was even more convenient to read them into the depictions, so to evoke them with benefactor audiences in Europe. By 1908, the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* still upheld the classificatory value of the four temperaments as a hereditary fact (Maher 1908:585). Physiognomic determination was thus not only a strategy of scientific racial anthropology (Chapter Six), but equally part of popular and religious discourses (cf. Poole 1997:110). With particular reference to Von Linné's work and theories of race, the German anthropologist and ethnologist Felix von Luschan eventually denounced this interpretative framework as a "pointless game, with only historical value" (Von Luschan 1922:2).

and their subjects. Some of these same photographs, which had originally been produced and selected for purposes of propaganda, later-on became scientific objects for European anthropologists and ethnologists (Chapter Six).

In his article, Müller considered every individual dressed in a non-western way as a "heathen type". Figure 14, for example, is described as follows: "Picture Nr. 10, a cunning shamrock! The three councillors or ministers of the heathen chief who lives close to Mariannhill are still alive. We certainly do not need to assure you that all three men are cunning rascals. A rogue hides underneath every wrinkle" (Müller 1909:176). This jovial and humorous tone of writing is characteristic for the first decades of Mariannhill's periodicals, and indicates that the texts in combination with the photographs indeed intended to entertain. At the same time, they nevertheless claimed to inform and even to educate the reader. This ambivalent form of humour will be of concern throughout the following chapters. Müller further authenticated his photographs through the subtle presentation of suggestively intimate and expert knowledge on the subjects (Figures 13 and 14): he pointed out their social positions, he knew whether they were dead or alive, and he penetrated their overall character. Rarely he identified common people by name in publications, even if he occasionally registered their names on glass plate negatives, or in the albums he kept at the studio. The three old men for example were indeed *izinduna* (advisors) of the nearby *Inkhosi* (chief) Lokothwayo, as Müller indicated with other prints of the same image in albums.



Nr. 10. Drei Geheimräte des Häuptlings. — Ein geriebenes Kleeblatt.

Figure 14: original caption: "*Nr. 10. Drei Geheimräte des Häuptlings—Ein geriebenes Kleeblatt*"—"The chief's privy council of three—a cunning shamrock" (as published in Müller 1909:180).

Despite Müller's carefree interpretations of photographs through physiognomic frameworks, the presentation of his photographs as "truthful" and "objective" was still at the very heart of his

approach. In the text quoted above, he claimed his work as an objective depiction of his sitters' physical appearance. He further stated that such a "truthful" photographic representation may at times divert from the sitter's own self-image. It may differ from what they wanted, or indeed did *not* want to present as their own appearance: beauty, ugliness, and eventually "character", as defined by the four physiognomic types. These were eventually concerns about aesthetics, which defined the abstract notion of "character" through physical traits. Müller's idea of objectivity does not refer to unposed recordings of "everyday life", or "snapshots", as he himself claimed. A snapshot with a short exposure time differs in so far that the subject is potentially unaware of the camera. In the above quote Müller's idea of objectivity instead presented the lens as having its own agency, without being in need of himself as photographer to produce truthful images. Still, *through* the lens he presented himself as an indiscriminate observer of the entire social landscape around him. To understand photographic practice at Mariannhill within the contemporary photographic discourse, we need to establish the modalities of conventional contemporary claims to objectivity and truth (cf. Daston and Galison 2007). Müller's photographic practice and his writing about it must be scrutinised thoroughly, as it was not established within the rules of reference of a scientific community. Instead, it relied on strategies of contemporary popular media, mission propaganda, and as I shall explicate in this chapter, on the contemporary European artistic discourse on photographic aesthetics.

We have to consider whom Müller photographed, and whom he attempted to address with these photographs; or to phrase it with M'charek (2013), how "race" became a "relational object" in the form of photographs. Even if all sitters in the above photographs appear as "Blacks", "Africans", or "Natives", the historical individuals may have thought of themselves differently. There was not only an established and highly subjective discourse on racial identity centred on South Africa, but likewise a worldwide discourse on photographic personal identity. Due to the involved subjective "objectivities", I use the capitalised terms "White", as well as "Black" or "African" only as historical approximations, which do not necessarily coincide with the self-identification of the respective historical individuals, or the social identifications applied to them by others.

According to the social relationship between sitter and photographer, Müller would also have dealt with and presented them differently: the members of the Catholic family were commercial customers paying for a service (Figure 12), the four girls were most likely subjects of the mission living in Mariannhill's so-called "*Marienhaus*"[96] with certain obligations (Figure 13), while the three *izinduna* of Chief Lokothwayo were probably neither spiritually nor materially dependent on the mission (Figure 14). In the first case, Müller had to adjust to his customers' wishes, for example by committing to certain poses, or through the retouching of facial features. Retouching can in fact be followed through the traces and discolourations left on many of the glass plate negatives. Müller would furthermore not have been able to freely publish

[96] Like the "*Josephshaus*" for boys, the "*Marienhaus*" provided accommodation and training for girls, in order to prepare them for becoming Catholic wives and mothers (Gütl 2005:310).

and comment on the photographs of commercial customers. As subjects to the mission, the four girls may have considered the use of their image in the mission's periodical as a contribution to the propaganda effort, or simply did not dare to criticise this form of use. As the three men were most likely illiterate, like many of their age-mates (cf. Chapter Four), it was unlikely that they actively followed either the ensuing circulation of their photograph, or Müller's interpretations of it.

Photographic Authorship and Self-Fashioning at Mariannhill

While this may be said for most mission propaganda efforts, Mariannhill in particular was entangled in the discourses of various other interest groups employing photographs. A brief analysis of this situation at the outset is necessary to establish how Mariannhill's photographers presented the mission by establishing particular views on themselves and their subjects. They did this through performative movements of inclusion and exclusion in photographs, thereby establishing Selves and Others. In the last decades of the 19th century, the three projects of commercial studio photography, Christian mission, as well as museum-based anthropology and ethnology developed ideas on the practice of photographic self-fashioning, and thus by implication the fashioning of Others.

All three projects produced discourses within Western society that were driven by institutionalised fora, societies, their journals, and other forms of publications. At the same time, these projects interacted with the project of colonialism. Just like Christian mission, ethnology and anthropology, also photography must be considered as naturally embedded in institutionalised social practices of peer groups, lobbies, and fora, which worked for a common interest. At the turn of the 19th century, many commercial studio photographers were members of photographic societies. Together with the editors and readerships of photographic journals, they worked towards distinguishing themselves as artists, and their products as an independent art form. One of the reasons was for example the goal to further the revision of copyright laws, once infringements started to endanger professional businesses increasingly.

The forms of reflexivity of photographers, ethnologists/anthropologists and missionaries had commonalities and differences regarding their use of the photographic medium. All three involved an imagined relationship between an observing subject and one or multiple photographic objects or subjects. The three related discourses tried to visually manifest differences and similarities in terms of either social hierarchy, race, or religion. Their use of photography, however, differed in terms of expression: professional urban photographers often staged themselves flamboyantly, in order to establish themselves as artists and thus to further business (Sagne 1998, Dewitz 2010). Anthropologists and ethnologists around 1900 rather avoided to involve themselves or their colleagues in the photographs they took. This would at least hold true for their published scientific work.[97] Missionaries instead had to include themselves in their photographs as agents, in order to present to their benefactors an active relationship with their subjects, which was beneficial to the conversion of the latter.

In their work on the (textual) author, both Barthes (1977 [1968]) and Foucault (1998b [1969]) questioned the idea that a written work has a concrete originator. Instead, they reconsidered the idea of an author's "oeuvre", on what discourses and circulations it is based,

[97] As examples one may think of German anthropologists and ethnologists, such as Gustav Fritsch, Wilhelm Joest, and Felix von Luschan, who visited South Africa during the 1860s, 1880s, and in 1905 respectively. To my knowledge, for all three cases no published photographic self-depictions remain.

and what the function of the "author" is within those. Implicitly following Barthes, Foucault further explored ideas on the excessive migration of images between painting and photography and related questions on authorship at the end of the 19th century (2002 [1975], also see Stiegler 2004). Like in the experience of intertextuality of both writer and reader described by Barthes, the production and reception of photographs depended on an experience of intermediality: in a form of co-production, photographers, their clients, and their audiences often rethought and reproduced preexisting images. The idea of the single author was thus questioned in the contemporary German discourse on the appropriation and even the plagiarism of images. It was only intentionally strengthened once more with the improvement of photographic copyrights shortly after 1900, when professional photographers actively reclaimed the economic rights to their own work. I shall briefly cover this discourse in this section further below.

Without referring to either Barthes or Foucault, Alfred Gell developed a similar approach by considering the oeuvre of an artist as an object, which is distributed in space and time (1998:232). As there were multiple authors at work at Mariannhill, who nevertheless all tried to represent the phenomenon of the mission encounter as "part of a single coherent project" (ibid.:245), the *collection* of multiple oeuvres may be thought of as a "distributed object" (cf. Introduction to this study). In the case of Mariannhill it will not be possible to turn the authors "inside-out", as Gell suggests, by showing the interconnectedness of all the material traces they produced (ibid.:222). Nevertheless, by at least trying to reassemble and reconstruct from these traces the "authors" of particular photographs to the greatest extent possible (cf. Foucault 1998:213, Latour 2005), we will learn more about the production process of images throughout all chapters. Repeatedly, I will return to the question of what role the ascription, as well as the denial of artistic authorship (for both Black and White social actors) plays in the concrete historical discourses around image production at Mariannhill Monastery and Centocow Mission.

According to these ideas, the filed, annotated, handled and previously published photographic object in the mission's archive cannot be attributed to one single author. It is never entirely clear who conceived of a photograph's *mise en scène*, as the pose is necessarily a negotiation between photographer and his models. Also other actions may have been carried out by different people, independently or in cooperation: the release of the shutter and thus the exposure on the glass plate negative; the chemical development and fixation of the plate and print; the annotations on the glass plate; the writing of an article using the photograph in the mission's periodical, and the application of a caption; and eventually, yet another person may have annotated, filed and categorised the original prints, which are today scattered over several of the mission's archives. If all these actions are carried out by different people, all involved individuals are necessarily "producers" or "creators" of the photographic object, even if they are not attributed with the role of "author" or "artist". In the case of photographs from a distant past, neither the photographer nor the sitter are still alive. Unless either one of them has left behind some kind of testimony, we can therefore no longer reconstruct their interactions and negotiations in relation to the resulting photographs (cf. Bigham 1999). As far as this is possible

for the case of Mariannhill, I discuss authorship in this chapter as it is addressed either in the textual discourse, or in the photographs themselves.



Figure 15: Br. Aegidius Müller in the photographic studio, approx. 1900 (CMM Archives).

This cabinet card shows the photographer Br. Aegidius Müller as a *savoir vivre* bohemian, comfortably seated in Mariannhill's photographic studio. He lounges in a wicker chair with his right leg draped over the armrest. Wearing a velvet smoking hat, decorated with a long, dark feather, he rests his right hand with a self-rolled cigarette on the raised knee, and draws a swagger or walking stick close to the torso with his left hand. A glass of—most likely—wine rests on an insect-eaten tree trunk, with the bottle next to it on the ground.

This could be a studio portrait as taken in most European towns during the 1890s, but at the same time it points towards a set of less conventional photographic tropes. The pose taken by Müller was certainly unusual for an associate of a Catholic monastery, but not so for the canon of European artistic photography. Self-portraits in eccentric fashion, often in "orientalist" style were not an unusual practise amongst urban artists, and often mimicked earlier travellers, such as the like of Richard F. Burton, Francis Frith, or any other explorer or tourist who ventured to the Middle East during the 19th century (cf. Billeter 1985, Dewitz 2010, Jooss 2010). A well-known series of Frith's self-portraits from the late 1850s bear a striking resemblance to Müller's pose.[98] Dressed in oriental style and photographed in a similar fashion, even the monastery's founder Abbot Franz Pfanner may have served as model for Müller's portrait (Figure 155). We will hear more about Pfanner's own experiences in "the orient" in the last chapter.

David Bate described this kind of portraiture as one of two dominating models within a "colonial vision" of "men mimicking the orient", directed from and towards the colonial self: "the 'warrior'—those images of men who are armed and dressed in signs of warfare; and the 'despot'—those figures whose despotic power is signified through their body-image, the casual 'slothful' pose" (1993:90). Bate's "provisional division" may also work as a division-in-progress for our South African case, as will become clearer with two more examples in Chapters Seven and Eight, even combining various of such visual tropes. Although it may not have been Müller's intention to imitate an "oriental despot", his performance must nevertheless be considered within a *tradition* of this discourse. In the second half of the 19th century, audiences may have considered this photographic performance of orientalist colonial fantasy as practice, but would not yet have used the term "orientalist" to describe it, as the term merely stood for the academic study of the East at the time. It was only established as a postcolonial metadiscourse, and a critique of how those colonial fantasies came about, with the work of Edward Said (1978). As a distinct feature, the photographic backdrop displays a clear reference to stereotypic imaginations of the South African landscape: situated next to a country road, we can see a beehive-shaped hut with smoke curling towards the sky, as it is usually attributed to the "Zulu".

The practice of White sitters dressing up and posing in such an explicit way is only apparent in a few other photographs of the collection (cf. Chapters Five, Seven and Eight). Like the one under consideration, many photographs were never published. Contemporary intentions therefore remain unclear. The photographs nevertheless show a degree of playfulness and private

[98] For more on the orientalist portraits of Frith in a "turkish summer costume" see Bate (1993:87) and Nickel (2004:148-153).

enjoyment in experimentation with the medium. I argue that playfulness also underlies many other photographs I introduce in the course of this chapter. Müller's portrait eventually places him in between the various spaces, which he traversed: on the one hand, the interior of his South African studio, where he routinely recreated and imagined the world exterior to the monastery and the mission stations; on the other hand, the imagined spaces common to European aesthetic conventions, reaching as far as the orient. Close-by and far-away spaces were folded into a world of imaginative "backdrops" (cf. Appadurai 1997, Chapter Four).

As the photograph is glued on a carton embossed with the label of the "Mariannhill Studio", Müller's pose may have been intended as an example for customers; but no similar images can be found in the remaining collection. It could also have been a gift for Müller's family in Germany. In the latter case, the medium would have travelled between South Africa and Europe physically, while at the same time this movement was performed in the image itself. Müller created an image of South Africa for Europe by merging visual tropes he and his audiences were already familiar with. His pose was derived from Europe's experience *with* (but not necessarily *in*) the exotic "orient". This photograph in particular shows the extent to which Müller was capable of creating a world of and for the imagination: he emulated (or africanised) a European visual trope (literally) in front of a South African backdrop.

In and through the photograph under discussion, Müller distanced himself in every way possible from the ideals of the Trappist community; ideals which he otherwise used to represent and promote through his photographs. The photographic performance of his own profane inclinations towards consumption therefore questions ideals and realities: according to the Trappist rule, alcohol with a low alcohol content (beer or cider, no wine) would only have been served in strict limitations during meals (Bonaventura 1887:57). The Trappists of Mariannhill instead replaced such drink with an unfermented kind of tamarind water, as they could not plant the ingredients for either beer or cider under the conditions given in Natal. Also tobacco was apparently prohibited for the monks at Mariannhill Monastery, at the most maybe tolerated (Gütl 2005:117, 204; but see Chapter Four).

According to what I explained so far, we can already draw some conclusions about photographic authorship. Self-portraiture in particular was a common practice at Mariannhill, and therefore helps to reflect on the idea of authorship. Scholars writing about photographic practices often assume that photographs of identified photographers are self-portraits. However, unless one of the following three circumstances occurs, the identity of the photographer remains unknown: either, we need to have been present during a photographic occasion; or we know through circumstantial evidence that the photograph has been taken with a self-release mechanism; or the photographer pointed the lens towards a mirror. Even in the case of a photograph of someone taking a photograph, there is always yet another "invisible" photographer (cf. Chapter Two). For the case of Mariannhill I try to evaluate alternative circumstances. At a high point during the early 1890s, Mariannhill had at least three photographers, of which at least two had been professionally trained in Germany. They were

simultaneously present at the monastery, and occasionally took photographs of each other. In the case of a few occasions, there are indications that even untrained members took photographs, if necessary.

An analysis of the self-perception and self-reference of Mariannhill's photographers is further complicated by the fact that the Trappist authorities intentionally subdued the identification of textual authorship after Abbot Pfanner's deposition in 1892. The visitation report of 1892 by the Abbot of Ölenberg, Franziskus Strunk, explicitly forbade authors of Mariannhill's press to sign their articles (Strunk 1892:17), a practice which was however watered down over the years to come. Strunk introduced this rule in order to control the monastery's editors, criticising that the periodicals had misrepresented the Trappist order at large. However, anonymity was also a general trend with the contemporary religious press (Altholz 1991).

With very few exceptions, also Mariannhill's photographers never signed their work. The multiplicity of potential authors involved in the photographic practice at Mariannhill therefore requires the discussion of their different personal and professional backgrounds in the next section. Such an analysis will allow us to better understand the resulting skills, aesthetic preferences, and therefore photography at Mariannhill as image, object, narrative, and practice. Professional photographic training at the time tried to improve the photographer's abilities to create and maintain social relationships with sitters. As I showed above, this included and nurtured the cultivation of a particular representative form of self-fashioning. This fact not only allows us to study a particular photographic practice, but also provides us with identifiable portraits of some of the photographers.[99]

Also the article I described in the previous section was not signed (Müller 1909). However, I believe that Müller was the only author who could have written with such intimacy and knowledge about the photographs and the people they depict. The transfer of information from the glass plate negative to the article shows this most explicitly (cf. Figure 13). Also the style of writing is similar to articles where Müller is the confirmed author. However, even before 1909, none of Mariannhill's photographers ever signed a photograph with his name in the image. If some origin is indicated, it is merely done through the name of the mission, "Mariannhill" or "M'hill", the place "*Südafrika*", as well the occasional indication of a date. These three coordinates were provided within the image space, as they constituted the minimum requirements for copyright protection since 1876 (Dommann 2006:355).

It was only Br. Aegidius Müller who established personal photographic authorship, and even added two more identities, other than his religious name. First, he inscribed his Zulu name "*Madwebula*" on multiple glass plate negatives showing himself, together with other annotations.[100] This signature, however, only appears on paper strips on the negative, never on the

[99] On the one hand, the shutter may have been released by an assistant. In this case the photograph would not be an "auto-portrait". On the other hand, there is the possibility that Müller operated the camera with a pneumatic self-release mechanism with either one of his feet, which are both just outside the frame (cf. Parzer-Mühlbacher 1905:100).

[100] Müller's spelling differs from written Zulu (*-twebula*) as it can be found in contemporary dictionaries. This

printed image. Being an antiquated Zulu word for "photographer" associated with "magical" practices, Müller employed this term as a private and likely ironic form of self-fashioning. When he instead engaged with the South African art world, he used his secular name "Joseph Müller" instead, as I will show in the next sections. In Chapter Six I discuss how he eventually was forced to actively claim authorship with German publishers, in order to prevent the repeated plagiarism of his photographs in Europe.

In his practice of self-fashioning as artist and author, Müller thus employed at least three identities, which evolved around the consumption- and production patterns within his practice as photographer. Depending on whom he thought to address, he either used his secular identity "Joseph Müller", his religious identity "Br. Aegidius", or his Zulu identity "*Madwebula*". These identities emerged within his reactions to particular discourses: artistic photography, catholic aesthetics, metaphysical ascriptions, the reactions to Catholicism in South Africa, tourism, juridical conundrums, as well as correspondence with ethnologists in Europe. The idea of the author in relation to photographs must therefore be considered as an identity which needed to be continually adjusted and propped up. Once we understand this as a process of entanglement (cf. Hodder 2016, Chapters Five and Seven), it will further our understanding of related claims to the authenticity of photographs.

In Chapters One to Six I establish Br. Aegidius Müller as the main camera operator and author, by showing that he controlled a considerable chain of media through various forms of social interaction, from the collection and description of objects, the taking of photographs, to the writing of texts, as well as the active distribution of these media through various circuits. At the same time, I argue that he must be considered as an avid consumer of these media from other sources, which he appropriated within his own work.

Many other photographs, made between approximately 1897 and 1915, show Müller reading books, riding horses, climbing mountains, exploring forests, hunting, smoking, drinking, and eventually in the process of taking photographs.[101] Even if Müller himself performed many roles for the camera, some of these images never appeared in the mission's periodicals. The fact that most of these photographs still appeared in the mission's official albums on display in the studio, makes it unlikely that they were made for strictly private purposes. Many photographs show himself or confreres in the process of reading, writing, photographing, and conversing or bartering for objects with Africans. The existence of these photographs indicates that Müller himself understood, appreciated, and consciously cultivated these engagements as conventional instances of processing, producing, but also of performing knowledge. In this chapter and the next, I explore similar image compositions, starting from the hypothesis that there was indeed a heightened awareness of photographic authorship and self-fashioning, as well as a need to perform for the mission's audiences.

---

suggests that he heard the word from native speakers, rather than having looked it up in a dictionary (cf. Chapter Eight).

[101] More than 40 photographs of the listed activities still exist in the collection, some as prints, and some only in form of negatives.

As shall become evident in various instances throughout this study, next to all the other roles he performed for the camera—or maybe even exactly through these roles—Müller conceived of himself as an artist. Proponents of artistic photography explicitly suggested to their colleagues to become, and indeed perform as artists, through their entire "being and behaviour" (Miethe 1902:399). The identity as "artist" manifested photographic authorship and therefore the juridical right to one's own photographic work. Eventually, Müller presented himself as an artist, and was perceived as such by others. For example, in March 1901, after having visited Mariannhill Monastery for two days, the pioneering and thus well-known Natal dairy farmer and politician, Sir Joseph Baynes (1842-1925), praised Müller in a letter of gratitude to Mariannhill's architect, Br. Nivard Streicher:

> The photos I brought away have been greatly admired, so much so, that I feel quite sorry the opportunity did not favour having my own photo taken at your studio, by your very able artist; I am sure those photos remove any doubt as to whether photography is an "Art".[102]

This statement addresses the contemporary aesthetic and juridical conundrum of photography in two of its dimensions, and furthermore shows its immediate resonance within the South African colonial society: could the medium of photography indeed bring forth "art", and could accordingly the operator behind the camera be considered an "artist"? Once their work was acknowledged as "artistic", and as a result contained their agency, photographers were in a position to defend their work legally and thus economically in terms of copyright. The contemporary legal discourse will therefore serve as indicator for the intercontinental and cross-cultural importance attributed to the question of (artistic) authorship at the time. In the remainder of this section I will delineate the question of photographic authorship and self-fashioning at Mariannhill by considering it against the background of the legal discourse in Europe. As this chapter is concerned with the appropriation of contemporary photographic aesthetics at Mariannhill and related claims to truth, I now provide a general backdrop of how photographic aesthetics, legislation, and authorship developed in interdependence in the field of commercial studio photography. In Parts Two and Three we shall see that also mission, tourism, and ethnology were involved in the same visual economy.

