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

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

Cover Page



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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

CHAPTER TWO

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Images of Faith

Introduction: Faith in Intermediality

If the last chapter was about faith in photographic technology, this chapter is about the performance and representation of both faith and doubt in religion. Clemens Gütl suggests that the turn from contemplative monasticism to active mission work at Mariannhill, was—at least initially—a “means to an end” (2005:329-333). According to his evaluation, the Trappists’ engagement with mission activities was first intended, not to convert as many Africans as possible, but to provide a topic in order to drive the propaganda machinery, which would eventually maintain the monastery economically. In this chapter and the next, it is therefore necessary to determine some of the continuities and discontinuities between Mariannhill’s photographic record on the one hand, and the historical spaces and occurrences that can be established through the comparison with alternative sources on the other hand.

“*Olde Studio*” reads a recently installed signboard on the western wall of the small building, which had until 1939 been the photographic studio of Mariannhill Monastery (Figure 98). Chiseled into the right corner stone is the year of its foundation: 1894. The last occupant, Fr. Lukas Mettler, lived in the building until his death in late 2007. Occasionally, during important events and celebrations, he served as photographer. Even though he did not use the building as studio any longer, he employed the very room where photographs had been taken before the 1940s, to screen slide projections on the early history of Mariannhill. Whenever a big-enough group of visitors was around, Fr. Lukas gave a presentation, including a taped narrative playing along projected photographs of Mariannhill’s past. The screening was scripted according to the biography of the mission’s founder and first Abbot, Franz Pfanner.

Images of various formats, contents, origins and times played a role in most mission projects, and their circulation had multiple directions (cf. Morgan 2005:147-187). Already during the celebration of the silver jubilee of Pfanner’s priesthood, 10-12 November 1888, Mariannhill Missionaries showed so-called “magic lantern” projections in order to entertain, as well as to educate White and Black visitors:¹⁹⁵ “Biblical Scenes and pictures of well-known individuals, such as his Holiness, and eventually also some nice pictures of landscapes” (Gross 1888b:31).¹⁹⁶ Apart from the magic lantern, the celebrations also featured theatre plays; the related performance of so-called “living pictures” or “*tableaux vivants*”, illuminated with Bengal fire; “apparitions of ghosts”; an exhibition of mission-produced goods, as well as paintings; and finally a parade with torches and fireworks. The published “reverberations”¹⁹⁷ of this event also recorded the presentation of a compilation of portrait photographs as gifts to the abbot: these had

¹⁹⁵ Also known as “*laterna magica*”. One projection apparatus and a yet unaccessioned collection of photographic slides remain in the CMM Museum in Würzburg and the Roman archives. This remaining collection contains many copies of Mariannhill’s main stock of photographs.

¹⁹⁶ My own translation from the German original. Mariannhill’s sub-prior Fr. Othmar Gross was likely the editor of this book, as he also edited a second volume for the same event. This second *Festschrift* consists mainly of Pfanner’s biography (Gross 1888a).

¹⁹⁷ The celebration’s review is titled “*Nachklang* [reverberation] *zur Jubelfeier des R.R.D. Franz Pfanner*” (Gross 1888b).

been taken of every member of the Trappist community, as well as of the school children.

Photographs were also taken during the celebrations, especially of the already mentioned *tableaux vivants*, which actors performed at the end of a play titled “*Weihnachts-Oratorium*” by Heinrich Fidelis Müller. These *tableaux* included King David surrounded by the prophets, as well as five Nativity scenes.¹⁹⁸ The various writers in the booklet compared these performances to the “*Passionsspiel*” at Oberammergau in southern Germany. This particular Passion Play is still today famous for its *tableaux vivants*, the temporary freezing of the play’s pivotal scenes, for the audience to contemplate on. Fr. Pius Kohl wrote about the opinions his Black subjects expressed concerning these living pictures during the festivities at Mariannhill in 1888: “They knew that White people can make nice paintings [*Bilder*]¹⁹⁹; they also knew that one can make statues [*Bilder*] from stone and wood (nice ones too), which they could see in our new church; however, they had not expected that one could assemble pictures [*Bilder*] of White and Black people, and even much more beautiful than painted or carved ones” (Gross 1888:76).

After all, it were the missionaries who noted down these statements and reflections on the performances. They are remarks on the performances being appreciated by the converts, but even more they are remarks on the “civilising” effect of the performances on the converts. Rather than only celebrating Pfanner’s jubilee as such, the missionaries invested into all of the mentioned media, and recalled them textually later on, in order to show to local, and especially to overseas audiences how much the mission’s protégées had prospered. The missionaries used these media not only to show how well the converts had progressed in following the Trappist motto “*ora et labora* [pray and work]”, but also how versed they had become in performing, and indeed in mimicking those Christian values through media such as theatrical performances, mission-produced goods, and eventually various forms of paintings, photographs, and slide projections.