Since the 1860s, the German-speaking law discourse struggled over whether or not to integrate photographs into the copyright legislation for artworks. The discussion evolved around the question whether photography was merely a "trade [*Handwerk*]" involving the autonomous process of mechanical imprinting ("mechanical objectivity"), or whether it was in fact an "art form", which certified the photographer as an artist, and therefore as author. In the first case, the photographer was considered as only a craftsman with little impact on the photographic result (Dommann 2006). The dominant opinion considered the process foremost as a mechanical imprinting, similar to how Müller described it above (1909), or what Gerhard Plume referred to as the "dead gaze [*der tote Blick*]" (1990). This opinion held that the agency was with the

[102] CMM-GR: Baynes to Streicher, 11.03.1901. For biographical data on Baynes see Leverton (1972).

camera, rather than its operator. In order to establish the same legal rights for their works as fine art painters, photographers had to actively claim the status of their work as "art" for each individual photograph (cf. Dommann 2006, Plumpe 1990, Kaufhold 1986, Ricke 1998, Stiegler and Thürlemann 2011). The photographer as "artist" thus had to enliven his work through the idea of the creative and individual genius. As Plumpe (1990:95) puts it, the photographer needed to saturate his work with his own personality. Photographers explicitly followed this strategy by utilising stylistic conventions of fine art painting, which I explore in this chapter, as far as they are relevant for our case.

The very idea of the photographer's agency as artist is epitomised in Joseph Baynes' letter to Br. Nivard Streicher in 1901. In particular since 1897, German professional photographers pushed for a revision of photographic copyright in order to secure rights regarding the reproduction of their own work (Hoerner 1989, Ricke 1998, Weise 1994). Adolf Miethe, the editor of the two journals, *Das Atelier des Photographen* and *Photographische Chronik*, played an essential role in this process (see below and Chapter Three). As Müller read these journals and even published in them, he actively followed these discourses. As I suggested above, photographers therefore not only had to transform themselves from mere "craftspersons" into "artists", but also perform this image through their attempts at photographic self-fashioning. As we will see, the discourse therefore continually circulated around the comparison between the painter's and the photographer's capability to capture the essence or "character" of either a person or a scene. The idea of investing an image with a maker's personality may also be compared to what Gell (1998) framed as the distribution of personhood. I will return to this more explicitly in Chapter Eight.

Revisions of legislation first took hold in 1876, and eventually in 1907. In the process photographers targeted two main themes: first, the customer's right to his or her own (photographic) image, and second, the photographic reproduction or recreation of already existing images. These two fields can be equated to the fields of photographic portraiture on the one hand, and genre photography on the other; the latter in particular in its relation to so-called *tableaux vivants*. I will discuss both of these formats in detail below. The resulting question of authorship in our case—in its confirmation as well as its infringement through plagiarism—may be seen as a central issue in the relation between European photographers, Africans, and the representations they co-produced.

The debate about copyright was played out between various competing producers of photographs. The crucial difference between the situation in Europe and the colonial situation of photographic practice in South Africa was that depicted Africans were often left out of this equation. The discourse in Europe strived towards the *creation* of the individual *against* the masses and the technical apparatus, and his or her rights and claims to images. The practice of taking photographs of the colonial Other was diametrically opposed: people were framed and their images circulated as replaceable stereotypes of homogeneous social masses, or "tribes". Mariannhill Missionaries only started to circulate photographic portraits of individual converts

after 1900 (Chapter Two). In relation to the ongoing discourse of segregation, "African" artistic authorship as such only became a phenomenon in South Africa's art world during the 1920s (Chapter Seven).

Since photographs were generally considered to be very "objective" representations, they became functionally instrumental to all kinds of controlling surveillance, involving police work, psychology, medicine, journalism, ethnology, and physical anthropology (Sekula 1986). The establishment of this alleged indexical relationship between representation and subject allowed for either the identification or denial of particular expert skills: the discourse considered someone as a skilled photographer, who could convincingly establish this relationship. Whether these skills were referred to as "social", "craft-like" and "technological", "artistic", "scientific", or even "magical", depended on knowledge and how the involved stakeholders constructed and perceived this knowledge. At the same time, these skills created new and potentially independent knowledge in the form of a photograph. Once the photograph was disconnected from its maker, the associations with the product, however, could be re-transferred to the interpretation of the author and his skills. A photographer could thus either appear as a craftsperson, artist, scientist, or a magician, which all give different qualities of validation to authorship. As we shall see, Br. Aegidius Müller in particular took on these authorial roles purposefully. Within the relationships photography can create, Müller fulfilled the conditions required for certain social roles, even the one of of the potentially supernatural *mathwebula*. At the same time, however, Müller's performance and representation of these identities inflicted the complementary roles on the mission's subjects, clearly without their consent.

The Six Photographers of Mariannhill

The missionaries exchanged knowledge and skills at the monastery across various fields of action. I therefore introduce Mariannhill's six photographers in this chapter, some of Mariannhill's writers and editors in Part Two, and collectors and curators of museum objects in Part Three. All of these members must be considered as part of the authorial network within the process of knowledge production I just described.

Whenever novices arrived at Mariannhill Monastery, they were registered in the so-called "*Kloster-Catalog*".[103] This record contains only the most basic dates, such as the birthdate, date of arrival, and of the various vows each member made. Furthermore, we find notes on the place of birth, previous occupations and belongings, as well as few details on the parents. These informations constituted a starting point for biographical research. Early private documents or correspondences, however, either no longer exist in the archives of Mariannhill, or they are in an unreadable condition. Those individuals who left the community before they died, generally took most of their belongings and other traces with them. Associates like Br. Aegidius Müller had an affiliate status, which allowed for a much more private and independent life away from the monastery. Therefore, none of Müller's private documents or correspondences ended up in the archive. As I explained in the introduction, full members of the congregation were under a much stricter rule, obliging them to adhere to a daily routine.

I now turn to the individual biographies of Mariannhill's six known photographers, according to the order how they entered the congregation. Very few remaining photographs made between 1880 and 1882 show that the Trappists had already brought along a photographer to Dunbrody, their first settlement at the Western Cape. This first photographer, however, remains unnamed and parted from the community after only a few months. According to Prior Pfanner, on his departure this photographer was "in a very bad constitution" (Kempf 1982:51).

Still at the Cape, **Fr. Othmar (Josef Peter) Gross** (1851-????) joined the community on 24 June 1882 from Düren in Germany, a city half-way between Aachen and Cologne. This was still five months before the community eventually settled at the present location near Durban. On arrival, Fr. Othmar's occupation was recorded as "civil servant", but he must have soon taken the first photographs at Mariannhill, which depict newly erected building structures, monks at work, and few group photographs of the community (eg. Figure 3). Up to 1889 he held the position of Mariannhill's sub-prior. He then returned to Germany in early 1889, with the order to acquire equipment and expertise for the printing press. In 1891, he eventually underwent training at the Photographisches und Graphisches Lehrinstitut of Wilhelm Cronenberg (1836-1915) on Castle Grönenbach in Bad Grönenbach, Bavaria, some 130 km to the West of Munich (cf. Gross 1891). Cronenberg had bought Castle Grönenbach in 1881, but was already well-known for training photographers in his two photographic studios in Bad Kissingen and Darmstadt since 1858.[104]

[103] *"Der Kloster-Catalog"* lists all basic data on newly arrived members up to 1895.

[104] Cronenberg moved his institute to Castle Grönenbach in 1881, and there expanded the range of offered training (cf. Sedelmayer 1910). On the letterhead he used when running the school in Grönenbach, he nevertheless dated

The photo historian James Cornwall claims that Cronenberg's institute was Germany's first photographic school working on a larger scale (1979:136). Photography was however taught privately already since the early 1840s, and taken up as subject at universities in Berlin and Leipzig in the 1860s (Stenger 1950:226). Other training institutes, similar to the one of Cronenberg, had been started up since the early 1860s in several other German cities (Hoerner 1989:96). Some of these institutes, however, no longer existed by the 1880s.

Cronenberg's school was successful, because, other than only training for photography, he additionally offered (1) spacious premises and laboratories; (2) lodging on site; (3) a picturesque environment; (4) the additional training of a broad spectrum of other printing technologies; (5) a training that could be concluded within a few months; (6) and eventually he advertised extensively, also with the fact that he had earned the title "*Hessischer Hofphotograph*" in the 1870s.[105] These advantages may explain Mariannhill's choice for this particular school.[106] Cronenberg eventually sold the castle in 1901 (Sedelmayer 1910:253), once he had opened the Praktische Lehranstalt für Photographie und Photomechanische Verfahren in Munich in 1898 (Eder 1932:993). After his training with Cronenberg, Fr. Othmar only returned to Mariannhill briefly in 1891, before leaving the community for personal reasons. Instead, he joined the Alsatian Trappist Monastery Ölenberg.

A rather obscure figure in relation to Mariannhill's photographic production is the painter, mechanic, sculptor, and photographer **Anton Schmidt** (????-1920). He joined the monastery together with his wife in 1886. Like Br. Aegidius Müller, Schmidt and his wife were affiliated to the monastery as lay people (Welzel 1951:478). Due to this independent affiliate status, nothing is known about the Schmidts' pre-Mariannhill past. The couple lived in a private accommodation (with an artistic studio) close to the sister's convent. In several notes up to 1890, Schmidt is briefly referred to as photographer (eg. Vonbank 1890:112). Approximately between 1897 and 1914, he appears on several photographs together with Müller. This leads to the assumption that both influenced each other concerning their photographic practice. The photograph below must have been taken, or has at least been released by another permanent lay resident of Mariannhill by the name of Von Manteufel.[107] He is present in another photograph of the same occasion, which must have been taken by Müller instead. This shows that photographic authorship is an ambivalent idea, and did not require absolute professional expertise at all times. In 1903, Mariannhill's architect, Br. Nivard Streicher, mentioned in a report on Mariannhill's industries that the monastery had two (active) photographers (Streicher 1905:26). As Leyendecker was absent in German East Africa at the time, I believe this to be Müller and Schmidt, Müller being the main photographer running the studio.

---

the foundation of his institute to 1858.

[105] In 1888, just before Fr. Othmar left Mariannhill in 1889, Cronenberg had placed an advert in the journal *Jahrbuch für Photographie und Reproduktionstechnik,* the same journal where Fr. Othmar published an article about his experience of training with Cronenberg in 1891.

[106] Cronenberg not only taught at his own school, but also published on topics of print technology. In 1895 he wrote a well-received book on the half-tone process (*Autotypie*), which was even translated into English one yer later.

[107] Nothing is known about Von Manteufel's identity and occupation at Mariannhill.



Figure 16: Br. Aegidius Müller (left), Anton Schmidt (with pipe and rifle), an unidentified boy, and a dog at the Umhlatuzane River near Mariannhill (CMM Archives).

After Fr. Othmar had left in February 1889, **Fr. Isembardus (Fridolin) Leyendecker** (1869-1942) was immediately put to work at the photographic business. Only twenty years of age, he arrived at Mariannhill a few months before Br. Aegidius Müller in July 1889. Leyendecker had learned the trade of photography at his father's studio in Bernkastel an der Mosel,[108] a small village in western Germany, relatively close to Trier and the border of Luxembourg. His father, Nikolaus Leyendecker (1824-1896), is known to have taken photographs already by the late 1850s, and he is believed to have been the only photographer in the area until the late 1880s.[109] He thus practiced photography early on, an experience which he would have passed on to his son Fridolin, the later Fr. Isembard, during the 1880s. In addition to being a photographer, Nikolaus Leyendecker also worked as a carpenter, and by the 1890s he owned at least 14 extensive vineyards. This indicates that he was not able to make a living from the photographic profession alone. In the 1880s, the business became even more competitive, and Nikolaus Leyendecker

[108] In the 19th century the name was alternatively spelled "Berncastel". Due to municipal restructuring the village is today called "Bernkastel-Kues".

[109] In local archives at the town Wittlich, under which Bernkastel falls today, only few landscape photographs, but no portraits, remain. I thank Lutz Engelskirchen of the Landesmuseum Koblenz, and Claudia Schmitt of the Stadtarchiv Bernkastel-Wittlich for this information (personal communication, May-October 2013). I also thank the collector and local historian Roland Klinger for providing me with several portrait photographs by the "Photographisches Atelier N. Leyendecker" from his private collection.

began travelling to neighbouring towns, offering his service as an ambulant photographer. In adverts he stressed that he was "able to compete with every other studio of bigger cities, be it in regard to direct photographs, or enlargements" (Petry 2009:275).

Precisely at a time when other photographers established themselves in Bernkastel permanently in 1889, Nikolaus Leyendecker's son Fridolin left for Mariannhill. As it was not uncommon that siblings entered Mariannhill's male or female communities together, Fridolin's six-year-older brother Franz, a trained baker, joined him some years later, and became the lay brother Garzia. Yet a second brother became a cleric, and joined an unknown congregation. Once Fridolin had become Fr. Isembard at Mariannhill, he only performed actively as photographer for about three years, until another professional photographer arrived. He nevertheless remained involved, and was well situated in between European and South African photographic businesses. For example, when he ran the studio during an extended illness of Müller in 1901, Fr. Isembard advertised the existence of a befriended Durban photographer to a German glass plate manufacturer as a potential outlet market.[110] Between 1903 and 1907, Fr. Isembard served as superior for Mariannhill's stations in German East Africa,[111] and between 1907 until the separation from the Trappist order in 1909, he was prior of Mariannhill Monastery. In 1911, Fr. Isembard became superior of St. Paul near Venlo in the Netherlands, which opened in 1913 as Mariannhill's very first noviciate in Europe (Wendl 1998:168). Only in 1923, Fr. Isembard returned to Mariannhill, where he died in 1942.

As **Br. Aegidius Müller** is one of the most eminent protagonists throughout this study, I shall sketch his biography in more detail. Mariannhill's *Kloster-Catalog* recorded that he was born as Joseph Maria Caspar Müller on 30 March 1853 in the small village of Lövenich near Erkelenz, approximately forty kilometres to the northwest of Cologne. He was baptised on the very same day at the Catholic parish church[112] as the third child of Johann Müller and his wife Wilhelmina (née Dahmen). Besides one surviving older sister, he had two younger brothers and one younger sister. Müller's father was a teacher at Lövenich's school and died in 1869. Beyond this date, the archives of Erkelenz do not reveal any traces of the family's presence. This creates the impression that Wilhelmina Müller moved elsewhere with the children, once her husband had died. At some point in the 1870s or 1880s, Müller must have settled in Cologne's suburb Ehrenfeld, where he resurfaces in an account written during the year 1889 (Vonbank 1890:53).

From the contemporary official address book and business inventory *Greven's Adreßbuch* of 1888, one can glean that Cologne had no less than 22 photographic studios within the inner city ring, several providing equipment and possibly training. It is unclear, however, whether Müller had any experience with photography before his arrival in South Africa. During his last years in Cologne, Müller practiced as an accountant and lived just outside the inner city, at the address Everhardstrasse 14 in Cologne-Ehrenfeld. At the time, this suburb mostly consisted of

[110] CMM-MM: letter (copy), Leyendecker to "Trockenplattenfabrik Unger Hoffman, Dresden", 21.10.1901.

[111] Leyendecker also took photographs near Mariannhill's East-African stations, as shown by the photographic collection and related correspondences in the Weltmuseum of Basel, Switzerland.

[112] KAL: Baptism register Lövenich bei Erkelenz, Pfarrei Maria & Elisabeth, 1853, p.16.

industry, as well as housing for the working class. The address book's entry on Müller suggests that he lived together with his widowed mother. No private, and only few handwritten notes by Müller can be found in the CMM archives, even though he wrote for the periodicals more actively than most of his confreres.[113]

Müller's motivation for joining a mission in South Africa is unclear. It might have been religious conviction, maybe the death of his mother, the unreliable economic situation in the Cologne area, or the general anti-Catholic sentiment at the time.[114] The most plausible catalyst is Pfanner's appeal towards lay people in March 1889 to become associates or so-called *Franziner,* in order to relieve the contemplative monks at Mariannhill.[115] This lay brotherhood was also interchangeably referred to as either "Semi-Trappists", "*Tertiare*", "*Oblaten*", "*Familiare*", or "*Associierte*". Pfanner had founded this "sub congregation" in early 1888 as an alternative option for people who wanted to join the mission, but did not want to bear the heavy rules of the Trappist order. In the mission's periodical *Vergißmeinnicht* of 13 March 1889, Pfanner added a four-page pamphlet, which Müller may have read. The *Mariannhill-Kalender* of 1890 also included a version of the "light rule" for the community.[116] A trip from England to South Africa cost about 190 fl. with a reduction negotiated by Mariannhill to 170 fl., which the novices had to accommodate for themselves.[117]

On 20 August 1889, a group of 50 people met at the inn Fränkischer Hof in Cologne: 28 men and 22 women[118] at an age between 15 and 42, all destined to the Catholic Mission Monastery Mariannhill in South Africa (Vonbank 1890:12). On 23 August 1889, after a journey via London, the party boarded the steamship Tartar of the Castle Line at Southampton. Up to this point they had been guided by Br. Pankratz Baierwaltes OCR from Würzburg, who regularly guided groups of novices from Cologne to Southampton, on their way to Mariannhill, via Madeira and Cape Town. Amongst the group were the accountant Joseph Müller, the professional painter Josef Mäder,[119] and the priest Fr. Athanasius Vonbank. Vonbank eventually authored the novelistic and propagandistic travelogue *Von Innsbruck nach Mariannhill*, in which he described the course of the group's journey to South Africa. The notes for this account, he kept, discussed,

---

113 In 2009, Cologne's City Archive collapsed during extension works on the subway network, rendering all potentially existing biographical data inaccessible. Also all other regional archives (secular as well as church archives in the Cologne area) bear no traces of Müller.

114 See Chapter Two for a brief account of the impact of the "Culture Wars" on Mariannhill.

115 Pfanner had chosen St. Francis of Assisi as the community's patron saint. St. Aegidius was one of St. Francis's followers, and may thus explain the choice of Müller's religious name.

116 *Mariannhiller Kalender* 1890: A. Schwestern-Regel, pp. 90-92; B. Franziner-Regel, pp. 92-94.

117 Pfanner indicated the prices in "fl.", the Austrian currency *Florin*, which was issued between 1857-1892 (cf. Gütl 2004:15). 1 fl. equalled 1,71 *Mark*, and thus approx. 3 Shilling 5 Pennies. The prices for the journey would thus have been approx. £32 10S, or including the reduction, £29 1S.

118 The enumeration of professions joining the party also mentions one photographer. This cannot be Joseph Müller however, as he was accountant at the time, and the latter profession is listed separately once. The identity of the mentioned photographer could not be retraced.

119 Josef Mäder became Br. Otto, and would paint Müller's photographic studio backdrops over the coming decades (cf. Chapter Four). Mäder first chose to become a priest, but later decided (or it was decided for him) to become a lay brother.

and compiled together with Joseph Müller (Vonbank 1890:99). One night before entering the Port of Durban, one of the authors marvelled at the African night sky and wrote: "The Milky Way is more elongated, wider, and also more intense in light. I wish I was a photographer, and thus able to photograph this sky and send it to Europe." (Vonbank 1890:98).[120] It remains unclear whether this is the voice of Fr. Athanasius Vonbank or Joseph Müller.

In the night of 19 September 1889, at the age of 36, Müller arrived at Mariannhill. The official date for entering the congregation is noted as 23 September 1889 in the *Kloster-Catalog*. On Sunday, 6 October, at half past five in the morning, Müller, four other *Franziner*, and 21 Trappists were initiated. Müller was clothed, and received the religious name "Br. Aegidius" from the Abbot of Mariannhill, Franz Pfanner, with the words:

Exue veterem hominem,	Remove your old identity,
Indue novum habitum,	put on your new clothes,
Accipe nomen tuum.	Receive your [new] name.[121]

Müller's arrival is further marked by a short article in Mariannhill's periodical *Josephsblättchen,* where he described the experience of his first Christmas day in South Africa (Müller 1889). One segment is worth quoting, as Müller here conceived of himself as a literate and refined mind, fond of music, literature, and theatre. The theme of nature was a central interest for Müller across these media. It would also become important in his photographic occupation, especially in later years.

> On the evening of the first Christmas day, after *compline*, I am sitting in front of the entrance to our "*Franzinerklösterli*",[122] which we are very fond of, because it is designed—in its entire outer appearance and interior design—in the spirit of St. Francis. At quarter to eight, the progressing dusk forces me to close the book, and now suddenly light and darkness change, the heat of the day and the coolness of the evening, so that within ten minutes a semidarkness covers the earth. Almost as swift as a scene shifter in a theatre, the sky—which was still in broad day light seconds ago—pulls a veil of stars over its face. The hot temperature of the day drops to 14 C; considering the quick change, an almost touching chill. I make a few steps forward to the young eucalyptus trees which are planted in front of our "*Klösterli*". Their globate crowns form a long green string of pearls, descending the hill in a curve to my right. From the green bushes to my left, the long branches of some sort of bamboo pole emerge in a particular way. Like festoons they move fantastically to and fro in the quiet evening wind. Behind this scenery the valley *Josaphat* closes by forming even and complaisant hill chains; only the stretched-out and significantly higher table mountain poses an exception, like a very stern and dignified king.[123]

The *Tafelberg*, or table mountain of Mariannhill, which Müller described, is indeed a distinct landmark in the area and features in many photographs Müller made of the surrounding area in later years. Of these we shall explore one particular example in Chapter Eight.

As his first occupation in December 1889, Müller was transferred to the so-called

---

120 My own translation form the German original.
121 My own translation from the Latin original: Vonbank (1890:130).
122 *Klösterli* = Swiss German diminutive of "*Kloster* [Monastery]".
123 My own translation from the German original.

"*Vestiarium*", where he had to dispense clothing and equipment to confreres.[124] He shared this post with Fr. Ludgerus Selbman (Anon. 1890:15). They were the successors of Fr. Severin Grimm, who, in the previous year, had compiled an exhibition of "ethnographic" objects, which he then accompanied to Europe, where it was supposed to tour several cities. Fr. Severin eventually remained in Europe and joined Mariannhill's house in Würzburg permanently, from where he administered financial and propaganda matters. In his new position, Müller wrote a short article on this planned propaganda exhibition (1890), which I will discuss in Chapter Five. As a museum was not yet in existence, it appears that the collection and curation of "ethnographic" objects was initially taken care of by the *vestiarium*. This was now partially Müller's task. Even before he became an active photographer, he engaged with the material world of the monastery on the one hand, as well as with the one of Africans on the other.

There are no further archival traces regarding Müller's first years at Mariannhill, besides a note that he left the congregation on 23 August 1890. This obviously means that he left the Franziner community, but stayed on as an affiliate lay brother. In 1892, after the first visitation, which caused Abbot Franz Pfanner to resign,[125] the institution of the Franziner was abandoned, for no specific reasons other than that it "had no grounding" (Strunk 1892). As I explained already, it is unclear when Müller began his engagement with photography, and whether he had a professional training in Germany or at Mariannhill itself. However, it is very likely that once Pfanner had left Mariannhill, the second Abbot, Amandus Schölzig (1836-1900), adopted a policy to employ the Ex-Franziner with secular work, in order to relieve the Trappist priests and brothers. At the same time, it seems that the rift between the factions of missionaries and monks within the Trappist community became even greater after 1892. Schölzig thus tried to balance contemplation and mission, as well as propaganda, which was necessary to support the latter. Before becoming a Trappist, Abbot Amandus Schölzig held a position as professor for "oriental languages" at the educational institution of the Monastery Klosterneuburg near Vienna, as well as editor of religious publications (Ludwig and Reitterer 1995:29-30). He was thus well-versed in the needs and interest of European academia and society at large for information on South African matters. In 1894, his first initiatives were a building for the monastery's museum and a new building and expansion of the photographic business (cf. Chapter Five).

During these years yet another photographer entered the stage. After the departure of Fr. Othmar Gross in 1889, the position of photographer was only temporarily filled in by Fr. Isembard Leyendecker for less than two years, until another professionally trained photographer arrived in 1891. This was **Fr. Desiderius (Joseph Hubert Aloysius) Fresen** (1873-1939), who hailed from Essen in Germany, and was eighteen years of age on arrival. Fr. Desiderius was hitherto unknown in the history of Mariannhill, and I could only identify him as a temporary photographer through a close reading of the contemporary accounting books. Research on his

[124] The job description used at Mariannhill was "*Equipierungsrat*", one who dispenses equipment to confreres. The Trappist Rule instead speaks of the "*Vestiarius*" (Bonaventura 1887:109ff).

[125] The title "Abbot" is however kept for life.

previous biography and training as photographer in Essen did not yield any information.[126] Even though he left the congregation only five years later, in 1896, he may have been responsible for a variety of photographs that I will discuss later. The documents of Fresen's application for naturalisation in 1905 show that he stayed in South Africa, moved to King Williams Town, remained in the photographic business, married, and raised kids.[127] Notes on containers of photographic negatives suggest that he maintained contact with Mariannhill, and at least on one occasion was commissioned to take photographs of the mission station Keilands in the Eastern Cape.

Even if the exact forms of interaction and cooperation between the five photographers cannot be fully reconstructed, it is clear that at the end of 1897 Müller emerged as the main professional photographer of Mariannhill, occasionally aided or relieved by either Fr. Isembard Leyendecker or Anton Schmidt. While I consider Müller as the operator of the studio, and the main photographer after 1897, it is much harder to distinguish photographic operators in the period prior to 1897. The idea of the photographic "author" thus falls apart even more, and can only be reassembled for particular occasions. The lingering question with Müller remains his very relationship with Europe after 1889; whether—or better where—he received professional training as photographer, and thus where he collected ideas on the photographic economy and related aesthetics, as they appear in his article of 1909. He was able to draw from a considerable photographic experience and expertise on the ground, but nevertheless directed his attention and search for more expertise towards Europe. As photographic technology, aesthetic trends, and the visual demands of benefactor audiences and ethnographic museums changed considerably during the 1880s and 1890s, the necessary information concerning related practitioners, proponents and their networks could not have been solely supplied to Müller by Leyendecker, Fresen, Schmidt, or any other photographer in the colony of Natal.

Instead of direct evidence for Müller's training, I will only be able to provide circumstantial evidence. There are two possibilities: either he was sent back to Germany in 1896, to undergo training at a photographic school for about one year, and returned to Mariannhill in the course of 1897; or he acquired his knowledge locally at Mariannhill Monastery from one of his confreres, and was additionally aided by published instructions, which I will discuss in the next sections. But for neither one of these two hypotheses could I find concrete evidence. It is possible, however unlikely that he became a member of a local photography club or society, as I explain below. Instead, he acquired and updated photographic equipment and expertise through correspondence with practitioners in Germany at least since 1898 (cf. Parts Two and Three). This makes it likely that he had established contacts with experts during a sojourn at a photographic school in Germany. It is confirmed that he took over the studio in October 1897, when the accounting books first recorded payments to the monastery's main register under his name.

[126] The Stadtarchiv Essen does not hold any registration records of the timeframe 1883-1920. Therefore nothing could be found regarding Fresen's youth. His father was an artistic gardener and nurseryman. I thank Jutta Vonrüden-Ferner of the Stadtarchiv Essen for this information (personal communication, July 2011).

[127] CAR: CO_8610_22_1-1905.

At least one of Mariannhill's necrologies mentions that Müller was a "trained photographer" (Welzel 1951:480).[128] This suggests that he went through an institutional training experience like his confreres Fr. Othmar Gross on Castle Grönenbach, Fr. Desiderius Fresen in Essen, and Fr. Isembard Leyendecker in Bernkastel. Members were dispatched to Germany on a regular basis, in order to follow training in various trades, and so to improve the expertise on the ground. Still by the mid-1890s, Cronenberg's institute on Castle Grönenbach appears to have been one of the few that focused exclusively on training. An advert of Cronenberg's school (approx. 1888), which I retrieved from the nearby Staatsarchiv Augsburg,[129] gives some further insights: for the reason that not only photography, but the entire process of development and printing was taught, the institute attracted students from all over Germany, Dutch East-India, Silesia, Bulgaria, Romania, Finland, Sweden, Russia, Portugal, Switzerland, America, and the Netherlands.[130]

In neighbouring countries like the Netherlands, for example, one still had to train in photography with an individual photographer at the time, as schools were only founded after 1910 (Rooseboom 2006:307). This would take on the form of an apprenticeship of several years, as the photographer could not focus on teaching alone.[131] The photographic course on Castle Grönenbach instead took only between two to six months, depending on the student's experience. It may have been such a training that enabled Müller, not only to run a professional photographic studio, but to build and maintain connections with German photographic and academic professionals, which he preferred over local ones. Müller also ran the printing press at Mariannhill during the First World War, which he could have hardly managed without having been trained in printing technologies (cf. Nolte 1928:167).

One way or another, Müller became aware of ethnographic museums' interest in photographs, read and published in contemporary German illustrated magazines, consulted professional photography literature, read photographic journals, and corresponded with the editors on questions of photographic chemistry, technology, and law. He must have become aware of this complex landscape somehow, and at the same time acquired the knowledge to navigate it. I reconstruct at least parts of this network in the next chapters.

A genealogy of photographic training can eventually be traced from Nikolaus Leyendecker's business since the 1840s up to 1923, when Fr. Isembard Leyendecker trained

---

[128] The author of Mariannhill's major necrology, Br. Joseph Welzel, identified Müller as "*ausgebildeter Photograph*". Welzel had known all deceased confreres personally.

[129] SAA: Akten des Königlichen Bezirksamts Memmingen. Betreff: Die Graphische Lehranstalt von Cronenberg in Grönenbach. 1889-1893. Tit. V. Fach 12. Num.18.

[130] This array of origins may have been selective, in order to show the diversity of students for the purpose of advertising. In the 1880s and 1890s, Cronenberg taught approximately 40 students per year (Cornwall 1979:156).

[131] The Lehr- und Forschungsanstalt founded in 1888 by Josef Maria Eder in Vienna also played an important role. It was the first state-funded school for photography worldwide. It not only had the aim to train photographers, but likewise to perform research on photographic chemistry and technology. Other professional institutes followed in 1893 in Leipzig, and 1900 in Munich (Lechner 2003). The photographic laboratory of Hermann W. Vogel at the Technische Hochschule in Berlin since 1863 was only an ancillary institute for other sciences, and had no academic status (Hoerner 1989:104).

Mariannhill's last full-time photographer **Br. Leonard (Walter) Weber** (1896-1984). The available equipment was by then much easier to handle, so that Weber went through a less rigorous training than his predecessors. His occupation was also limited to photography, and could therefore be supervised by Leyendecker. As a result, Weber was less professional and meticulous in his photographic approach than Müller. He never annotated his negatives and also did not number them according to a filing system. Even though he still worked on glass plate negatives when he began his work in approximately 1924, he gradually used more celluloid negatives during the 1930s. In 1939, Weber became boarding master at Mariannhill's St. Francis College. As it was forbidden to enemies of the state to take photographs during the Second World War, the studio had to close its doors for good (cf. Rippe 2007). After the war, the studio was used for other purposes, as more and more individual members had their own cameras and could easily produce photographs for the propaganda publications independently.

It remains to consider the involvement of Africans in the photographic practice at Mariannhill, or any potential transfer of photographic expertise and knowledge. Norman Etherington writes that photographers were *trained* at Mariannhill (1997:105), which is however only a citational slippage from "visitors could *observe* […] even professional photographers at work" (Brain 1982:135, my italics). While the training of Africans at the printing press and as ornamental painters has been documented photographically before 1914, there is no trace whatsoever of the training of Africans in photography, even if it may have been envisioned at one point. In the before-mentioned article, written at Castle Grönenbach in 1891, Fr. Othmar Gross speculated:

> However, this brief sketch of the achievements of nine years should have brought hope to the experts of photography, to count amongst their ranks some individuals of the wild Zulu tribes in due course. […] And so it will not take too long until we can see [at Mariannhill] black artists producing zinc cliches [*Zinkcliches*] and photo types [*Lichtdrucke*]. But as of today, we are still lacking the necessary staff for training. (Gross 1891:148)[132]

Four years later, in 1895, an anonymous author opposed this promise in Mariannhill's own periodical *Vergißmeinnicht*, by stating that "Kafirs stand only at the beginning of all culture". He argued that they could not be turned into academics, theologists, or advocates yet, even though this may be possible with some few exceptional individuals. He continued that "also for artistic crafts, eg. engraving or woodcarving, or crafts like the one of the mechanic, turner, musician, photographer, printer and the like, the Kafir is not yet suited. He will never rise to an independent skill" (Anon. 1895:61-66). First, so the author, the most basic practical occupations had to be mastered. In the eyes of the mission, these were agricultural skills and basic craftsmanship (cf. Gütl 2005). In 1895, some of the missionaries therefore considered Africans not yet capable of mastering photography, neither as a technological and artistic skill, nor as a commercial business.

Even though Müller may have had an *assistant*, it is therefore uncertain whether he ever

[132] My own translation from the German original.

had an *apprentice*, someone who eventually practiced photography independently. In a similar situation Ghanaian Protestant converts actively engaged with the medium photography and consumed European material culture through photographs shown to them by missionaries (Meyer 1997). A similar encounter with photographic technology and its related material culture must have taken place at Mariannhill, when Africans entered the studio to be photographed. It is however yet another question whether the photographer on occasion introduced them in detail to the technology of the camera and the working of chemicals. But as a matter of fact, Figure 97 shows a photograph taken in Mariannhill's studio just after 1907: the man in the centre holds up the publication *How it is Made* (Williams 1907), explaining—among many other topics—how photographic glass plate negatives are produced.



Figure 17: One of Mariannhill's artistic painters, Br. Otto Mäder, with two apprentices, approx. 1900 (CMM Archives).

At least during the first decades of the mission's existence, it appears to have been important to the missionaries that (the representation of) authorship, and thus representational authority, remained with themselves. At the beginning of the next chapter I present two cases where Mariannhill's photographers considered situations of African authorship in relation to

photography, even if only in simulation and as potential parodies. The situation, however, appears to have been different in the case of painting and drawing. Before 1914, Mariannhill had at least three known professional painters. They worked on the interiors of Mariannhill's many churches, but also painted portraits and sceneries of mission life. The earlier-mentioned Anton Schmidt and Br. Otto Mäder both worked mainly at Mariannhill Monastery, and Br. Ludger Janssen at Centocow Mission. At least three photographs exist that show both Mäder and Janssen being assisted by Black boys. In the example above, however, Mäder can be seen supervising a boy while drawing an ornament on a chalk board (Figure 17). Both Mäder and the boy work on images typical for Mariannhill's churches, and appear to be copying from illustrations placed next to their working surfaces. The photograph can thus be taken as evidence that Mariannhill's painters did indeed take on Black apprentices, if not for figurative painting, at least for the work of ornamental drawings.

The situation only changed crucially by the mid 1920s, when—at least in one case at Mariannhill's outstation Centocow—mission personnel fostered, and even explicitly promoted the authorship and agency of the African figurative painter Gerard Bhengu (Chapter Seven). Unlike with Müller and his hypothetical assistants, it will be possible in this situation to think of something like a shared authorship between Bhengu and his first patron and mentor Dr. Max Kohler. The fact that so far no Black photographers could be identified in South Africa prior to the First World War, does not mean that they did not exist.[133] Müller had contact to at least one Black photographer, who had been professionally trained before 1913. Due to the lack of information on this photographer so far, I hope to write about him at a later point.

[133] The state of research is very different for West and East Africa, where African photographers have been recorded as early as the 1880s. For some of the existing overviews see Wendl and Behrend (1998), Geary (2002, 2013b), Haney (2010), and Schneider (2011).

Between Pictorialism and Propaganda

The Vergißmeinnicht also appears in a new dress, because Mariannhill celebrates its **25. Jubilee** in the course of this year. Like in the Mariannhill Kalender, we want to present *pictorial depictions* [*bildliche Darstellungen*] of African mission life also in the Vergißmeinnicht. A single glance at a well-executed [*wohlgetroffen*] picture often tells us more than one single print-page.[134] Otherwise, our mission leaflet should generally retain its original character, i.e. it will bring first of all truthful reports from daily mission life, so that our honoured readers and benefactors may always be well-informed about the progress of our common great project; yes, as it were, they may become eye-witnesses of the colourful life and bustle, as it plays itself out, on the one hand in the regular spaces of the Trappist monastery, on the other hand in the huts, schools and chapels of the lively Kafir-people. Along with the reports about the more important daily occurrences, there should be in proper variety some interesting reminiscences from earlier years, as well as exciting stories etc., interchangeably in part educative, in part of entertaining content, so that our modest leaflet should do justice to all wishes and expectations of its honoured readers.[135] (From the editorial of the *Vergißmeinnicht*, Frey 1907a:2)

In the years prior to the mission's 25th anniversary in 1907, Br. Aegidius Müller attempted to create a photographic record that would positively display the mission's impact on its social environment. In the year of the anniversary, his photographic record was eventually used to illustrate a concise history as a Festschrift: *Das Trappisten-Missionskloster Mariannhill, oder Bilder aus dem Afrikanischen Missionsleben. Im Auftrage seiner Obern gesammelt von einem Ordenspriester* (Frey 1907).[136] Even though the images had been "assembled [*gesammelt*]" by the editor Fr. Dominikus Frey, most of the 221 photographs on 188 pages, had been taken by Müller over the previous years. The renowned Catholic publisher Herder in Freiburg, who was also responsible for the periodical *Die Katholischen Missionen. Illustrierte Monatsschrift*, even distributed Mariannhill's *Festschrift* through its branch in America. A contemporary review in the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* praised it for its "numerous exceptionally fine photographs". As a concise account of the mission's efforts, the anniversary publication chronologically sketches Mariannhill's history of the past 25 years. It is told along the lines of landmark events, in particular the periods under the three Abbots, Pfanner, Schölzig, and Wolpert. Furthermore, it contains many anecdotal stories and photographs of the encounter between the missionaries and their African subjects.

As indicated in the quote above, Mariannhill's anniversary also gave reason to revamp the mission's periodical *Vergißmeinnicht* in the style of contemporary German popular illustrated magazines, educational literature, and travel journals. At least those Mariannhill members who worked for the press, read journals such as the popular *Über Land und Meer*. Previously without illustrations, from 1907 onwards the *Vergißmeinnicht* was packed with photographs. These were not only of Mariannhill's own making, but additionally sourced from European press stocks and

---

134 In several variations this saying is phrased as "a picture says more than a thousand words" and has been ascribed to many authors. Burke, for example, attributes it to Kurt Tucholsky (2001:9).

135 My own translation from the German original. Italics and bold letters are as they appear in the original text.

136 *"The Trappist Mission-Monastery Mariannhill, or pictures of African mission life. Collected by a priest of the congregation by order of his superiors".* The still existing publisher Herder in Freiburg has not maintained an archive for the time in question (personal communication, Tabeah Faubel, July 2014). Also the Mariannhill archives no longer contain any correspondence on the matter.

Bible imagery.

The quote lays out the periodical's new program in relation to its use of photographs. According to what I explained about ideas on objectivity at Mariannhill, this program explicitly introduced itself as presenting the privileged perspective of an "eyewitness".[137] In his explanation of the "eyewitness principle", the art historian Ernst Gombrich compares it to the artistic attempt of "mimesis", the approach of copying truthfully from nature (Gombrich 1980:246, also see Burke 2001). Gombrich, however, defines representations according to the "eyewitness principle" as a "negative" rule, according to which "the artist must not include in his image anything the eye-witness could not have seen from a particular point at a particular moment". According to him, mimesis is a less useful approach, as an artist is unlikely anyway to capture in a picture all available detail of a real situation. Both Gombrich and Mariannhills editorial, however, only give a new name to an issue photographers have struggled with since the establishment of the photographic profession, and the professional discourse on it: the conundrum of objective versus subjective interpretation between the camera and its products, the photographer and the photographed. Whether a photograph indeed "resembles" what it depicts according to what an eyewitness could have seen, thus depends on the "collateral knowledge" of the person evaluating the photograph.

In order to speak to audiences in Germany successfully, Mariannhill's photographers therefore had to frame their depictions of South Africa in visual idioms German audiences were familiar with, according to a particular program (cf. Krüger 2011, Rippe 2018). While claiming to present an "eyewitness" perspective, they nevertheless produced photographs according to contemporary conventions. In the following, I explore how Mariannhill's photographs related to the contemporary discourse addressing this diversion. Like the texts in Mariannhill's periodicals, the photographs were anecdotal in the sense that they presented seemingly ordinary stories from "everyday life" around the missions, but can in fact be deconstructed as highly engineered. The worldwide photographic movement providing a language for this effort is generally referred to as "pictorialism" or "art photography". It had its high time between the late 1880s and the 1910s, the exact timeframe of Mariannhill's most active photographic production.[138]

As I already explained above, in the 1890s proponents of professional photography began to apply artistic styles and painterly conventions to the composition and physical manipulation of their work. They motivated colleagues to seek inspiration with painters, however in variation and moderation. One aspect of this effort was to promote photography as an "art", instead of a "craft", in order to be able to claim property rights. Part of this discussion was carried out through the many photographic journals, which appeared, but also disappeared quickly during

[137] On the use of photographs as evidence in mission periodicals also see Storning (2016), Stornig and Bauer (2018), Rippe (2018).

[138] While photographic styles, conventions, and practices were of course more diverse at the time, there was a contemporary authoritative community of artists, lay people, and professional photographers, who maintained a discourse through exhibitions and journals. Since then, art history and photographic history has mostly focused on the most successful practitioners in the art world, mainly based on the evaluations of their oeuvres in museum archives. In the process, private and consumer photography has often been excluded (but see Starl 1995).

the second half of the 19th century. One of the most popular journals in Germany was *Das Atelier des Photographen*, published between 1894 and 1932 under the editorship of Adolf Miethe. According to the photo historian Ludwig Hoerner, the *Atelier* was a "completely new form of photographic journal", due to its big format, special art paper, as well as full-page collotype and autotype reproductions of photographs. Accordingly, the journal had an "exclusive reputation" for the quality of its texts and the reproduction of its photographs. The intended audience were professional studio photographers (*Fachphotographen*), who appreciated the journal for its close proximity to their daily work. The monthly *Atelier* featured instructive articles by specialists, while its weekly addendum, *Photographische Chronik*, presented news on economic and juridical issues, chemical recipes, as well as a Q&A section. For all these reasons, many photographic societies, associations, and guilds chose the *Atelier* as their organ (Hoerner 1984:36).

Müller had a subscription to these journals, posted questions in the *Chronik* on a regular basis, and in 1904 even succeeded to have two of his photographs published in the *Atelier*. In fact, these two photographs show the only Black people in the journal's existence prior to the First World War. Some of the published photographs in photographic journals more generally served as examples to explain issues raised in the articles, such as composition or lighting. Other photographs, such as Müller's, stand alone and unrelated to the text surrounding them. We may safely assume that the editor chose them as aesthetic examples of best practice, and therefore promoted them as inspiration for colleagues.





Photographic Studio: Mariannhill und Pinetown.