Textual conversion stories most clearly allow us to analyse the intended construction of a relationship between missionaries, their subjects, and their benefactors. In the *Vergißmeinnicht* and *Mariannhill-Kalender* these stories are written either in a pious or a resistant key, which both may have an additional tone of either drama or entertainment: the authors describe their African interlocutors either as engaging positively with Christianity (sometimes more successfully than most Europeans), or as resisting it, sometimes forcefully (already/but still). In both cases, the stories often lead to the climax of the main protagonist’s death, which the mission’s authors either stylise as religious fulfilment, or as the character’s demise due to his or her misdeeds. Some of these stories are connected to dateable events and individuals, others are highly generic, to an equal amount. The naming of protagonists with either baptismal or Zulu names increased steadily since the last years of the 1890s. This development also coincided with narratives on the first Black priests of Mariannhill (cf. Mukuka 2005).

Particular conventions of writing may be related to the periodicals’ multiple authors and

¹⁹⁸ None of these photographs could be found in the photographic collection of Mariannhill.

¹⁹⁹ The German language does not distinguish between picture (ie. the materiality of a painting) and image (ie. an image-idea).

editors.²⁰⁰ As Mariannhill's writers often worked anonymously and the editors changed quickly, in particular during the 1890s, it is very difficult to attribute styles to particular individuals with certainty. In the conversion stories during the 1890s, the writers created a dichotomy between believers and non-believers, which was independent from photographs: textual storytelling distinguished between "civilised" and dressed African Christians, and "uncivilised" pagans in "traditional" fashion. Benefactors were therefore able to recognise the same distinction in photographic illustrations, even if in some cases these did not relate directly to the texts (cf. Chapter One). With the arrival of Br. Aegidius Müller as photographer and writer in 1897, and in particular since 1907 with the illustrations in the *Vergißmeinnicht*, stories became more and more related to images by directly referencing them as narrative devices.

African subjects as protagonists in the stories of the periodicals, as well as the readers of the periodicals in Europe, nevertheless remain untraceable participants in Mariannhill's media production. For further analysis I therefore have to rely on situations of intermediality as arranged and imagined by the missionaries, and as I established them in the main introduction and the last chapter. The analysis of such situations of intermediality allows us to perceive the communities of missionaries, Africans, and benefactors, within their relations as imagined by the missionaries. This does not, however, allow for statements on the genuine reception or agency of either mission subjects or benefactors. In Mariannhill's photographic studio, sitters were exposed to images, which would have partially guided their performances and even became part of these performances. The publication *The Living Races of Mankind* is one example with which I introduced this study. Furthermore, I showed that *tableaux vivants* constituted a common and independent medium, which has to be analysed as a crucial element of photographic performance. As photographic models, the mission's subjects performed familiar *tableaux*, so that these could be recognised by, and have an influence on European benefactor audiences.

As I showed in the last chapter, photographs constituted an essential part of storytelling in Mariannhill's periodicals, in particular after 1907. Next to the last chapter's *tableaux vivants*, I will introduce other modalities of media in this chapter, which facilitated this connection. Throughout the seven sections I discuss the following media in their relations to photographs: photographic "metapictures" reflecting on their own modality in the process of conveying knowledge; theatre photography and *tableaux vivants* in their explicit form; then in their implicit form; text and the very act of writing; the relationship between photographic negative and positive, in particular in the act of retouching; film and montage; and eventually the conventional medium of stained glass windows, which allowed for a particular assemblage of narratives in Catholic churches. In the Third and Fifth Chapter I discuss how Mariannhill Missionaries performed guided tours over the monastic ground for tourists, and how they curated exhibitions with photographs and other particular objects of the mission encounter. Conceiving of objects, as

²⁰⁰ Future studies may want to provide inter-congregational and -confessional comparisons of these narratives according to their similarities and differences. It also seems crucial to analyse whether these stories were written by a priest, a mission sister, or a lay brother.

well as exhibitions, as particular media of their own, will allow to broaden our understanding of social actors' experiences. Mariannhill Missionaries thus combined various media in different constellations with photographs, and as a result increased their reproductive power.