Der Begriff „Schärfe“ ist eigentlich ziemlich dehnbar, namentlich für solche Arbeiten, die nicht ins Reproduktionsfach schlagen, bei dem durchgängig sogen. Strichschärfe erforderlich ist. Man hat sich indessen dahin geeinigt, dass eine Unschärfe von $^1/_{10}$ mm als zulässige Grenze angenommen wird.

Die scharfe Abbildung ist nun abhängig von dem Korrektionszustand des Objektives und der angewendeten Blende. Bei den nichtanastigmatischen Objektiven ist meist die Bildmitte bei Einstellung auf ein ebenes Objekt genügend scharf, die Schärfe nimmt aber, namentlich bei grosser Blendenöffnung, nach dem Rande zu mehr und mehr ab. Der absolut scharfe Bildwinkel solcher Objektive kann daher zuweilen sehr klein sein.

Durch Aufhebung des diesen Fehler bedingenden Astigmatismus und der sphärischen Aberration erstreckt sich die absolute Schärfe auch bei voller Oeffnung um sehr vieles weiter nach dem Bildrande zu, und man erhält daher mit den Anastigmaten ein gleichmässig scharfes Bildfeld von grosser Winkelausdehnung. Weil die so mit grösster Oeffnung erhaltene Schärfe sich von der Mitte des Bildfeldes aus nach den Seiten erstreckt, nennt man sie auch wohl Seitenschärfe.

Stellen wir dagegen auf ein Objekt von grosser Tiefenausdehnung, etwa eine Landschaft, mit voller Oeffnung ein, so finden wir, dass nahe und weit entfernt liegende Gegenstände nicht gleichmässig scharf erhalten werden können, dass aber eine befriedigende Schärfe durch eine stärkere Abblendung zu erzielen ist. Da nunmehr die Schärfe sich nicht seitwärts, sondern nach der Tiefe zu ausdehnt, nennen wir sie auch Tiefenschärfe. Sie ist bei allen Objektiven, ohne Rücksicht auf den Korrektionszustand, lediglich von dem Oeffnungsverhältnis abhängig und um so geringer, je grösser dieses ist. Sehr lichtstarke Objektive haben daher eine geringe Tiefenschärfe.

Eine geringe Tiefenschärfe macht indessen bei nahegelegenen Objekten eine sehr sorgfältige Einstellung notwendig, wenn man eine befriedigende Schärfe erzielen will. Nun ist man aber bei Momentaufnahmen in den meisten Fällen gezwungen, die Entfernung zwischen Objekt und Objektiv durch Abschätzung zu bestimmen. Je geringer nun die Tiefenschärfe ist, um so leichter und auffallender resultieren hier Fehler. Der erfahrene Lichtbildner blendet daher so weit, als es die Umstände nur erlauben, sein Objektiv ab, falls er mit einem äusserst lichtstarken arbeitet, um diesen Fehler nach

Figure 18: original caption: “Photographic Studio: Mariannhill und Pinetown” (*Das Atelier des Photographen* 1904[no. 9]:143).

The history of early photographic societies in South Africa (Natal in particular), their organs, and artistic photographic production is still rather unexplored, as existing accounts are brief and quickly jump to the mid-20th century (see Bensusan 1966, Grundlingh 2001). In 1893, the "Maritzburg Camera Club" was founded in Pietermaritzburg, but apparently no longer active once the "Durban Amateur Photographic Society" was established in 1921. The latter was later renamed "Durban Camera Club" (Sketch 1921, Bensusan 1966:87). Even though a photographic journal, *The South African Photographer*, existed since at least 1895, only in 1906 did the international "pictorial movement" manifested itself in Cape Town in form of an exhibition. With the assistance of the British Photographic Royal Society, the photographic society Brotherhood of the Linked Ring, and the American Photographic Salon, an exhibition of 629 pictorial photographs was set up in Cape Town's City Hall in 1906. Likewise in the spirit of pictorialism, a Mudie Thomson[139] published *The South African Photographic Journal* in Cape Town between 1909 and 1911 (cf. Bensusan 1966:86). Müller was clearly aware of these local developments, and also interacted with the South African art scene.[140] For example, as I shall describe below, he presented his work in the politico-cultural journal *The State*, which was connected to the art scene through such writers as Mudie Thomson. It was founded and backed by those industrial and political actors, who also moulded early ideas on race and segregation, but at the same time influenced the South African fine art world through their collection and funding activities. Howard Pim and T.C. Loram, for example, were two of the political actors who stood in the background once the South African art world admitted Blacks such as Gerard Bhengu in the late 1920s. Both painting and photography then not only served to represent Black South Africans, but even as tools to actively *cultivate* the development of African artists along separate lines (cf. Chapter Seven).

By 1908, the art photographic scene still focused on Cape Town. As far as Natal was concerned, Mudie Thomson only attributed artistic skills and pictorial intentions to two photographers in Pietermaritzburg (Thomson 1908:92). By this time, however, Br. Aegidius Müller had already developed a national and international network and reputation as an able artistic photographer. Against the background of these developments in both Germany and South Africa, I show in the following two sections that Mariannhill's photographic production depended on the contemporary idea of "photographic resemblance", which constituted an important topic in the discourse around the photographic format of the "portrait", and, as I will argue in the next section, can also be followed in relation to the format of "genre photographs". The contemporary art discourse on fine art painting distinguished "landscape", "portraiture", "genre", "history" and "still life", whereby these categories were transferred in various degrees to photography (cf. Peters 1979, Plumpe 1990:154-155). I only explore portraiture and genre

[139] Bensusan attributes female gender to a "Mudie Thompson", while contemporary sources speak of a "Mr. Mudie Thomson".

[140] I have not yet been able to evaluate the journal myself. It is therefore unclear whether the exhibition or the journal contained any of Müller's photographs.

photography,[141] as Mariannhill's photographers produced them according to handbooks and journals. Even though they never explicitly framed the construction of space around mission stations as "landscape photographs", and the depiction of objects as "still life", I will discuss these in Parts Two and Three respectively.

In the quote above on his photographic practice, Müller (1909) alluded to a classic explanation regarding the ambivalence of resemblance in portraiture, and how common people in their vanity strove towards imitating higher social classes (also see Vogel 1875:363, Waetzoldt 1908:83). With the depiction of people in portraits, but also in genre photographs, the recognition of either individuals or genre scenes due to "resemblance" played such a considerable role in the historical contexts and narratives that it was often explicitly referred to either as a "problem" or a "question" (eg. Arnold 1889, 1892; Waetzoldt 1908; Albien 1911; Warstat 1916; also see Brevern 2013, 2014). In this chapter and the next, I consider this contemporary "problem" and how it was approached in South Africa and Europe.

An exploration of resemblances in Mariannhill's photographic oeuvre requires an analysis on various levels. To begin with, I compare the *contemporary* attribution of categories to published photographs in the mission's periodicals, as well as to some of the original photographic prints in the mission's archives. As we are in the exceptional position to analyse contemporary perceptions of aesthetics regarding the photographic practice at Mariannhill, I must now briefly compare it to evaluations of image production and categorisation by other mission congregations and denominations. Other than Mariannhill's photographic archive in its entirety, the mission's periodicals followed the logic of "the mission as movement" (Pels 1999, 2009), according to which missionaries attempted to fill a cultural and spiritual void through their sacrifice and in particular their presence, which determined an intended "image program" (Krüger 2011, also see Gullestad 2007, Kittel 1996, Rippe 2018).

As a comparative focal point I therefore begin with the above-mentioned anniversary publication. As indicated by its editor, Fr. Dominikus Frey, he had assembled stories from previous issues of both the *Vergißmeinnicht* and the *Kalender*. Thus the arrangement of photographs in the anniversary publication presents altogether 221 photographs on 188 pages, which had been taken since the early 1890s. This selection adequately represents the existing topics used for propaganda purposes throughout the years. These same topics were introduced in the *Vergißmeinnicht's* editorial in 1907 quoted above: on the one hand photographs depict the life of the Trappists at the mission stations, and their interactions with Africans. On the other hand, they present the life of Africans (both Christians and non-Christians), in particular relating to their daily home life, education, and religious life. The quote above clearly separates these topics in terms of spatial arrangements, and relates them to both education and entertainment. I will therefore deal with the construction of space in relation to images in Part Two.

[141] "Photographic genres" as categories are not to be confused with "genre photography" as a distinct pictorial style. Genre painting and photography usually denoted the depiction of daily life in obviously arranged scenes, as I will explain in more detail in the following sections.

Some of the topics in the anniversary publication necessarily overlap, but nevertheless allow for a statistical evaluation. This evaluation is carried out according to the intended message in the publication, either defined by a photograph's caption, or the section the photograph is placed in. By far the most numerous photographs with a clear single topic are the 50 landscape views of mission stations. Altogether 73 photographs explicitly address interactions between missionaries, mission sisters, and Africans in relation to religious practices, education, work, charity, and visits to homesteads. 38 photographs explicitly address the topic of work, either on the mission's fields, at the monastery's workshops, or at the sisters' sewing and kitchen facilities (cf. Chapter Three). 39 photographs address an issue related to children, either regarding education, work, in daily non-Christian life, or romanticising portraits that were explicitly related to fundraising (cf. Chapter Two). 21 photographs show only Trappists, either in portraits, group photographs, or while working or praying. With only one exception of a group photograph, the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood are exclusively shown in interaction with African protégées in 27 photographs. 58 photographs show only Africans, of which 28 show supposedly converted Africans in form of portraits, or at their homes. These are identified as Christian either by their clothing, their activities, or merely by a textual caption. 38 photographs explicitly address African non-Christian life as it supposedly existed outside the mission's (and European) sphere of influence, and its cultural practices and material culture. The latter photographs may be considered as "ethnographic" or "anthropological", in so far that they addressed how Africans looked differently, or did things differently than Europeans. However, Müller only referred to this last category as "ethnographic" when corresponding with European ethnologists since 1898. I will discuss these photographs and their construction within conversations with anthropologists and ethnologists in Part Three. The missionaries also successfully introduced photographs showing their interactions with Africans into ethnological circles. As I shall explain in Chapters Two and Six, this was exceptional, since several ethnologist considered European presence in "ethnographic" photographs as a contamination of research data.

Other than the jubilee publication I just discussed, the *Mariannhiller Kalender* and the *Vergißmeinnicht* presented foreign religious imagery, paintings, as well as photographs sourced from German press agencies, in particular since the *Vergißmeinnicht's* revamping in 1907. These additional illustrations related either to Germany, Europe at large, or other non-European countries. When the monthly *Vergißmeinnicht* was first equipped with photographs in 1907, the above-quoted editorial positioned the periodical as a "modern", and thus by definition as an *illustrated* newspaper. It intended to satisfy European readers by additionally embracing politics, technological innovations, entertainment, as well as other secular news.

As I mentioned in the general introduction, categorising all of the periodicals' photographs from today's perspective would be an ambivalent endeavour. This ambivalence can be circumvented, however, by analysing the categories used at the time. Since 1905, the bound yearly volumes of the *Vergißmeinnicht* included an inventory, where the editor Fr. Dominikus Frey applied categories to texts, and later also to images. The stable categories under

"Illustrations" between 1907 and the 1920s were (1) "people", (2) "images of mission-life", (3) "Geography and Ethnography [*Land und Völkerkunde*]", (4) "Modern Technology", and (5) "Religious Depictions". These were rearranged over the years, and later inventories also included categories such as "from the world of animals", "varia", and eventually "images of the war".

These ascriptions are however not as straightforward as they seem to be. While "people" referred to *identified* portraits of either missionaries, converts, or for example German politicians, "Images from Mission-Life" include all photographs relating to Mariannhill, including those photographs of Africans that would otherwise be labelled "ethnographic" in the colonial discourse. Instead, the heading "Geography and Ethnography" included every other area of the world outside the orbit of Mariannhill's influence, including other parts of South Africa, as well as central Europe. Both articles and illustrations resembled those of contemporary illustrated magazines, such as *National Geographics*,[142] *Globus*, or *Über Land und Meer*. While the editors presented the monthly *Vergißmeinnicht* as "news", the *Kalender* format presented a review of each year, and often repeated topics and stories already presented in the *Vergißmeinnicht*. The very first illustrated issue of the *Vergißmeinnicht* in 1907 contained altogether 227[143] images, separated into the five categories mentioned above: 33 are individual portraits, 73 "Images from Mission Life", 124 "Geography and Ethnography", 11 "Modern Technology", and 31 "Religious images". We can see that the majority of illustrations (124) were not of Mariannhill's own making. But according to the aesthetic conventions, which I referred to above, all included illustrations were well in tune.

Next to the stories in Mariannhill's periodicals (cf. Chapter Two), in particular the ongoing repetition of similar photographs, created a sense of familiarity with the readers. Familiarity in turn created an interest in Mariannhill's progress, such as the material development and expansion of the stations. Stereotypes of generic Africans, such as "the convert", "the warrior", or "the diviner", needed constant repetition, in order to become powerful complementary images to those of "the missionary" (cf. Chapter Eight). In order to create certain scenarios exactly as they were intended, the photographers also re-staged them in the studio: for example a woman delivering her children to the mission, or children posing (or rather being *posed*) with text boards, expressing either appeals for money and clothing, or gratitude towards benefactors for already received donations (cf. Chapters Two and Four). On the adaptable stage of the studio, the photographic performance achieved an even greater theatrical quality, due to its various backdrops, as well as an assortment of props to choose from (cf. Chapter Four).

Other reoccurring topics in Mariannhill's oeuvre may at first sight not have been an explicit part of the propaganda programme, as I just evaluated them in the statistics of the *Festschrift* and the *Vergißmeinnicht*. The missionaries nevertheless produced and used some of

[142] I am not aware of any studies on these contemporary magazines. But see Lutz and Collins (1993) for an analysis of *National Geographic* after the Second World War, with some remarks on earlier decades.

[143] As a comparison, the periodical of the nearby Lutheran Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, *Missionsfreund* for the year 1907, only contained 19 images altogether. The *Missionsfreund*, however, also had to cover the society's activities in Asia and America.

these photographs as mimetic capital to muster allies: single portraits and group portraits of paying customers, visitors and tourists, as well as group photographs of Trappists with honorary guests show Mariannhill's relationships to the colonial world at large. Due to the studio's commercial nature, today's CMM photographic archive also contains a fair amount of commissioned portraits of White, as well as fewer Black clients. These clients were either tourists visiting Mariannhill only for one day, or local residents, who traded at Mariannhill on a regular basis.[144] Amongst these are also portraits of British soldiers stationed in Natal between the Anglo-Zulu War (1879) and the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). One contingent of soldiers was stationed near Mariannhill at "Pinetown Bridge". Government representatives, as well as other visitors of social standing, were presented with photographs as gifts, and often with their own portraits to memorise the occasion of their visit (Chapter Three). Among these were for example the above-mentioned Joseph Baynes in 1901, and the Lord of Selborne in 1908. The demands of local customers, visitors, and tourists also further intensified the production and trade with exotic images of "African life". While the portraiture industry established and demanded the negotiation of individual "character" through "resemblance", the format of genre photography established typical and at the same time recognisable scenes through a "resemblance" with preexisting images. It is these two topics that I address in the next two sections.

[144] Several photographs showing the latter kind of visitors are still housed in the archives of the Bergtheil Museum in Durban, which deals in particular with the history of German immigrants to the area (cf. Chapter Three).

Photographic "Character" as a "Problem of Resemblance"

In this section and the next, I show that Müller worked in his African studio according to particular European aesthetic conventions. In recent literature, the most obvious of those conventions has rarely been discussed adequately. It evolved from the public and professional debate about the fact that before and after 1900, professional photographers were much troubled by their clients' demand to produce a "likeness", which was supposed to display "likeness" to its referent, the sitter. While English-speakers used the term "likeness" in these two forms[145] (eg. Robinson 1869), it was consistently framed with the term "*ressemblance*" in French (eg. Disdéri 1862), and "*Ähnlichkeit*" in German. This German term can be translated into English as either "similarity", "resemblance", or "likeness".[146] As evident from the case of Müller's (1909) description quoted above, photographic resemblance involved the idea of the sitter's idealisation through his or her photograph. It was explicitly used in this way in the photographic discourse, as it was carried out in photographic studios and journals from the early 1850s onwards (cf. Hoerner 1989:76, 95, 151). By the late 1880s, the notion became so pervasive that it was even brought up in satirical magazines, such as the popular *Fliegende Blätter,* published in Munich.[147] In the edition of 1888, a drawing shows an elderly woman in a photographic studio. She implores the photographer, just before the image is taken: "please, please, Mr. Photographer, but not too similar [*nur nicht gar zu ähnlich*]". Throughout the 1890s, due to the before mentioned clashing interests of professional and artistically inclined lay photographers, the relationships between photographer and photographed, art and technology, were often made an issue in caricatures presented in contemporary satirical magazines (cf. Krauss 1978, Henisch and Henisch 1998).

Since Hermann W. Vogel's *Lehrbuch der Photographie* (1870), and its English translation (1875), written instructions for studio photographers in Germany dedicated considerable space to the artistic and aesthetic staging of the sitter. Focusing on commercial studio photography, the book contained more than 80 pages on *Die Kunst der Photographie oder die Photographische Aesthetik.* The book's fourth edition of four volumes (*Handbuch der Photographie*) even dedicated one entire volume to issues of aesthetics: *Die Photographische Kunstlehre oder die künstlerischen Grundsätze der Lichtbildnerei: für Fachmänner und Liebhaber* (1891).[148] All editions were well received and especially the part on aesthetics was considered as an innovation (Röll 1939:53). However, Vogel explicitly borrowed image examples and aesthetic ideas from the British photographer Henry Peach Robinson (1869, 1892), who is generally acknowledged as one of the first propagators of pictorialist ideas, next to the French André A.E. Disdéri (1862). Also Vogel himself had already started his work on aesthetics as early as 1866 (Röll 1939:49).

---

[145] The first indicates a concrete photographic *object*, the second the *quality* of resemblance.

[146] In order to avoid further confusion I will from now on translate "*Ähnlichkeit*" with "resemblance".

[147] *Fliegende Blätter* was a common title for light readings in Germany. Its use for Mariannhill's first periodical (cf. Introduction) is not necessarily related to this particular satire periodical.

[148] Vogel noted in the introduction that after part I. (chemistry) he considered the aesthetic part of such great importance that he released it as part IV., even before part II. (optics) and part III. (practicalities).

Still in the 1891 edition, Vogel stated that, apart from his own work, there has only been one work published in Germany so far, translated from the English, which dealt specifically with the artistic aspects of photography.[149] Eventually, also Vogel's successor as professor at the Technische Hochschule in Berlin, Adolf Miethe, in his *Lehrbuch der Praktischen Photographie* (1902), included a long section on *Die Photographische Ästhetik im Atelier und im Freien*. Miethe was also the founder and editor of the above-mentioned journals *Atelier des Photographen* and *Photographische Chronik*, where Müller received and presented some of his ideas and photographs.

Hermann W. Vogel (1834-1898), based in Berlin, developed an international reputation through the translations of his work into various other languages, and the fact that he also served in juries for photographic competitions and exhibitions in the US. He also mingled with both ethnologists and anthropologists in Berlin. He cooperated with anthropologist Gustav Fritsch, who was responsible for photographic instructions in German anthropology and ethnography, which he first formulated in the early 1870s. Vogel and Fritsch had travelled to Egypt together in 1868, in order to observe and photograph a sun-eclipse (cf. Röll 1939, Herneck 1984). This was the same year that Fritsch started releasing his influential publications on South Africa, including his own photographs (cf. Chapter Six). At the same time, Vogel himself started engaging with the ethnological and anthropological community at large by attending and presenting at meetings of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte (eg. Vogel 1875b). During 1882 and 1883, Vogel also trained the anthropologist Franz Boas in photography (Jacknis 1984:4), before the latter emigrated to the US in 1887.

Vogel, and later his successor Miethe, worked as scientists and journal editors, but also contributed substantially to innovations in the field of photographic chemistry and technology. Particularly in their function as editors, they positioned photography as a practice in the discourse between science, art, and the interests of commercial studio photographers. Müller read their journals, and corresponded with fellow photographers through the Q&A sections, at least since 1898.[150] I shall refer to these correspondences throughout the next two chapters.

The general public discourse on the various qualities of photographs was only carried out regarding the most eminent examples and practitioners of (semi-)professional "artistic" photography and painting, and thus excluded the mass of amateur "snap-shot" photographs (and related aesthetics), if only to position itself against them (cf. Kaufhold 1986, Starl 1995).[151] When some photographic amateurs eventually desired more "art" and less "truth" in photographs by 1891 (Kaufhold 1986:18), Vogel still introduced his *Lehrbuch/Handbuch* (1870, 1875 and 1891) with the conundrum of "photography and truth" as follows:

---

[149] Most likely he referred to the work of Robinson.

[150] Vogel founded and edited the journal *Photographische Mittheilungen* between 1864-1899, and Miethe founded and edited *Das Atelier des Photographen* and its addendum, *Photographische Chronik* in 1894 (cf. Hoerner 1984).

[151] See Starl (1995) for a history of private snapshot photography in Germany and Austria.

Experience has demonstrated that a sharp and spotless, or in short a technically perfect photograph, be it portrait or landscape, may appear on the one hand untrue, or it may displease when the observance of the laws of the beautiful (which are the cause of our pleasure in the works of the plastic art or paintings) have been disregarded. That these laws are not applicable to photography in their generality, which more than any other art is "glued to the substance" [… '*verhaftet an den Körpern'* (bodies) *klebt* ...], is evident. (Vogel 1875:292, also see 1891:1)

While the painter is free to bend reality according to his aesthetic preferences, so Vogel, the photographer is bound to the physicality of his sitters' bodies (also see Kracauer 1960:4). In the section on "characteristics and individuality", Vogel stated that "I call all external signs [of a sitter] that are necessary to a true and comprehensive representation characteristic" (1875:360). In regard to these "external signs" as "Character", Vogel thus equated "truth" repeatedly to the degree of "resemblance [*Ähnlichkeit*]":

Admirers of photography assert so often that this young art represents the pure truth, the true counterpart of nature.[152] Photography can, indeed, when rightly applied, produce truer pictures than any other art, but they are not absolutely true, and because they are not absolutely true it becomes important to learn the sources of error, and they are manifold. (Vogel 1875:293)

As such sources he considered potential distortion through the lens, illusions of perspective, or elongations of the image during printing. In 1891 Vogel added: "Even coroners [*Untersuchungsrichter*][153] pay homage to this conviction, and assert that a photograph must be similar [*ähnlich*] at all times. Unfortunately this is not the case" (Vogel 1891:2).[154] In order to achieve an acceptable balance of "truth" and "beauty" within his approach to aesthetics, apart from lighting and other practical issues—which I will consider in Chapter Four—Vogel relied entirely on principles and examples taken from classical painting, genre painting, and renaissance statues, such as those by Giovanni Rustici. In the section "arrangement" he suggested the geometrical pattern of the pyramid as a basic structure for composing an image, which may repeat itself throughout the horizontal line of the photograph, in order to achieve a "balance" in the image: "[the] arrangement harmonises the best with our feelings […] because the pyramid rests on the firmest foundation; and we demand a firm stand for every figure at any price, particularly in photography" (1875:336). This pyramidal aesthetic was generally considered as favourable, and often described as widely practiced (eg. Hoffmann 1889:309, Miethe 1902:412).

Analysing Müller's photographs (eg. Figure 21) with these criteria in mind, clearly shows his consequent attention to a pyramidal composition. In this particular case, not only one major pyramid can be distinguished, descending from the girl at the very back (carrying a baby on her

[152] My own translation/correction from the German original: "[…] *unter Wahrheit die Übereinstimmung mit der Wirklichkeit verstanden.* ([…] comprehending truth as the photograph's correspondence with reality.)" (Vogel 1870:388).

[153] Vogel here appears to speak of judges and their use of photographs to identify criminals, rather than their use to analyse crime-scenes. The notion of truthful resemblance was naturally of importance in the juridical field, i.e. mug-shots to identify suspects, or in the case of crime-scene photography, in order to determine the cause of death and the course of events. e.g. Ginzburg (1989), Mnookin (1987), Regener (1999), Sekula (1986).

[154] My own translation from the German original.

back), but also three smaller pyramids, constituted by the two crouching girls to the left, the two standing in the centre, as well as the two children to the right. Adding to this geometrical composition is the fact that the scene is partially reflected in the water, an aesthetic component that Müller used in his work repeatedly (cf. Figure 1). The latter aspect shows particular attention to proper lighting, not only of the figures, but also in order to bring out their mirror images. The pyramidal construction can also be observed in many of Müller's other photographs presented in this study, and was generally practiced by pictorial photographers. Another feature of Vogel's instructions, which can be observed in most of Müller's photographs, is the clear attention to the "supporting leg [*Standbein*]" and the "free leg [*Spielbein*]", the upper body and head turned against the feet, and eventually the hands and arms, of which one should hang down, while the other is placed somewhere else (eg. a table, or holding an object). According to Vogel, the sitter then "appears, even in the lifeless picture itself, capable of motion" (1875:332). The intention was thus to create a lifelike and natural impression, even though the arrangement was obviously and conventionally posed (cf. Benjamin 1963b:54).

Such aesthetic conventions thus bring up the question whether photographers at the time attempted to create either mimetic, or idealised photographs. As we already heard from Vogel, "resemblance" was somewhere in between. While it is not possible to review the entire discourse on "photographic resemblance" here, I must briefly refer to the discourse predating the 1880s.[155] As described by Von Brevern (2013), "photographic resemblance" was already perceived as ambivalent by French writers in the 1850s, when for example Francis Wey (arguing against positions such as of Rodolphe Töpffer) stated that an *artistic* photographer (like a painter) could indeed create *characteristic* resemblance true to the sitters character, contrary to the belief that the camera only mechanically reproduced a mimetic *identity* (also see Holschbach 2006). "Photographic resemblance", is thus not the same as the "iconic" in semiotic terms, but instead was an *argued* and per definition a negotiated relationship from early on. However, all authors who dealt with the topic so far, only discuss conceptions of "resemblance", either during or before the 1860s. This is why I will present a brief overview of statements made by authors during the time Mariannhill's photographs were taken, and which Müller would have been able to access.

Müller was clearly aware of Vogel's, Disdéri's and Robinson's ideas, and had read at least one author who discussed them. The still existing small stock of contemporary photographic literature from Mariannhill's studio contains a handbook on retouching by Hans Arnold (1892), where the author further explored ideas from his earlier publication *Ueber Aehnlichkeit in der Portraitphotographie* (1889). In both works he explicitly identified the photographers' attempts to achieve "resemblance" as a contemporary "problem". Mariannhill's collection of photographic

[155] As Von Brevern (2013) rightly states, a (international) history of "photographic resemblance" has not yet been written. Surprisingly few authors analyse it as a contemporary concept in a historical discourse, and none of these authors does so for the period just before and after 1900. All accounts are rather inconsistent and do not address the idea's pervasiveness and particularity (eg. Gage 1997, Trachtenberg 1992). However, it may be misleading to assume that all language-discourses relied on a singular contemporary conception.

literature further contains volumes of the *Atelier des Photographen* and of the *Deutscher Camera Almanach*, where Fritz Möller published the article *Etwas von der Ähnlichkeit* (1898) and where Gustav Albien published the article *Das Problem der Ähnlichkeit im Porträt* (1911).

Arnold stated that "resemblance" was at the very heart of photographic practice (1892:46). All four mentioned works were concerned with the professional studio photographer, and theorised the "problem of resemblance", as Albien would have it, in the same way for more than 20 years by contrasting photographic practice to the work of artistic painters. While the latter had much time at his hand, so they argued, not only to study his subject, but also to alter the painting, the commercial studio photographer instead had to "read", understand, and accordingly to reproduce the physiognomy of his sitter quickly. As the painter achieved favourable resemblance artistically, the photographer had to create it through skilled social interaction. Only in such a way could the photographer have the sitter strike the desired pose and the facial expression at the very moment of exposure. Accordingly, the photographer had to adjust perspective, lighting, and decide on which side of the face to photograph. Arnold (1889) thus distinguished a "natural" from an "idealised" resemblance (also see Kirchbach 1889, Möller 1898:94). Arnold further argued that the difference between the two eventually depends on the willingness of the photographer to meet the wishes of his customers. It was the latters' "vanity" and final judgement that eventually decided whether a photograph was indeed "resemblant" or not. It may also be argued that only a sitter's immediate acquaintances could indeed judge the quality of photographic "resemblance" (cf. Gage 1997:119). Br. Aegidius Müller eventually addressed this contemporary issue of image evaluation with a photographic composition, showing four women near the mission station Kevelaer. The photograph was published twice in the *Vergißmeinnicht* (1909, 1917) with the title "Female Vanity. A heathen Kafir girl contemplates her photograph" (Figure 19).[156] Almost identical *mise-en-scenes* had been produced earlier by the Berlin studio Loescher & Petsch.

[156] My own translation from the German original. In a published version of later decades, the same photograph is titled "message from home". The caption therefore claims that the girl is reading a letter, instead of looking at her own image.

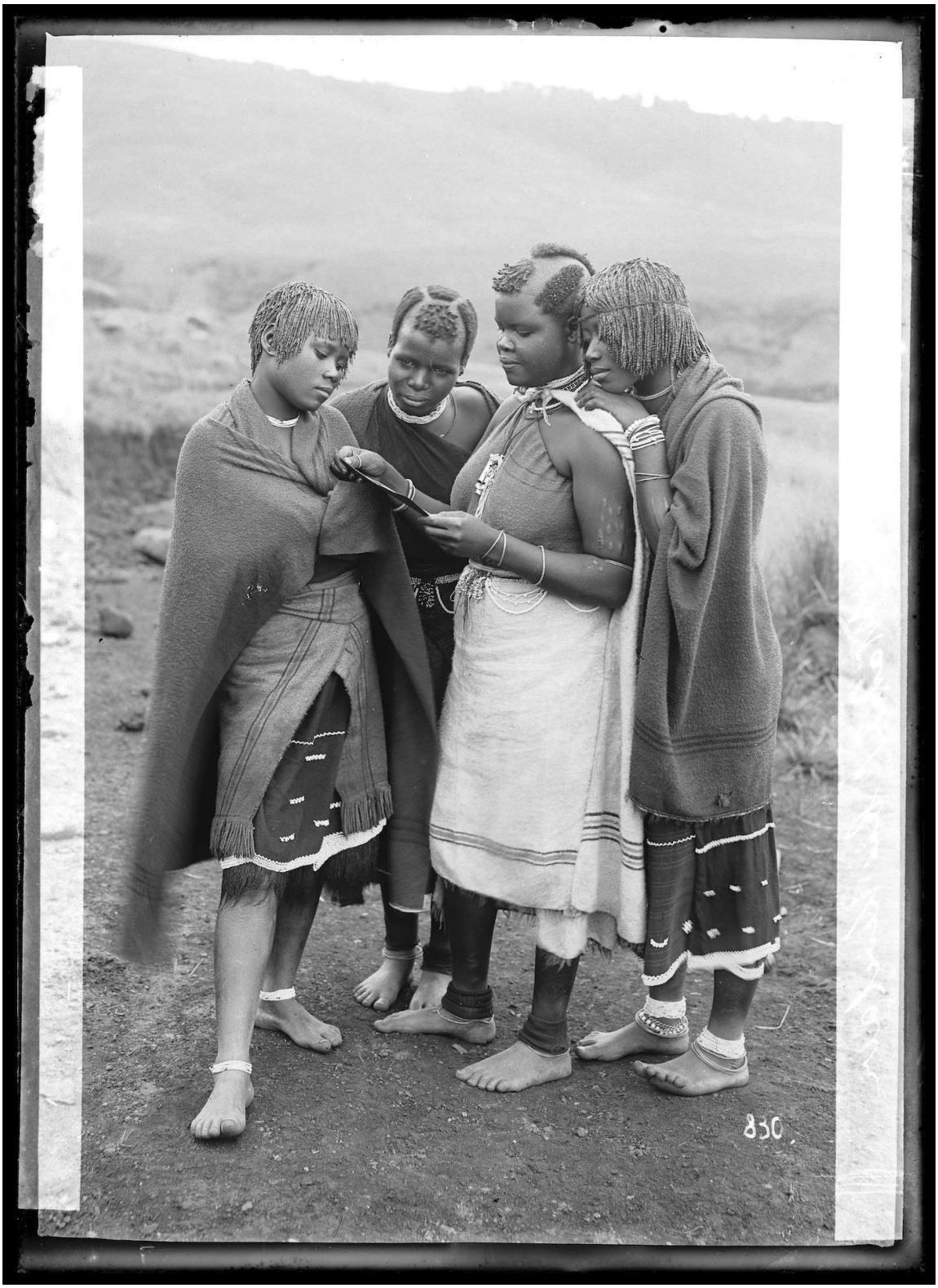


Figure 19: original caption: "*Weibliche Eitelkeit. Ein Heidnisches Kaffernmädchen betrachtet seine Photographie*"—"Female vanity. A heathen Kafir girl contemplates her photograph" (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives, published in *Vergißmeinnicht* 1917:80, also 1909:225).

All three mentioned authors writing on "photographic resemblance" understood the idea as a manifestation and measurement of the sitter's "character", expressed through his characteristic posture and facial expression. Especially Arnold and Möller considered it necessary to approach photographic study through physiognomy, and especially through the work of Lavater and Piderit. According to them, the face could be read through explicit blueprints, such as the "four temperaments", which Br. Aegidius Müller invoked in his 1909 article. Möller went as far as composing a "physiognomic tableau [*Physiognomische Tafel*]" of 200 photographs showing distinct facial expressions that he thought could generally be found with people. His performance of the "four temperaments" was published with his article in 1898.[157] We recall that also Müller considered his arrangement of portraits in 1909 as a "sample-card [*Musterkarte*] of facial types". All mentioned authors relied equally on the notion that an underlying canon of beauty existed, which was, according to them, exemplified by artists like Velázquez or Rembrandt, and should be appropriated by photographers: "One has to know what humanity considers as beautiful or ugly, in order to be able to depict it" (Möller 1898:78). The notion of "resemblance" was here once more directed towards an ideal of art. This shall become even more important in the next section.

In the 1930s, Walter Benjamin was still haunted by the demand of "*Ähnlichkeit*" or "resemblance", when writing up his memories of experiences he had in the photographic studios of Berlin and elsewhere, as a child around 1900:

> The gift of perceiving similarities is, in fact, nothing but a weak remnant of the old compulsion to become similar and to behave mimetically. In me, however, this compulsion acted through words. Not those that made me similar to models of good breeding, but those that made me similar to dwelling places, furniture, clothes. Never to my own image, though. And that explains why I was at such a loss when someone demanded of me similarity to myself [*wenn man Ähnlichkeit mit mir selbst von mir verlangte*]. This would happen at the photographer's studio. Wherever I looked, I saw myself surrounded by folding screens, cushions, and pedestals which craved my image much as the shades of Hades craved the blood of the sacrificial animal. In the end, I was offered up to a crudely painted prospect of the Alps, and my right hand, which had to brandish a kidskin hat, cast its shadow on the clouds and snowfields of the backdrop. (Benjamin 2002:391-392, also see Benjamin 1972)

In his two almost identical essays from the 1930s, "doctrine of the similar" (1977a), and the "mimetic faculty" (1977b), Benjamin only described "resemblance" in relation to textual and linguistic imitation. It is therefore difficult to project it forcibly onto photographic representation. But in the particular case of the quote above, he contrasted the idea to the concrete situation in a photographic studio, where "similarity [*Ähnlichkeit*]" and thus "resemblance" was obviously a concrete part of an established discourse and a vocalised practice, as uttered by photographers in the presence of their sitters. Benjamin recalled the photographer's attempt to *make* him similar photographically, explicitly to himself, but implicitly also similar to an Alpine peasant stereotype, while Benjamin himself *resisted* to become similar.[158] In the next section I will

[157] For overviews of the contemporary mutual influence of physiognomy and photography see for example Trieder, John and Immisch (2001); also see Kaufhold (1986) and Woodall (1997).

[158] The volume in which this extended quote appears, also contains a photograph on which the description may be

elaborate on this principle in relation to Müller's attempts to fuse popular European "genre images" with his own photographic imaginations of Africans.

Read against what I just explained, Müller's earlier quoted theory (1909) thus indeed amounts to something resembling "mechanical objectivity" (Daston and Galison 2007): other than the painter, the camera allegedly records *everything* that comes before it.[159] Müller stressed the unfailing and penetrating objectivity of the lens, unearthing a person's "character" at any time. For the professional studio photographer, however, such a situation eventually created an aesthetic problem, which Vogel formulated by saying that

> […] a great many [sitters] do not care particularly for a true representation of their character. The rascal wishes to appear as a honest man; the lady passing into the sear and yellow leaf of autumn wants to be young and coquettish; the servant girl wishes to represent the mistress; the daughter of the mechanic wants to look like the court lady, and the street-sweep would be a gentleman" (Vogel 1875:363, also see Waetzoldt 1908:83, Müller 1909:177).

However, it should have become clear by now that Müller proclaimed, rather than indeed practiced this theory, and instead adhered to Vogel's doctrines of aesthetification, and thus the ambivalent notion of "resemblance".

Vogel himself considered a margin of permitted "beautification", the possibility to cover ugliness, or to direct attention to other features of the person by lighting, retouching, or garment. He thus distinguished three levels of retouching: on the positive image, on the negative, but also on the "original", by which he meant the application of cosmetics (1875:375, also see Arnold 1889). Vogel's assessment eventually was a practical instruction intended for the photographic apprentice, while we must acknowledge that the one of Müller was mission propaganda for a German-speaking Catholic middle class. Whether it was through mediation by others, or by studying the book itself, Müller had indeed followed much of the advice as put down by Robinson and by Vogel: throughout his working life Müller arranged, framed, cropped, and retouched extensively to achieve his aesthetic intentions, which can in many cases be shown by comparing negatives to printed and published positives. Photographed subjects and objects were either enhanced aesthetically, or in few cases even eradicated from the image (cf. Chapters Two and Four). The analysis of glass plate negatives also allows to retrace Müller's practice of excessive retouching, in particular of customers' faces (and sometimes hands). The digital inversion of the glass plate negative below (Figure 20) shows a group of seven females, probably a mother with her six daughters. The discolouration and the tonal shading of the faces clearly shows the intentional smoothening of the features through retouching. This resulted in a lightening of shadows on the left side of the faces, giving an impression of flatness to the facial surface. It may be that Müller either carried out a standard manipulation, or that he retouched according to the particular wishes of each client. Other than European photographers, Müller had to develop particular skills to deal adequately with the exceptionally wide range of skin tones of

based: in 1902 Walter Benjamin and his brother Georg posed in an alpine peasant outfit in a photographic studio (Benjamin 2002:391).

[159] Also see Mnookin (1997:17) for a similar legal interpretation from the 1860s.

his various customers according to their different "racial" backgrounds.



Figure 20: seven unidentified females in the Mariannhill Studio, approx. 1905 (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives).

Of course, next to Vogel there were many other professionals who published advice on how to best take artistic photographs. This was the case in particular since the 1880s, when smaller and faster cameras became available to a broader mass of people in Europe and elsewhere. Common to most positions was that "*ideal* and *resemblance* underwent a paradoxical fusion" (Regener 1999:44). It is thus important to realise at this point that "photographic resemblance" (*Ähnlichkeit*), did not stand for "mechanical objectivity" around 1900, but indeed reflected an epistemological ambivalence. Hans Möller wrote in 1898 that clients often stated that they wanted a "characteristic" photograph, while they actually meant "conventional" (Möller 1898:94). This conventional middle ground of well-established and neutral poses, such as the "three-quarter", "half-length", or the "full-body portrait", allowed the sitter to blend in by adopting, or rather by *imitating* socially accepted poses (cf. Starl 1993:27-35).[160] As I will show, such poses were likewise adopted by Africans outside of the studio, often under Müller's

[160] Or, as Roland Barthes suggested, when being photographed we imitate our own imagined *social* self (1993:13).

direction. This has to be taken into consideration when evaluating photographs as historical sources. I will thus consider the "portrait" as an aesthetic format of photography supposed to identify an individual (cf. Brilliant 1991, Woodall 1997, Waetzoldt 1908), but I also consider it as a format that is thought of as "resembling" (rather than being "identical" with) an individual only in very concrete and subjective situations. I will discuss such "photographic occasions" in more detail in Part Two.

Due to the difficulties concerning the *recognition* of photographic "resemblance", interviewing people around Mariannhill with photographs became an ambivalent exercise for me: several of my interlocutors were absolutely sure to recognise ancestors due to a resemblance of facial features. A woman I interviewed in 2007 near Mariannhill, insisted vehemently that a photograph showed her father in old age. She maintained this opinion, even after I had explained to her that this would be temporarily impossible, as I had dated the photograph with certainty to approximately 1905. Many Africans near Mariannhill also recognised Abbot Franz Pfanner in depictions of other monks, equally bearded and dressed in Trappist robes. But also authors of the congregation itself have in recent years repeatedly misidentified Trappists in the old photographs, due to the uniformity of their appearance. As stated earlier, "recognition" is a highly subjective perception, and thereby renders "resemblance" a subjective claim. During the early decades of photographic practice in Europe it was often disputed who exactly was depicted in a photographic portrait, and it was even common that sitters themselves could be fooled with photographs of others as their own (cf. Mnookin 1997:31, also Gage 1997, Brevern 2013). Resemblances between individuals depicted in the photographic collection of Mariannhill will nevertheless prove useful for studying biographies of people alongside those of their photographs, by tracing the same individual through multiple depictions.

"A Picture as well as a Photograph": Africanising Genre Photographs

In this section I shall discuss the notion of "resemblance" within the practice of "genre photography". Throughout the rest of this chapter and the next I will also develop its connection to the practice of the *tableau vivant* as an independent medium. Mariannhill's photographers relied on image examples from Europe, which at the time was the main direction of the mission's propaganda work. Br. Aegidius Müller, for example, arrived at Mariannhill with a particular worldview, training, and certain ideas on popular culture in terms of literature, music, material aesthetics, and photography. This becomes apparent in his description of the landscape around Mariannhill in 1889, which I quoted above. Apart from biblical imagery, he integrated rather worldly image conventions in his efforts of framing the mission, as well as his own self-fashioning. The archives at Mariannhill Monastery still hold several publications of German photographic journals and instructions, such as the *Deutscher Camera Almanach* and the earlier-mentioned *Atelier des Photographen*. These publications served as sources of inspiration, and as an interface with contemporary print culture. Contrary to the congregation's imperative to "divest himself of his old identity", Müller occasionally still used his secular name "Joseph Müller" when interacting with White South Africans.

The South African art world payed attention to Müller's work, once he had promoted it intentionally outside the sphere of mission propaganda. In December 1909, he was awarded the first price for one of his works in a photo competition, held by the publication organ of the Association of Closer Union Societies. Members of the British High Commissioner Milner's "Kindergarten" had initiated the monthly journal *The State*, in order to further the idea of South African Union. In October 1908, Lionel Curtis announced it during a meeting of the Closer Union States Societies in Durban, which was held during the first session of the South African National Convention (Nimocks 1968:111). Many of the attending politicians visited Mariannhill while in the area, some even purchasing photographs (cf. Chapter Three).

The journal was first released in 1909, initially edited by Philip Kerr and funded by the Rhodes Trust and at least three imperialist mining magnates. These were Sir Abe Bailey and Lionel Phillips (Dubow 2006:163), as well as Howard Pim (Legassick 1995:56). Not only did these men actively influence racial politics, but they were also active art collectors, who eventually loaned or donated their collections to the South African National Gallery and the Johannesburg Art Gallery in the 1930s (cf. Chapter Seven). *The State* dealt with a wide range of political issues and at the same time was considered as a forum for pro-Union cultural activists, in order to create a unified South African identity by developing its own aesthetics (Dubow 2006:164, also see Merrington 1995).