To engage in propaganda by employing specific media and the facilities to produce them was an extraordinary financial and logistic effort: in order to produce photographs, the mission needed not only cameras, negatives, chemicals—which all had to be imported from Europe at the time—but also a studio with darkroom and a room for backdrops; theatre not only needed a cast, costumes, props, and a stage, but a great amount of time to rehearse; a printing press and its equipment also had to be imported; the logistic challenges to produce a film involve many of the previous dimensions; the decoration of church interiors with both wall paintings and stained glass windows demanded not only architectural and artistic skills, but once more the import of a considerable amount of industrial goods from Europe; eventually, guided tours, museum collections and exhibitions, as I discuss them separately in Parts Two and Three, require space, time to collect and arrange, and especially skilled personnel to curate them.

All of these media may therefore be considered as “mimetic capital”. These could be images, objects, texts, performances, everything that has the capacity to manifest an established and accepted equivalence with scenes of the mission encounter. Most importantly, so Greenblatt notes (1991), mimetic capital may be stored and reused at a later point in time and nevertheless retain the potential to develop the reproductive power I mentioned above. Through its reproduction in photographs and its repetition in mission periodicals over many years, the missionaries introduced this mimetic capital to their audiences. Mariannhill's photographers and editors made Africans resemble what Europeans could understand. In the process, mimetic capital became a staple, audiences familiarised themselves with it, and thus integrated a supposedly foreign lifeworld into their own.

The mimetic capital relevant in relation to Mariannhill are those images and objects, which could be easily injected into several interpretive communities, whether they belonged to a national and international art world, mission benefactors, or a community of ethnologists. In order to even better function as mimetic capital, the missionaries related these media in a mutual dependence with photography. As I explained in the last chapter, photographic models needed a certain histrionic inclination, and theatrical performances needed to be recorded photographically, in order to be circulated. Texts in periodicals benefitted from illustrations, and meaning in photographs could be better directed with captions. Images more generally are useful mimetic capital, because they can be cut up and rearranged, such as in a photographic montage, a film montage, or the composition of a stained glass window.

If we define “mimesis” according to the art historical convention as a claim to truthful imitation of reality, then “mimetic capital” is most valuable, exactly because of its promise to represent in such a way. Extracted from a repository, or having gone through a selection process, the missionaries used images and objects as supposedly authentic media in the creation of their periodicals and exhibitions. They brought particular mimetic capital into correspondence with

the imagination of benefactors, in an attempt to approximate a presence of the originals. Like Europeans addressed the fear of uncertainty in knowledge with claims to “objectivity” (Daston and Galison 2007:372), they attempted to tackle their fear of otherness with objectifications and conceptualisations of “race”. In the process they created difference.

As Michael Taussig argues in *Mimesis and Alterity* (1993), it is exactly such acts and discourses of imitation, which create an awareness of alterity and thus an excess of meaning, exceeding a mere copy or imitation. Crucial in Taussig’s account is the mutual reflexive awareness by both coloniser and colonised about processes of imitation and representation, leading to something he calls “mimetic excess”. Like Taussig, Homi Bhabha (1984) presented a partially cryptic, but widely received account of colonial imitation, as mimesis and mimicry respectively. Both must be credited for introducing the critical study of colonial imitations through various representational means. I will focus my own study on the forms of imitation and resemblance as performed, implied, and identified by Mariannhill’s photographers (cf. Roque 2015:206). The mission’s narratives presented in this chapter evoke similar forms of such excessive imitations. As I started to explain in the discussion of race in the last chapter, colonial mimicry and the creation and perception of identities can only be grasped as a discourse and process, not as an entity (cf. Bhabha 1984). Therefore it is crucial to analyse the “photography complex” (Hevia 2009) in its relation to other media and the process of how missionaries established connections.

By propping up the credibility of their periodicals through a variety of media, Mariannhill Missionaries addressed the fears of both South African Whites and their benefactors. The establishment of religious faith as the convert’s own and genuine “inner experience” through trustworthy evidence was essential for mediating the mission’s success (cf. Van der Veer 1996:15). Therefore the choice of religious faith as an example of genre photography is crucial. I will begin this chapter with a cluster of photographs that epitomise the opposition of non-Christians with technological modernity. Africans’ alleged (in-)ability to mediate knowledge in comparison to White contemporaries became a common trope within the colonial discourse. As I partially introduced it in the last chapter, it was a commonly held cliché that Africans imitated European practices, rather than being productive themselves in a genuine way. White colonial actors (missionaries in particular) expressed this idea in relation to the various media I am discussing in this chapter, especially concerning the realm of theatre.