The winning photograph was published in *The State* under the name "Josef Müller" with the following caption:

"The State" Photographic Competition.
This month all South Africa from the Sambesi to the Cape was represented in the entries received. "The Naiads of Natal", by Mr. Josef Müller of Mariannhill, Pinetown, is a picture as well as a photograph. The graceful grouping of the Kafir girls at the stream would have delighted a Burne-Jones or perhaps have induced an Alma-Tadema to forsake the marble baths of ancient Rome for the natural watering places of the Natalian bush. Every detail of the scene will repay study, from the plump limber-shanked picaninny to the tasseled topknot of the young Zulu wife who is filling her calabash. […] (Lancelot Ussher, *The State*, 1909).



Figure 21: original caption: "First Prize—Photo competition. The Naiads of Natal. By Josef Müller" (as published in *The State*, 1909. Copy at Museum Africa, Johannesburg).[161]

The lauder's identification of the work as "a picture *as well as* a photograph" not only shows the association he makes with popular British artists of the time, but also points to the possibility that similar works may indeed have inspired Müller. The photograph is titled "The Naiads of Natal" and shows a group of five young women, posing in a water pool or stream, while being watched by four children. Other than in the portraits presented in the last section, here the gazes of the photographed subjects are closed within the image, and do not aim at the lens. This suggests that such an arrangement was not intended as a "portrait", but indeed as a "picture". As a pictorial composition it does therefore not acknowledge the camera's presence.

[161] The photograph's print is here shown as it appears in the journal *The State* (1909). This particular cut-out is housed in the photographic collection of the Museum Africa in Johannesburg (PH2010-230 / 572-13). It is filed under the label: "Zulu - Dress - Women". In *The State's* 1909 copy at the Killie Campbell Africana Library in Durban the photograph has been cut out. Whether both do match is unclear.

While the photograph itself is indeed present in Mariannhill's photographic studio albums, the caption cannot be found there. In the albums, as well as on the original glass plate negative, the German caption is rather descriptive and related to action and location: "Girls scooping water at the Umlazi [river]".[162] The more imaginative caption "Naiads of Natal" was only applied under the secular authorship of "Josef Müller". Apparently, "native" and scarcely dressed women, with titles invoking classic literature and art, such as "woodland nymphs" were a common topic in commercial colonial photography (Thomas 1992:369). Furthermore, such "classicizing of indigenous figures" was already a common trend with the pre-union effort to aesthetically appropriate South African themes within European conventions (Merrington 1995:652), eventually brought together in the journal *The State*.

For this reason we have to address a key problem in the art historical interpretation of colonial imagery. This concerns the repetition, resemblance, as well as the recognition of images. The photographic theme of women collecting water repeats itself throughout Müller's surviving oeuvre in more than 40 different variations. For the jury member Lancelot Ussher, who was an experienced photographer himself (Bensusan 1966:106), Müller's winning photograph bore resemblance to the work of the British painter Edward Burne-Jones and the Dutch-born Lawrence Alma-Tadema. Such acts of recognition and association may have been possible for contemporary audiences, but pose a problem for a researcher more than 100 years later. Lacking the contemporary "collateral knowledge", we have to reconstruct associative frameworks, of which some are more evident than others. We can at least observe that Ussher associated Müller's composition with two painters, whose oeuvres were known for their orientalist and classicist sceneries. There are thus not only potential difficulties with identifying "cross-cultural" aesthetics, arising in the process of performance and posing during the photographic occasion. Furthermore, there are problems with identifying the origins of images over time, depending on what Pinney called the "recursive nature of image production" (cf. Pinney 2004, 2005, also see Ginzburg 1989a). As I discussed in the introduction, a combined consideration of provenance and provenience (Joyce 2012, 2013), as well as image genealogies (Gell 1998) allow us to approach such origins. At the same time, we should not lose sight of individual image producers and their intentions.

The South African art historian Michael Godby (2008) earlier pointed out the need for art historical analysis in studying South African historical photographs. As I just explained, this involves the conundrum of "resemblance": how can we know what a photographer had seen, and what he attempted to depict in his photographs, unless we have his written confirmation? We would have to balance our analysis of prototypes with potential image examples of what the photographer had actually seen before he decided to take a photograph. To provide an example, it was certainly the case that African mothers, as we can often see them in photographs from Natal, routinely carried babies on their backs. And it may be equally true that the perception of this habit was reinforced by popular imagery. It is problematic, however, to state that such imagery

[162] My own translation from the German original: "*Mädel schöpfen Wasser am Umlazi*".

"draws its vocabulary simultaneously from Christian Madonna imagery" (Garb 2013:30). It is a crucial difference whether one merely claims from a temporal distance that photographs look similar and that they were influenced by pictorialist conventions, or whether one shows empirically that contemporary social actors, photographers, and their interpreters indeed expressed an "intertextual" or "interpictorial" experience. These issues are usually addressed in terms of iconography and iconology, which I already discussed in the introduction.

With few exceptions, Mariannhill's photographs are carefully staged and many are modelled after common "genre" themes, as I will show throughout this work. However, even if the photographers staged a particular *mise en scène*, it can not always be clearly pin-pointed whether they intended to reference particular artwork. This may only be claimed in case the artwork which had served as an inspiration is clearly indicated, or in case the resemblance to another artwork amounts to such a degree that it is unmistakable (cf. Ginzburg 1989a:49). As with portrait photography in the previous section, this begs the question of how one can possibly measure "resemblance". Mariannhill's photographers may have drawn inspiration from artworks, either through pre-existing textual narratives, or from published imagery. They would have acquired them from popular magazines with pictorial illustrations, or from illustrated Bibles. Once they had been stockpiled at the photographic studio, such images can now be approached as what Pinney called "recursive archives" (2005:265) and what Greenblatt thought of as "mimetic capital" (1991). Before I present several examples for such cases, I need to return to some contemporary aesthetic conventions and the epistemic discourses concerning photographic "resemblance" and "reality".

It is documented that Alma-Tadema's paintings were indeed at times re-staged as *tableaux vivants* in Europe (Reissberger 2002:100). As I explain in the next chapter, the performance and photographs of *tableaux vivants* were first recorded at Mariannhill during theatre plays at Pfanner's Jubilee in 1888. This European theatrical convention consisted of staging people as so-called "living pictures" in arranged *mise en scène.* This required the actors to halt in a particular position for a prolonged period of time, often lingering on a play's final scene. The audience was supposed to *experience* the formation, and eventually to *recognise* the imitated image. Since the late 18th century, *tableaux vivants* became popular in the context of theatre performances *on-stage* (Jooss 1999), but were also re-created *off-stage* as fashionable home entertainment (see Wallner 1870 and 1895). Once print media allowed in-text printing of photographs by the 1880s, depictions of *tableaux* became increasingly popular as illustrations (Brandl-Risi 2013; Krauss 2005; Jooss 2010, 2011; also see Foucault 2002:873). The latter fact also contributed to the recognisability of *tableaux* with wider audiences other than the upper class, and the social game of recognising *images* in *tableaux vivants* (Krauss 2005:59).

In the following I explain the performative idea of the photographic *tableaux vivants* as a freezing, or a mortification of the photographic model, and its relation to the idea of the genre photograph as a staged narrative, and as being explicitly opposed to snapshot photographs. Building up the idea over several sections of this chapter and the next should enable us to better

understand photographic practice at Mariannhill. We can then conceive of the *tableau vivant* as an intentional and conventional pose and performance during a photographic occasion, a medium in its own right. The *tableau* as such exists in between a pre-photographic image idea, which preceded the photographic occasion on the one hand, and the material photograph on the other. When performing a *tableau* for a stage play or photograph, models intentionally held the pose in order to create a lasting ensemble, and not because exposure times required it (see next section). The *tableau* thus constituted a stable entity for a considerable time, which justifies to consider the *tableau* as a form of medium in itself, or as what Holschbach has called an "intermedium" (2006:36, also see Plumpe 1990:82), situated in between a preceding image idea and the photographic image-object.

Once the idea of the *tableau* became a conscious and intentional part of the photographic occasion, its participants before and behind the camera had to discuss the anticipated image. Accordingly, the photographer attempted to *make* the models similar to an image, while the models attempted to *become* similar. However, like Walter Benjamin in the previous section and Mariannhill's novices whom I described in the introduction, models may also be reluctant to pose. The act of imitation may thus have taken place knowingly or unknowingly, willingly or unwillingly (cf. Schade 1996:74). Like with portrait photographs in the last section, with genre photographs the question is however, whom or what did the models imitate? The characteristic features of a person, the conventional pose of studio photography, or even a concrete example of artwork? Paying attention to the conceptual differences to the case of portraiture, I now explore the notion of "resemblance" in relation to "genre photographs", such as the "Naiads of Natal". A tableau-like performance here became the medium of imitation.

In 1909, the same year when Müller wrote his article and received his "First Prize", the photographer L.L. Kleintjes from Munich published in the *Deutscher Camera Almanach* on genre photography. "The genre photograph is hard to define", he wrote, "but can be located on a spectrum between portraiture and landscape (or interior)". In this central position of the "genre", the individual and its surroundings are equally balanced in the idea of "daily life". Kleintjes further posed this idea against—thereby criticising—the "sentimental and sweet works", which many photographers had produced earlier (also see Hofmeister 1898). According to Kleintjes, it required great artistic skills "to tell a story with a 'before and after' of occurrences in one single image, so that our mind may grasp the succession of events, even though our eye is only presented with one episode" (Kleintjes 1909:35).[163] He also suggested to present the photographic subjects as representatives of an entire "category [*Gattung*]", such as any "random work" could stand for "work as such". He concluded that this would literally be a "genre", a "*Gattungsbild* in the strict sense of the term".[164] He considered it to be "complicated to produce a

[163] My own translation from the German original.

[164] The German "*Genrebild"* was also referred to as "*Gattungbild"* or "*Sittenbild"*. The term "genre image" was firmly established between the 1830s and 40s in Germany. Already by the 17th century it was distinguished from "history painting", which was used for historically or biblically derived themes (Stechow and Comer 1976). While the history painting is related to a concrete point in space and time, the genre painting is atemporal in the

narrative [*erzählendes*] genre image", as it needed capable "models", on whose understanding of their task the success of the photograph depended. He thus suggested to find a "striking type [*markanten typus*]" for this purpose. In general, it was the "externalities [*Äußerlichkeiten*]", so he wrote, "which hindered the photographer to have his fantasy roam freely when producing an image. Reality can be found somewhere in between fantasy and the image. It is the latter into which everything has to be translated up to the smallest detail, before the camera can come to its right. Everything too much or too little will remind the beholder that the image has indeed been *posed,* and not *seen*" (Kleintjes 1909:40-41).[165]

Already 20 years earlier, C.F. Hoffmann had made it clear that his conception of photographic truth relied on the *plausibility* of a genre-scene: "it is therefore the *apparent truth, the perfection of the illusion*, which must be preserved in the image" (1889:284).[166] The concern was thus about the artistic composition of the photograph, and not whether the event had actually taken place. Also Henry P. Robinson had made a similar statement already by 1869, which he still repeated in 1892.[167] We see once more that it was legitimate within the international contemporary photographic discourse to distill generally-assumed social realities into artistic photography, as long as the depicted event remained plausibly connected to the everyday world of the audience. "Genre photographs" are usually understood as explicitly posed depictions of "scenes of daily life", scenes, which a European audience could therefore even better recognise and position as a concrete narrative within a wider social discourse (cf. Petersen 2008a). Genre photography as an image category thus connected seamlessly to the practice of *tableaux vivants* as a mode of theatrical performance. Edmund Wallner (1876) already made this connection when he proposed genre photographs as examples for the staging of *tableaux vivants*.

Like most colonial photographs, many of Mariannhill's photographs can be located on this "spectrum between portrait and landscape", as identified by Kleintjes in 1909. Scholars, such as for example Gidley (1994), Gore (2015), Griffiths (2002), Jäger (2009), Stevenson and Graham-Stewart (2001), and Waldroup (2012) suggested that art photography and pictorialism indeed played a role in the representation of the European colonies and the Americas, as well as in the practice of Black West African photographers around 1900. Also some of the authors in Theye's (1989) *Der geraubte Schatten*, and also Wiener (1990) suggest that there was a connection between ethnographic photography and genre photography and pictorialism. None of the authors, however, provides examples for the photographers' artistic motivation and aesthetic principles, or related image examples (but see Grossman 2014; Mnyaka 2012, 2014). None of these studies draw connections in this regard between modes of production, intentions, and contexts of employment, such as the use of artistically inspired photographs in ethnographic academic circles. For the case of Mariannhill, such biographies can in some cases be followed in

sense that it relates only to a wider epoch, region, or group of people.

[165] My own translation from the German original. Emphasis as in the original. (also see Vogel's statement on the same conundrum in the last section).

[166] My own translation from the German original. Emphasis as in the original.

[167] Robinson (1869, 1892:109), also cited in Mnookin (1997:26).

detail, showing that conventions of art and ethnography were indeed mutually influential.

Also other mission societies were clearly aware of the advantages of framing their work according to prevalent European artistic aesthetics (cf. Jäger 2009, Maxwell 2011), but they have not yet been explored in relation to concrete examples. In this section I therefore describe the tradition of genre photography as it was applied to supposed "everyday life" at Mariannhill. In the next chapter I discuss its application in relation to the representations of conversion and faith and in the context of actual theatre performances. In Chapter Six I will eventually contrast it to allegedly "ethnographic" photographs. Even though there were voices against it amongst European photographers, Müller followed a particular style of genre photography since approximately 1900, which can be counted amongst the "sweet and sentimental" examples mentioned above. Some contemporary photographers instead considered it "undesirable to imitate [*nachzuahmen*] a genre painting by posing sitters in the same way, and by making the background and everything else similar [*ähnlich*] to the proposed example, as this can only be a disappointment to the beholder, in case he is aware of the original" (Hoffmann 1889:282).

Apart from the majority of individual portraits, group photographs, and landscape views, Müller adopted many themes, which were popular in the German entertainment press at the time, and reworked them into africanised genre images that had various degrees of "narrativity". He dressed, staged, framed, and captioned photographs of children as "African cupids", equipped with local adornment, bow and arrow (Figure 22); courting African couples in romantic postures, or "Zulu warriors" in *pose plastique*, mimicking exaggerated fighting postures, resembling statues or paintings of Greek warriors, equally with shield and spear; in his studio he arranged "traditionally" dressed African women holding "tea-circles", complete with porcelain service and smoking cigarettes.[168] For such photographs the smoke had to be retouched onto the negative in an elaborate process. Especially the latter kind of images reference examples from satire journals, presenting for humorist effect Africans' alleged inability to adapt adequately to European culture. Maybe at the most extreme end of photographic fantasies at Mariannhill stood photomontages of African toddlers riding giant butterflies or crickets (Figure 22). Even if photographic montage became generally more popular during the 1920s, the permanent arrangement of previously unrelated images on one surface was not a common practice at Mariannhill. Nevertheless, I will deal with some more examples in Chapter Two. While montages remained experimental at Mariannhill, other topics were reproduced, or rather re-staged and re-enacted, repeatedly over the years (cf. Rippe 2018).

Authors such as Fiedler (2005) and Fabian (1992, 2000) discuss similar examples as "ethnographic humour" and "White humour" respectively. They take their examples from popular ethnographic accounts, such as the work of Adolf Bastian published in 1855, and Leo Frobenius in 1907. Both Fiedler and Fabian may still not have realised the pervasiveness of the

[168] This example can be matched to an image appearing in the satire journal *Fiegende Blätter* (1896:225), titled "[…] *das erste Kaffeekränzchen in Ostafrika* [… the first coffee-circle in East Africa]. The artist was Rudolph Grieß, who published caricatures taking place in Africa in the same journal on a regular basis.

phenomenon at the time. They nevertheless make the plausible suggestion that such forms of humour can be understood as a coping mechanism employed by colonial actors, in order to suggest to a European readership that one was in control of the situation. This suggestion may hold true for several of the examples I present throughout this study.

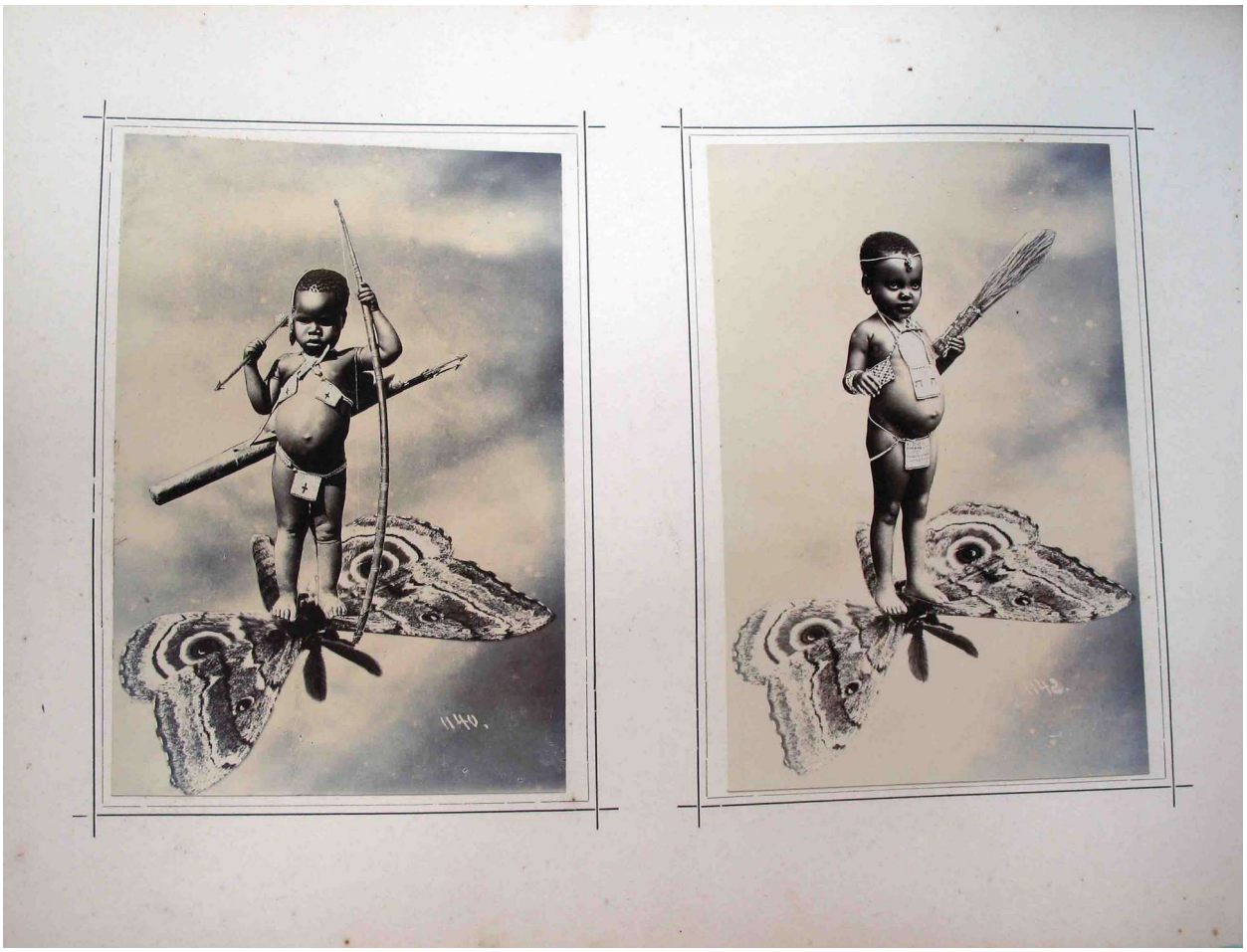


Figure 22: toddlers riding butterflies. approx. 1900-1908 (CMM Archives).

By comparing photographs to contemporary genre paintings, it is possible to trace other artists, who served as an inspiration to Müller. Two of these are the humorist genre painters Carl Spitzweg and Pietro Torrini. The German Spitzweg (1808-1885) is known for his work in the satirical magazine *Fliegende Blätter,* and in his case it is the sheer number of similar photographs in the remaining oeuvre of Mariannhill, which make an inspiration plausible. For example, Spitzweg's well-known painting *Der Naturforscher in den Tropen* (1835) matches several of Müller's attempts of immersing himself photographically in lush nature scenarios close to Mariannhill (Figure 23). These resemblances must not only be seen in terms of image reproductions, but in the wider late-romanticist and *Jugendstil* (art nouveau) experience of coming closer to nature, which was a prevalent notion in Europe at the time. Michael Godby

identifies a similar inclination with the German anthropologist Gustav Fritsch, who travelled through South Africa during the 1860s (Godby 2008:127, also see below and Chapter Six). Spitzweg furthermore produced scenarios within the wider field of humorous genre paintings, popularised through the magazine *Fliegende Blätter*. His oeuvre consisted of a standard repertoire, which even he himself repeated on a regular basis. His painterly world was populated by eccentrics and collectors, the mundane parts of a monk's or hermit's life, lovers in forest glades, hunters, women carrying pots in rustic landscapes, and eventually orientalist images set in Middle Eastern coffee houses or harems. It even included more fantastic themes, such as dragons, witches, diviners and sorcerers, witches and their familiars, or, as in the potential adaptation by Müller, nymphs (ie. naiads) in forest glades (cf. Roennefahrt 1960, Wichmann 2002). Several of these themes could already be found in earlier imaginations of the South African encounter scenario.

A concrete example after the Italian artist Pietro Torrini (1852-1920) is the painting of several monks sharing a joke, of which a contemporary commercial reproduction could even be found amongst archived photographs at Mariannhill Monastery.[169] Müller appropriated it to illustrate the press release of the *Mariannhiller Kalender* in 1904. The priest sitting at the table and holding the *Kalender* is Fr. Dominikus Frey, the editor of Mariannhill's print media at the time.

[169] Müller appropriated Torrini's painting by retouching the cover of the book handled by the principal monk: "*Mariannhill Kalender für das Jahr ????*".



Figure 23: original caption: “Am Wasserfall am Tafelberg”. Br. Aegidius Müller, near Mariannhill, approx. 1910 (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives).



Figure 24: print of a painting by Pietro Torrini. The cover of the booklet held by Fr. Dominikus Frey has been fitted with a photograph from Mariannhill's collection and the line "*Mariannhiller Kalender für das Jahr ????*" (CMM Archives).

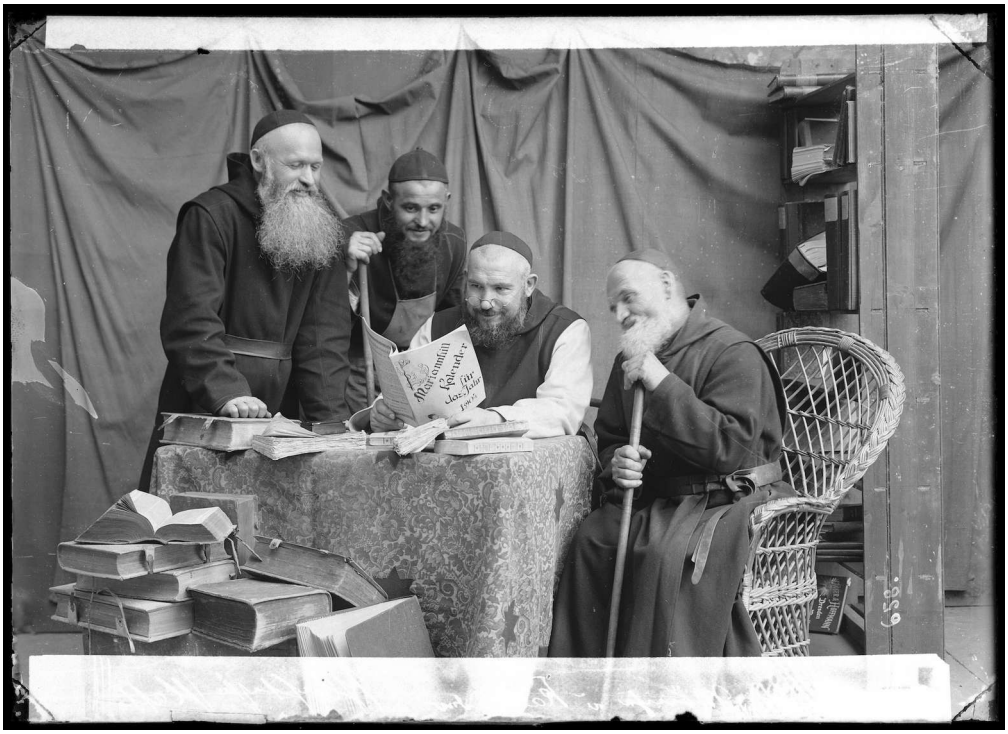


Figure 25: original caption: "*Mönche u. Kalender*"—"Monks and calendar" (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives, published in *Mariannhiller Kalender* 1905:61).

Apart from the theme of nature and mythic idylls, painters like Spitzweg addressed their experience of the distant exotic and strange, in particular of the orient. Spitzweg in particular had such an experience only in mediated form through visiting the 1851 World Exhibition in London (Roennefahrt 1960:19). He nevertheless made ample use of this experience for his paintings. The spectrum of inspirations for Müller must have been more diverse than Spitzweg and Torrini, but as I explained earlier, resemblances cannot always be identified, unless we are able to somehow trace the "collateral knowledge" of the time through a concrete material artefact, such as in the case of Torrini's work. As suggested by Ussher, Müller may indeed have been inspired by Alma-Tadema and Burne-Jones, for example on his way to Mariannhill in 1889 via London, where the party of novices spent plenty of time visiting cultural institutions and popular tourist destinations (Vonbank 1890).

The photographic depictions of Mariannhill's surroundings were thus not only reflections of an experience in the South African exterior (as opposed to the confinements of the photographic studio and the monastery), but equally an excessive reflection of photographic and artistic trends within the visual economy shared with Europe. Artists like Spitzweg had in fact already reworked their experiences of an exotic, and in particular of an orientalist Other in Europe. As I mentioned earlier, Spitzweg's experience in this regard had already been filtered through staged events at the London World exhibition in 1851. The resulting canon or tradition was then once more reproduced and "africanised" by copyists such as Müller in South Africa, according to expectations of his audiences. I earlier argued that this experience is epitomised in Müller's orientalist pose (Figure 15).

Even though some contemporary German photographers disliked "sentimental genre themes", Müller continued to produce them up to the beginning of the First World War. According to established practice, a "good genre photograph" should not be in need of any more explanation, other than a short title. It should work by creating its own *visual* pun, rather than relying on an extensive caption, or by being reminiscent of earlier works (Hoffmann 1889:285). Müller followed this established practise, especially in his later work. The following examples were taken approximately between 1905 and 1910. They are reproduced from albums, which would have been on display in the photographer's studio.



Figure 26: original caption: "*Angehende Katecheten, Himmelberg.*"—"Young Catechists, [mission station] Himmelberg", with Fr. Odo Ripp (CMM Archives).



Figure 27: original caption: "*Die Versuchung, Kevelaer*"—"Temptation, [mission station] Kevelaer" (CMM Archives).



Figure 28: original caption: "*Die erste Hose, Kevelaer*"—"First trousers, [missions station] Kevelaer" (CMM Archives).



Figure 29: original caption: "*Die Schule ist aus, St. Wendel*"—"School is over, St. Wendel [parish near Mariannhill]", 1909 (CMM Archives).

All four photographs show their models imitating particular poses to correspond with the title. They resemble conventional stories and widely reproduced imagery that audiences would have been familiar with, ie. that would have worked according to their "collateral knowledge": (1) The central boy strikes a face of contemplation, as if being asked a difficult question by Fr. Odo; (2) "Eve" tempts "Adam" with an apple, while he performs a gesture of hesitation with his right hand; (3) the boy looks at his mother, as if asking for affirmation, while stretching his new trousers to the test. But especially the fourth photograph strains the pose to its limit: while the narrative suggests that the children are on their way home from school, not one of them is lifting a foot. Instead, all children—at least in the visible right part of the image—merely weigh in on their left foot in order to suggest movement. All 23 children appear to have been briefed with the same idea, and carried it out diligently in the exact same way. While aiming to suggest natural movement, the image instead appears to be totally mortified.

Photographic instructions at the time advised to make sure the "movement" of a pose is situated in the right "moment": a warrior striking his axe should be depicted in the very moment, not when the axe hits its aim, but rather when it is still raised above the head, so that the beholder

may anticipate the outcome (Vogel 1891:136). Hoffmann instead suggested not to photograph such poses at all, which would have only lasted for a moment in "real time". He was afraid that such a pose may have appeared in the photograph as if the model could not have held it for too long (1889:311). As all 23 school children in the photograph above eventually performed exactly the same pose, the effect is highly artificial (also see Rippe 2018). Despite the fact that his own approach did not "work", even according to contemporary best practice, Müller nevertheless repeated such depictions of school children many times.



Figure 30: original caption:"Vorbe [-reitung] Gruppierung zu einer Photographischen Aufnahme im Kaffernkraal, Centocow, Januar 1914"—"grouping for a photographic image at a Kafir Kraal", Centocow, January 1914 (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives).

The very knowledge and idea that photographers first staged and then manipulated their works in the long process of creating them, was apparently common with both photographers and their audiences. In one case, Müller even photographically performed this very act of arrangement himself. Accordingly, he staged his own intervention as a *tableau vivant*, ie. with the people posing for it. Figure 30 shows Müller at a homestead near Centocow Mission in January 1914. The glass plate negative holds the following caption: "grouping for a photographic image at a

Kafir Kraal".[170] Müller first attempted to write "preparation [*Vorbereitung*]", but on second thought crossed it out, and replaced it with "arrangement [*Gruppierung*]". He thus consciously pondered the appropriate terminology for his own action depicted in the photograph.

This is probably one of the very last photographs ever taken of Br. Aegidius Müller, before the First World War broke out in July 1914. The image was published with its original title in the *Vergißmeinnicht* of 1916, and thus even presented the staged nature of Mariannhill's photographic oeuvre publicly. Just like the three authors I discussed so far in relation to genre photography, Müller treated his photographic subjects literally as "models". Looking at the small boy, whom Müller attempts to direct into position, we see that these models were at times reluctant. Assuming that the clearly disgruntled facial expression of the boy is not a theatrical performance, it is indeed the most outspoken trace of a resistance to become "similar" to the imagination of the photographer, in the sense suggested by Benjamin. The photograph therefore shows a performance of the arrangement of a group of photographic models, or, phrased differently, it is a genre photograph with the topic of creating a *tableau vivant*. Müller thus engages in a meta-tableaux, and the resulting photograph becomes a "meta picture", as Mitchell called it (1994, cf. Chapter Two).

In the same way, we may now also better comprehend the photograph of the "four girls at Kevelaer", who are supposedly contemplating a photographic portrait of one of the girls (Figure 19). In the same way as in the previous example, Müller attempted to produce a genre photograph that addresses the "problem of photographic resemblance" of the last section in its relation to portraiture. Through its title, "female vanity", the composition suggested that the girls were scrutinising the accuracy of the photographic depiction, thus its "resemblance".

As I explained, photographers who produced genre photographs generally attempted to depict "everyday life". This eventually invites a comparison to "ethnographic photographs", in particular in the case of Mariannhill's photographic production (cf. Chapter Six). In an article in the *Photographische Rundschau* on the photographic *Figurenbild,* the Hamburg amateur photographer Theodor Hofmeister addressed the relation between a social reality and its photographic representation by wondering whether "any photographer will ever be able to describe a peoples as they really are, if he is not familiar with their customs and practices, their family life and common activities" (1898:262).[171] In Chapter Six, I will argue that "genre photography" and "ethnographic photography" went hand in hand at Mariannhill, and the first was eventually transformed into the latter, in close conversation with European ethnologists. In both practices photographers claimed to record typical "everyday life", by condensing it in the form of apparently staged scenes.

According to Langdon (1996:294), in Europe "the figure of the peasant—folkloric, pious, or threatening—recurs throughout 19th century art, epitomising a pure, unchanging existence,

[170] My own translation from the German original: "~~*Vorbe*~~ [*-reitung*] *Gruppierung zu einer Photographischen Aufnahme im Kaffernkraal, Centocow, Januar 1914*".

[171] My own translation from the German original.

remote from the flux and corruption of city life".[172] Even if depictions and imaginations of foreign "savages"—whether "noble" or not—have been around for much longer, representations of colonial subjects appropriated this triple figuration of Othering (folkloric, pious, or threatening) by the second half of the 19th century. Images, previously made by European artists to frame the encroaching influences of industrial centres on rural idylls in Europe, turned into what Landau (2002) calls an "image-Africa", the endless repetition of colonial themes. This process must therefore be considered, not so much as a European depiction of Africa, but even more as an "africanisation" of European prototypes as they were popular around 1900. This process of aestheticization was thus similar to the one attempted by the journal *The State*, in order to create a common South African Identity.

In the grass roots situation of Mission at Mariannhill, Africans took on and played out photographically the social roles as they imagined them in cooperation with the photographer. While we cannot recreate the thought processes of Africans at the time, it may be save to say that Mariannhill's photographers wanted their European audiences to recognise the resulting genre photographs as something familiar to their own European "daily life". Africans may not have carried out active social imitation, or "mimicry", purposefully (cf. Bhabha 1984), by aspiring to imitate or parody European appearances. They still took part (knowingly or unknowingly, willingly or unwillingly) in photographic performances regarding their own "transformation", as the missionaries imagined it as part of the conversion process. In order to survey a wider field of mimetic practices at Mariannhill, we thus need to engage in what Ferguson called "the anthropology of imitation" (Ferguson 2002, also see Huggan 1998), which is indeed more bi-directional and cooperative. As it was closely related to the practice of photographic representation of Africans, as well as their theatrical performance, the topic of social imitation will reoccur throughout the next chapters.

The previous section on portraiture and this section on genre photography explained that the notion of photographic "reality" and "resemblance" handled at Mariannhill was highly subjective and constructed, but at the same time also highly conventional. This convention relied on the idea that photographers (through their artistic faculty) were indeed able to condense their photographic subjects' essence or "character" into something of a higher, or at least a more abstract "truth". In the case of portraiture, *sitters* in their portraits became "types" of either a social stratum or ethnicity. The same was the case for the *models* in the format of genre photography, who became "typical" representatives of a certain group, trade, or ethnicity. In both cases, photographs were supposed to "resemble" an original, either a known individual, or an image prototype.

Hofmeister stated in 1898 that the attempt to capture an event involving a moving body through a snapshot with a short exposure time, may result in a well-defined image, but would hardly be balanced and pictorial in a compositional and artistic sense (1898:263). For this reason

[172] Also see Hoffmann (1889:284) for a contemporary perspective on European peasant "models", and Kaufhold (1986) for an overview of the interconnection of pictorialism, genre and the stratification of German society.

he suggested to resort to well-planned and well-prepared compositions instead, by involving "patient models" (1898:269). He perceived snapshot photography as not suited for the production of artistic photographs, as it did not allow to capture the "typical" aspects of a situation (also see Hoffmann 1889:283; Plumpe 1990:46). In early 1899, Müller went through an experience in which he came to understand these problems with snapshot photography. Even though he considered the resulting photographs as "more real", they eventually did not serve his ultimate purpose of mediating narratives effectively. A closer look at this experience in the next section will help us to better comprehend photographic practice at Mariannhill according to technological and aesthetic developments between the 1880s and 1910s.

Exposure of "the Most Original Reality".

In October 1883, Mariannhill's periodical *Fliegende Blätter* published an excerpt on experiments with exposure times from the "photographer's diary". It must have been Fr. Othmar Gross, who recorded these during the first months after the Trappist's arrival, January, February, and March:

> Wet collodion plates, silver-bath 1:15. iron-developer. - 30 lines landscape-lens, with smallest aperture. -
> 7 am, blue sky, 20°C in the shade. Landscape with a hill and a single tree on top, approx. 1/2 hour away. 10" [sec.] - A group under the same conditions.
> 10 am, dark buildings, 6", 30°C in the shade. -
> 1 pm, 30°C, Kafir group with dark backdrop, 3" -
> 2 pm, 30°C, bigger group of people, 3", overexposed. -
> 3 pm, 30°C, big head. visit 5", black storm-clouds to the South. -
>
> a six-days-old Tannin dry-plate after Russel, landscape, 1/2 minute,
> 10 am, overexposed.
>
> The summer sunlight does not have the strength of the winter light. In summer, if it does not rain, there is a perpetually blue sky, but in winter it is white and clouded most of the time. (Anon. 1883)[173]

In December 1883, an entry in the same periodical added: "The light here is so bright that the photographer can already take pictures before 5.30 am" (Anon. 1883a).[174] The duration of the plate's exposure and its dependence on the availability, as well as the intensity of light was inherently written into the medium of photography (cf. Part Two). With the commercialisation of faster (more sensitive) plates and better (more light-intensive) lenses from the late 1870s onwards, exposure times could be kept far below one second, and by 1883 new shutter systems enabled snapshot photography (Gautrand 1998). As evident from the quote above, already in 1883 Mariannhill's photographer experimented with the much more sensitive (and thus quicker) dry plate, instead of a wet plate. Certainly from the early 1890s onwards, it was thus easily possible to photograph moving objects and subjects with exposure times up to 1/2000 second, and even beyond this rate in good daylight (cf. Eder 1892).[175]

A rare, and probably the earliest example for short exposure times at Mariannhill is Figure 31. It shows three members of Mariannhill Monastery crossing a river in the year 1890. They are from left to right: Fr. Theoderich Sonnen, Anton Schmidt, Fr. Isembard Leyendecker, and four unidentified Africans. Only one year after their arrival, Sonnen and Leyendecker were still novices, and therefore wearing white habits with white scapulars.[176] Mind the splashing, but clearly defined water before the legs of Anton Schmidt.

---

[173] My own translation from the German original.

[174] My own translation from the German original.

[175] See for example Daston and Galison (2007:155) for the application of "high-speed" photography in the natural sciences, prior to the 1890s.

[176] As both would have worn black scapulars after their first vows in 1891, the caption indicating 1894 is incorrect. It was probably applied by Fr. Dietmar Seubert during the 1970s or 1980s.



Figure 31: original caption on the image: "*Photo-Zinko Mariannhill 189?*". Original caption on the carrier: "*Die Photographen beim Durchqueren eines Flusses*"—"The photographers while crossing a river", approx. 1890 (CMM Archives).

The evidence of the splashing water makes us aware of the fact that the aesthetic composition of photographs at the time was not restricted by prolonged exposure times. All photographs presented in this study could have been made with all the compositional liberties of snapshot photography. Nevertheless, the idea that exposure time still limited photographic practice at the end of the 19th century lingers on today, and even haunts academic thinking and writing about historical photographs.[177] But on the contrary, sitters did not have to remain motionless for prolonged periods at all times. Under ideal conditions, either under a clear sky or in a well-lit studio, it was possible for any photographer to avoid blurriness with reasonable exposure times. Photographic poses therefore depended not on technological restrictions, but on theatrical conventions, either implemented by the sitter or by the photographer. While it will be important to consider technological issues throughout the next chapters, it is thus even more important to think about the resulting social interactions, and the implications this may have had for the

[177] This is even the case with the most critical of critics of photographic interpretation (see Stocking 1993:217).

construction of photographic aesthetics, such as involving ides as "resemblance". In the remainder of this section I consider three more photographic occasions, which provide us with insight in this regard.

In the very first volume of the *Mariannnhill Kalender* of 1889, we can read how three Trappists (Fr. Josef [Biegner] and two Novices) explored the area of Mariannhill's two extensive farms, and approached people with a photographic camera:

> The people were in great excitement; especially the young men received our visit badly, as our mysterious box appeared somehow suspicious to them. We did not allow ourselves to be discouraged, even though we did not even have one stick to defend ourselves. Once we had succeeded to appease the people, we started to set up our "observation box [*Guckkasten*]".[178] We explained to them that we indeed had no other intention than to portray [*abmalen*, thus paint] their faces; it was nevertheless difficult to make this clear.
>
> Eventually, they were at ease. The women reappeared from their holes, wearing all their most valuable things, and were draped in their most beautiful clothes; some children (in "birthday suit") huddled next to them. The men came with their lances and shields of leather. They all took the positions we indicated to them. They did remain calm after we Trappists had mingled with them, and once we had taken away all suspicion. The exposure only took a few moments, as the local light is very sharp.

The same procedure is recounted for yet another homestead:

> We immediately proceeded to place our apparatus in a convenient position, once the Kafirs of this Kraal had agreed to it. They even complied to appear in their complete attire. One of them took his leather shield and acted as leading character. His hair was twisted very carefully into locks, which stood erect like small pyramids. His cheeks were painted with red colour in the form of a triangle, which was again framed in yellow. Around his loins he had draped some fur. More youngsters and children appeared, and in an instant it was done. The Kafirs could not marvel enough at the fact that their figures had been imprinted [*abgedrückt*] with such speed. This secret was however not new to them, as we had already photographed them during an earlier occasion.[179] (anon. 1889:128)

The priest must have been Fr. Josef Biegner, but the two novices cannot be identified. It thus appears that initially also non-professional members of the monastery experimented with the camera, if necessary. No photographs were published with the article and no photographs matching the description do appear in the photographic collection. The fact that all three Trappists were inexperienced photographers could have had the result that the photographs did not turn out well. Africans on their part showed a performative readiness, partially due to previous experiences of posing for a camera.

The *Mariannhill Kalender* of 1896 holds another rare account, titled "*Reiseerlebnisse* [travel experiences]". It tells the story of a long journey into the Drakensberg Mountains by two Mariannhill priests, undertaken in the (southern) winter of 1894. It was most likely narrated by Fr. Isembard Leyendecker, who had arrived at Mariannhill shortly after the publication of the previous article in 1889:

> At the beginning of the last dry season I received the order from our abbot to travel to the Drakensberg, there to make photographic images for various purposes. We had been told by a reliable source that the region provides

[178] The German term "*Guckkasten*" was also used to denote "raree shows"—the display of exciting visuals in wooded boxes on fairs—which is unlikely to be the intended meaning in this case.

[179] My own translation from the German original.

much of interest, which had so far not been studied.[180] (anon. 1896b:46)

In 1894, the second Abbot of Mariannhill, Amandus Schölzig (1894-1900), not only initiated the opening of a museum, and the extension of the photographic studio, but he also ordered photographs to be taken, and specimens of "natural history" to be collected at the mission stations (see Chapter Five). Accordingly, this account not only presents related texts and images, but the author even described the making of photographs. The participants of the expedition, and even the author himself, are not named. They can nevertheless be identified by some cross-referencing of texts and images as Fr. Theoderich Sonnen and Fr. Isembard Leyendecker. Sonnen had arrived at Mariannhill on 2 July 1889, together with Leyendecker.[181] They would thus have become well-acquainted during the sea passage of several weeks, still without a vow of silence. Sonnen eventually became a distinguished Zulu linguist under the pseudonym *Langa*[182]*,* and editor of the *Vergißmeinnicht* between 1900 and 1905. We also remember him from his involvement in the governmental surveys I described above. Shortly after this involvement, Sonnen left the congregation and applied for naturalisation in 1908[183], just like the photographer Fresen before him. Already by the time of their journey in 1894, Leyendecker attributed fluency in Zulu to Sonnen, who therefore acted as their interpreter. Other than in the photograph above (Figure 31), in 1894 both men wore the white habit with the additional black scapular on top, which they had received when giving their first vows together on 16 July 1891.

The author identified himself as professional photographer, and further stated jokingly that such a journey was "unheard of for Trappists". To do so they had to violate the "rule of stability", by spending the night outside of the monastery's confinements, or one of its outstations. It appears that those of Mariannhill's members, who preferred the idea of mission over contemplation, started joking about the dispensations given to them by the abbot in this regard, once these points of friction had been criticised during the visitation of 1892.

The journey's account describes its legitimising purpose as several modes of collecting information in form of photographs and specimens. At the same time, it tells about the technological restrictions concerning photography at the time, as well as the hardships of a missionary's life. This narrative of a journey to Reichenau[184] and beyond, was used to tie in several themes of potential interest to a German-speaking readership. The baseline remained to point out the contrast between the supposedly deficient reality of the local people, and their inherent potential to become a part of the civilised environments of the mission station Reichenau, and finally of Mariannhill Monastery. The narrative of a movement, from more to lesser civilised areas between Europe and Africa, was thus recreated once more within the local

[180] My own translation form the German original.

[181] It is therefore unlikely that they were the two novices accompanying Fr. Joseph in the previously described excursion, as the *Kalender* must already have been printed in late 1888, in order to be shipped to Europe before the beginning of 1889.

[182] *"I-langa"* (Zulu) and "*Sonne"* (German) both mean "sun".

[183] CAR: CO-8660-22_01-1908.

[184] Reichenau was Mariannhill's first experimental mission station, close to the Drakensberg.

network of mission stations (cf. Pels 1999). As part of the narrative, the author not only indicated shortcomings, but also mentioned the amiability and hospitality of local people, in order to mediate a degree of hope of future conversions to the reader (cf. Thomas 1991). On their way, the explorers furthermore collected zoological, as well as geological specimens, to "incorporate [*einverleiben*]" them into the recently founded museum at Mariannhill Monastery. They also copied "hieroglyphs"[185] and "Bushmanpaintings" (Figure 32), but in the first place photographed landscapes and people.

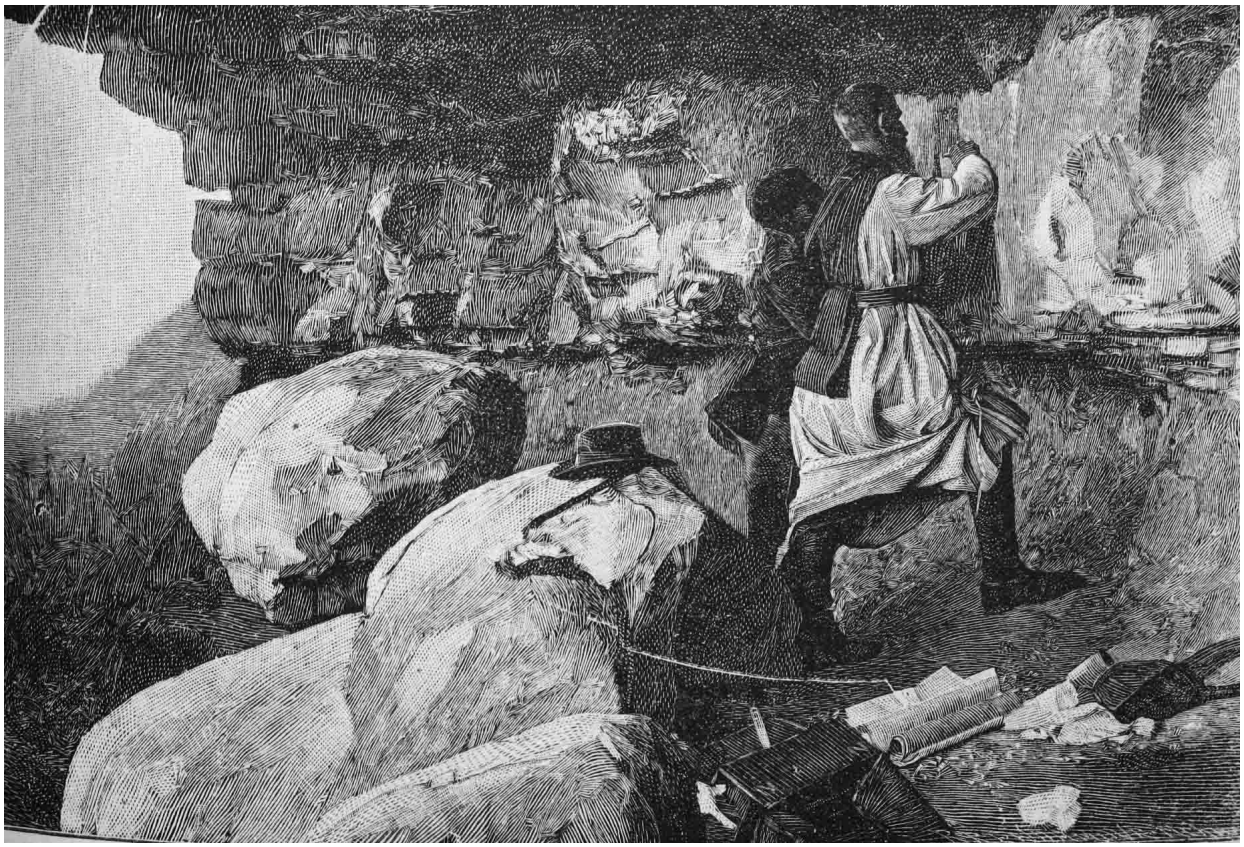


Figure 32: original caption: "*P. Th. beim Abzeichnen der Hieroglyphen*"—Fr. Theoderich Sonnen and a Black companion copying "hieroglyphs" from a stonewall. The photograph had been transferred into an engraving by the company (Richard) Brend'amour in München. The respective signature can be found in the lower right corner (as published in *Mariannhill Kalender* 1896:46).

During the trip, which could have taken several weeks from Mariannhill Monastery near Durban, the two Trappists had only brought along 36 glass plate negatives. The risk was high that several plates broke while travelling on horseback through mountainous terrain; others could have easily been over- or underexposed, or chemical complications could have occurred, due to the great changes in temperature in the Drakensberg area. Their equipment also contained a magnesium-

[185] The nature of these "hieroglyphs" is not explained, and no copies have been preserved in Mariannhill's archives.

powder flashlight.[186] But when used in a windowless African hut, so Fr. Isembard wrote, the device produced such a great amount of smoke that the taking of a photograph became impossible. Once Leyendecker fell ill during the trip, he passed the camera on, however reluctantly, to Sonnen. To Leyendecker's own surprise, the photographs made by his confrere eventually turned out well. Again, the question of authorship within Mariannhill's oeuvre undermines the appearance of the photographic record as a singular monolithic statement, as if created by a clearly definable group of people.

After the excursion to the Drakensberg from Reichenau Mission, Leyendecker travelled further along other mission stations by himself, and eventually also reached Centocow Mission. Of the entire trip's 36 exposed plates, 11 images were eventually published with the article, which is closed with the frequently employed exclamation: "*Alles zur Größeren Ehre Gottes!* [Everything was done for the greater glory of God!]". The photographs taken on such trips were not only used in the periodicals, sent to benefactors in Europe, and marketed with ethnographic museums (cf. Chapter Six). They were also sold at the photographic studio to visitors, where they embedded the experience of a visit to the monastery within the surrogate experience of the mission's exterior, and the extensive network of outstations (cf. Chapter Three). Such journeys were not only long and arduous, but as a result the photographer also had to shut down the studio business at Mariannhill for prolonged periods. Therefore the photographers would do such extensive tours of the missions only every other year, or in case an important social event or festivity could be anticipated, and was deemed worthy of photographic documentation.

Several years later, in March 1899, Fr. Isembard Leyendecker, Br. Aegidius Müller, and several of their confreres travelled to the mission station Lourdes in East Griqualand, to attend the visit of the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, William P. Schreiner. They remained in the wider area for more than two weeks, and also took photographs of what is commonly referred to as a "first-fruits ceremony" in the South African context (cf. Chapter Seven). Almost five years after the previous excursion, photographic technology had progressed even further. Through photographic journals Mariannhill's photographers would have been aware of discourses about the first experiments with cinematography, which also raised questions about photographic seriality. A series of seventeen photographs produced during the occasion is captioned (with some variations in spelling) as "*Erntefest bei den Amabacas* [a harvest feast with the Amabaca]" on every single image.[187]

In a letter dated 15 April 1899 to Felix von Luschan, curator at the ethnographic museum of Berlin, Müller presented this series as a very special addition to a descriptive sales catalogue, which he sent along with the same letter. I will deal with this particular correspondence in Chapter Six, and here only focus on this particular series. In his letter, Müller did not discuss

[186] Developed by the already mentioned Adolf Miethe and Johannes Gaedicke in 1887 (Newhall 1949:170).

[187] I hope to describe this occasion in more detail elsewhere: due to the fact that I was able to locate the photographs in the actual landscape of today's Umzimkhulu district during my fieldwork, it was possible to connect the photographic occasion historically to the visit of Schreiner. The analysis of both events is however far too complex to present here.

ethnographic detail, but rather emphasised that "these are snapshots[188], depicting scenes from Kafir life—dances and throngs of people, completely unadorned and without any addition. Six of the photographs are in double cabinet format and ten are in cabinet format".[189] Müller stressed the fact that these photographs had *not* been posed. Four months later, in a letter to Johannes D.E. Schmeltz, director of the ethnographic museum at Leiden, Müller repeated the claim, but phrased it differently. He also sent a different selection: "[Nr.] 605, 1-12 and 5 double cabinet, all in all 17 images, present dances and throngs of people at the harvest feast of an Amabaca Chief in East Griqualand. […] Images Nr. 605, 1-12 and 606, 1-11, and also images 16, 1-8 in the explanations are snapshots, in which scenery and arrangement [*Gruppierung*] are presented without any addition by the photographer, and thus as the most original reality [*in originellster Wirklichkeit*]".[190] Müller thus admitted implicitly that other photographs in his oeuvre (which came to Berlin and Leiden in the same packages) were apparently posed and arranged. Bearing in mind his other work in the photographic studio, and the work he did around Mariannhill near Durban as I described it above, one realises that the presentation of *actual* "snapshots" as a "mechanical objectivity" is exceptional in Mariannhill's oeuvre, even for Müller himself (cf. Daston and Galison 2007). 10 years later, in 1909, Müller expanded the argument to his entire oeuvre, in order to bolster its truthfulness.

To my knowledge, attempts at documenting process by constructing a scenic narrative through photographic series or sequences in an almost cinematic fashion, were rather unusual in early ethnographic photography of the 1890s, at least in an African context.[191] Even if Müller numbered the series from 1-17, it is unclear whether he intended to create a narrative. Not all of these numbers are still on the printed images, as some have been retouched. It is nevertheless still possible to arrange them in an approximate order. The series further consists of two numbering systems, relating to two different size formats: twelve photographs carry the number "605", and five photographs carry the number "274". This fact is inherently connected to the technological side of the production process: the series "605" has the conventional size 10.2 x 16.2 cm (cabinet), and the series "274" has the conventional size 13.4 x 21.7 cm (double-cabinet). In his letter to Schmeltz, Müller only pointed out the series "605" as snapshots, but not the series "274". The second series was not enlarged to a bigger format, but being contact prints the size of the prints is identical with the size of their glass plate negatives. This means that the camera of the larger format was much bigger than the camera used for the smaller format, and may even have been mounted on a tripod. One can further observe that people captured on the small format never look towards the camera, and therefore do not seem to be aware of its presence, except for one case (Figure 33). Here, Fr. Isembard Leyendecker, who was a trained photographer himself,

188 *Momentaufnahmen* ("records of a moment").

189 EMB: Letter, Müller to von Luschan, 15 April 1899: my own translation from the German original.

190 NMVWNMVW: Letter, Müller to Schmeltz, 24 August 1899.

191 But see the photographic work by the German art historian Aby Warburg (1896), the German ethnologists Paul Ehrenreich (1898) and Karl von den Steinen (1898), as well as the American anthropologist Matilda Coxe Stevenson (1880s-1910s). All four photographic bodies have been produced in the American south-west (cf. Isaac 2005, Sanner 1996).

gazes towards the camera with a knowing smile.



Figure 33: original caption: "*605. Erntefest d. Amabaca*". Small series "605". Fr. Isembard Leyendecker and several other Trappists are visible on the very right (NMVW-A15-140).



Figure 34: original caption: "[*16.*] *274. Erntefest d. Amabaca.*". Large series "274" (NMVW-A15-145).

By the late 1880s, shorter exposure times also involved the use of light-weight and hand-held cameras, instead of those on tripods. Very small and transportable cameras in various formats were by the late 1880s commonly referred to as "secret" or "detective" cameras. An accession register of Mariannhill's photographic studio mentions such a "*Geheimkamera* [secret camera]" already in 1891. Most of these cameras were referred to with the name due to their small size, as compared to the previous generations of cameras, which had to be mounted on a tripod.[192] It would therefore have been less obvious to photographic subjects what the photographer was doing. In the case under consideration the camera's size clearly influenced peoples' behaviour and therefore the outcome of the photograph.

The second series of five larger images ("274") instead shows people looking towards the camera in every image, an indication that the camera could not be concealed. In the contemporary perception and legal discourse in Europe, the new experience of capturing motion in "snapshots" was also connected to the idea of the moving, and potentially unaware photographic subject. Being photographed without one's knowledge eventually extended to the legal conundrum of one's right to one's own image (Dommann 2006:349). In the particular case under discussion, however, the scientific and anthropological paradigm of non-intrusive recording was served, which involved the anthropologist's "invisibility". According to the British anthropologist Everard im Thurn, the resulting product supposedly entailed more authenticity in such a way (1893:190). Müller's statement thus manifested claims to photographic reality and "mechanical objectivity" in scientific discourses—here towards the ethnological community as represented by Von Luschan in Berlin.

The ceremony could not have been recorded, had exposure times not yet been reduced even more drastically by 1899. However, even if Mariannhill's photographers may have attempted to create a more "holistic" image of the ceremony[193] (with one camera visible and stationary, and another one more concealed and mobile), they did not succeed to record central aspects of the ceremony, which would have allowed for ethnographic analysis. The way how Müller presented the series of 17 photographs, in fact covers up content itself: even if he may have tried to convey more knowledge by combining photographic seriality with true snapshots, he eventually failed. Instead, he succumbed to stressing that "throngs of people", being photographed *in motion*, are more "real" and thus more essential than ethnographic detail in form of the actions making up the feast's overall course and script. It is indeed not possible to distill any central action, or even a narrative from the series, which would define the event as a "first-fruits ceremony" on first sight. Müller's presentation of this particular series may be explained with the contemporary discourse on, and fascination with film and photography. First, the

[192] However, there existed versions in the form of a flat disk, which could be concealed underneath one's waistcoat with the lens protruding between the buttons.

[193] The attempt to create a holistic, or at least more complete account of the situation can be reconstructed from the fact that the photographers remained stationary, and turned once in a full 360 degree circle, while taking the 17 photographs of all cardinal points. I was able to compare the photographs to the landscape after discovering the exact location where they had been taken.

depiction of movement in a single image—action suspended in midair—and second, the creation of narrative by serialising photographs, had been an interest of photographers since the early days of photographic practice in the 1840s. The excitement with new technological possibilities during the 1890s is thus here presented as an argument to gloss over the lack of ethnographic evidence.

This is the only instance in the photographic oeuvre of Mariannhill, where the photographer intentionally created "snapshots", and at the same time put forward claims to their increased truth value.[194] After 1899, Müller indeed avoided this practice, and instead further refined his oeuvre of well-engineered genre photographs. As argued in a similar way by Hofmeister (1898), the trend of genre photography allowed Müller both more freedom and precision in arranging his models according to pre-conceived narratives.

If we consider the four textual accounts describing photographic encounters involving snapshot photography (1883, 1889, 1894 and 1899) as reasonably straightforward descriptions, they do testify to the fact that Mariannhill's photographers had to negotiate access to sites, and that they had to gain the models' permission to take their photographs. The technological conditions and skills of taking photographs were thus closely related to and reliant on social expertise and skills. Photographic occasions had to be negotiated, but depending on the available exposure time, they did not rely on cooperation entirely. While the sitters in 1889 had considerable freedom to choose their attire, and did so with some enthusiasm, it was still with the missionaries to indicate the most favourable pose. Even in the textual narrative, the authors always stressed their own agency and presence during the occasion, which could eventually even be concealed with smaller cameras during the occasion in 1899.

[194] As Müller mentioned to Schmeltz, two more sets of serialised snapshots do exist (approx. 1897), as well as few singular photographs had been likewise taken at big public events, such as African weddings. However, these are never referred to as such in any of Müller's texts.

Conclusion

The missions's approach of documenting the encounter with, and impact on their subjects may eventually be considered as auto-ethnographic. In its contrast with the photographic construction of "Blackness", it could also be described as what Patricia Hayes has called an "ethnography of whiteness" (1998:171-172). Over 60 years, Mariannhill Monastery had six photographers, who all worked for the same project with similar intentions. Despite this arrangement of multiple authors, we may therefore speak of one "distributed oeuvre", consisting of individual works relating to each other as protentions and retentions (Gell 1998). According to the *relative* subjectivity of "race", as I explained it at this chapter's beginning, the perception whether a person was considered Black, Coloured, or White was a matter of "resemblance".

The contemporary aesthetic notion of photographic "resemblance" served as an analytical concept to connect questions of authorship and race, self and other, through its relation to the photographic portrait and the genre photograph. The attempt to situate a photograph in the contemporary perceptions and discourses of its production period may be considered a commonplace by now. It is nevertheless crucial to do this in several ways. First, it is obvious to employ texts that cluster around, and describe certain photographs. Second, these texts provide us with popular contemporary concepts, in order to engage with photographic ontologies and epistemologies. As I showed for the idea of "resemblance", it was a commonly applied notion in both portraiture and genre photography. This demands to look at photographs and other images in conjunction, not only within one oeuvre, but also beyond it. Including experiences of intermediality we have to think the biographies of multiple authors alongside a single photograph, as well as the entire *oeuvre* that constitutes the photographic collection of Mariannhill.

Contemporary audiences therefore depended on their collateral knowledge, in order to recognise and distinguish resemblances in both portraiture and genre photography. It was only their knowledge of either faces or sceneries that allowed them to recognise resemblances between images, and therefore either establish or question authorship. Photographers thus extended the conception of imitation (or copying nature) from painting to photography, in order to determine a person's true "character" or "identity". Both portraiture and genre photographs commonly attempted to express the characteristic and the typical; the one of an individual, the other of a population or group. For these reasons we will recall in Chapter Six that a full analysis of anthropological and ethnographic photographs around 1900 cannot be achieved without taking their similarities to commercial and artistic genre photography into account.

Like the anthropologist Gustav Fritsch and the champion of artistic photography, Hermann W. Vogel before him, Mariannhill's photographer, Br. Aegidius Müller was strongly influenced by German romantic aesthetics of the mid 19th century. In particular Vogel had traversed and crucially influenced photographic technology, chemistry, aesthetics, art, and ethnology. He cooperated with anthropologists like Fritsch, trained the emigrant anthropologist Franz Boas, and

also the artistic photographer Alfred Stieglitz. Just like Vogel, Müller must therefore be considered a "trans-disciplinary subject" (Schneider 2011:132). Even though Müller may indeed have committed plagiarism in several ways and cases (cf. Chapters Six and Eight) he not only translated between various media, but equally between disciplines. Müller ran his own photographic studio, while at the same time dealing innovatively in an international setting of the photographic economy, pictorial aesthetics, as well as material culture from an ethnological perspective.

Even though Mariannhill's photographs are posed and constructed, they are not necessarily false, untrue, or inauthentic representations. Instead, I showed the contemporary visual conventions and photographic practices, which allow to delineate parts of the intercontinental visual economy. Actors within this economy would have viewed the emerging images as condensed and typified, according to contemporary conventions (Kaufhold 1986). *Tableaux vivants* constituted a theatrical mode of performance, much better suited for the needs of the mission's propaganda than the "objectivity" of snapshot photographs. *Tableaux vivants* served the photographer to facilitate interpictoriality, while at the same time providing experiences of intermediality for the models and the audiences. Eventually, posed photographs could better fulfil the demands of producing typical photographs for mission propaganda. Under particular circumstances, consumers considered these as even more objective than snapshots.

In particular during the 1890s, juridical discourses were strongly related to technological and social developments, and eventually translated into claims to photographic and artistic authorship. These interactions gave further rise to discourses on art photography and to photographers fashioning themselves as artists. Müller in particular established himself as an artist between his customers and models, by cultivating elaborately staged *tableaux vivants*. The *tableaux vivant*s—like the picture postcard—became part of the discourse on copyright law around 1900, as both raised questions about intermediality. In particular *tableaux vivants* constituted a possibility to insert an artistic copy into the production process, and so to circumvent the copyright law (Plumpe 1990:79ff.). According to this law, the photographer had to show that he had indeed *transformed* an original image idea sufficiently, so that it became an independent image. Had he indeed created a mimetic *copy* (ibid.:82), it would have been considered plagiarism. Apparently, Müller's transformations had been "africanised" sufficiently, so that they were no longer considered as copies.

In the quote above, Müller used death, impersonated by the undertaker, repeatedly as a metaphor for the "natural" processes the camera was supposed to emulate: "surprise" on the one hand, and "indifference" on the other. Clearly, photographers at Mariannhill did not employ these two notions when actually approaching their African subjects: on the one hand, they built on social relationships that had been slowly established over time. On the other hand, they carefully arranged poses, chosen from a vast array of preexisting visual conventions. By including themselves in this process, the missionaries intended to increase their success in claiming authorship, objectivity, and evidence. We can still not be certain how much of a contemporary

"African" society these photographs truly show. At least, we can be certain that photographers and photographed cooperated in creating performances, partially based on a "recursive archive" (Pinney 2005) of "mimetic capital" (Greenblatt 1991) and directed towards the desires of European audiences. While some contemporary audiences may indeed have considered some of the photographs as attempts at art and humour, over several decades these photographs sedimented as claims to historicity. Several of the following chapters will show this more clearly.

Eventually, Müller himself was caught in a trilemma, which is expressed in the central quote of the first section (Müller 1909): First, he had to uphold the objectivity in representation demanded by the logic of the mission movement, and which could be served by the camera's supposed "mechanical objectivity"; secondly, he was deeply immersed in the discourse of commercial studio photographers, which demanded to idealise clients according to their own wishes regarding subjective "resemblance"; and, thirdly, he embraced the artistic aesthetics provided by the upcoming photographic art movement of the 1890s, which hoped to transcendent the former two perceptions by explicitly establishing artistic individuality and subjectivity. As a result, Müller established different forms of photographic authorship and identity, which enabled him to participate in different discourses and thus different claims to photographic truth.