Even before 1900, a discourse evolved in South Africa that Africans imitated Europeans only imperfectly (cf. Bhabha 1984). As a partial critique on Bhabha, Bate (1993) and McDow (2011) point out that colonial relationships often involved situations where the coloniser imitated the colonised, as much as the other way round. We already saw one case around 1900, involving Br. Aegidius Müller cross-dressing in oriental garb and pose, and will see another example from the 1930s in Chapter Seven. Colonial visual culture furthermore depicted and ridiculed Africans in their attempts to copy European material culture. Mariannhill Missionaries in particular recorded forms of imitation by Africans as exceptional, yet ambivalent behaviour. Mariannhill’s

converts certainly cultivated ideas on European fashion, material culture and manners, but we only know about such acts through representations crafted in cooperation with Europeans, at least until Black South Africans established an independent press. It is therefore unclear in how far it was the intention of Mariannhill's subjects to be represented, and whether they were fully aware of the missionaries' representational intentions. We not only have to pay attention to the social aspects of representations, but also to the mode and materiality of its creation. This may include oral or bodily performance and pose, material culture, or whether it is mediated by text, painting, or photography. We thus have to engage in what Ferguson has called an "anthropology of imitation" (2002).

Each of the next sections discusses photographs where a performance of faith as both religious belief and trust in the truth of representation is the topic. Each section increases the involved degree of photographic manipulation, as well as the way how different media were pitted against each other.

Photographing Photographic Representation

The following set of three photographs is an apt turning point between the two forms of faith as presented in the first and second chapter. A comparison of these three photographs will help us to understand the missionaries' ideas on how photography as a practice was positioned between themselves, their subjects, and their audiences, such as clients, artists, benefactors, but also ethnologists. On the one hand, these three photographs show the importance which Mariannhill Missionaries attributed to the idea of photographic representation. On the other hand, they show the importance the missionaries attributed to photographic authorship and indeed authority. The three photographs are therefore suggestive of the very heart of colonial imitation, as two of them depict Africans handling photographic cameras. The authority regarding the creation of representations expressed itself in the denial of full authorship to converted Africans. Even though the missionaries presented photographic authorship as a common experience with Africans, it remains ambivalent. This common experience is only performed together with supposedly non-Christian Africans, and never extended to dressed and supposedly converted Africans. I suggest that the missionaries thereby attempted to retain control over photographic authorship. Africans appearing like Europeans while performing as photographers would have established them as absolute equals in the eyes of outsiders to the relationship, and thus rendered the mission's propagandistic enterprise obsolete.

So far, we have seen two photographs that show the topic "photography" in a *tableau vivant*-like manner as genre photographs. One depicts the act of staging a photographic pose (Figure 30), the other depicts Africans engaging with the product itself in a tactile manner (Figure 19). Both scenes are genre compositions that narrate, and therefore ponder their own ontologies according to the *creation* of resemblance on the one hand, and the *recognition* of resemblance on the other hand. Figure 30 shows an imagination of what social action preceded the actual moment of photographic exposure, and Figure 19 shows an imagination of how photographs can be engaged with socially as objects. I now explore three photographs, which imagine the very moment of what is commonly referred to as "taking a photograph", or even more precisely, as the moment of a negative's *exposure* to light. In the epistemological imagination of photographic practice, this moment is situated in between the previous two, in between the social acts of preparing the models on the one hand according to other preconceived images, and the analysis of the product on the other hand. The three photographs thus circle around the very moment of how photographic indexicality is commonly imagined.

This may be one of the reasons why audiences—contemporary, as well as in the recent past—found these photographs compelling. Even though the full extent of their contemporary reception cannot be reconstructed, we do know that they were published, circulated widely to ethnological museums, and distributed as postcards. Since the multiple reflexive turns of the 1980s and the reevaluation of photographic archives in this regard, in particular one photograph

(Figure 36) has been extensively re-produced in writings of the social sciences.²⁰¹ Scholars considered this photograph as a representation of representation, which is the reason why it developed reproductive power, similar to the art history of the painting *Las Meninas*. In order to understand these reactions, we need to consider the collateral knowledge, regarding photographic iconographies, as well as photographic indexicality and technology.

It is striking that of the authors who have engaged with this photograph so far, only the poet and essayist Subbash Jaireth (1999) reflected on it to some degree. At the same time, he is the only author who does not reproduce the photograph with his article. In all other cases the photograph is separated from the text, merely illustrating the authors' explicit or implicit analysis of the "colonial gaze" without further comment. All authors appear to take the depicted pun most literally (a coloniser being photographed by a colonised subject). Apparently, they consider this to be obvious enough for the photograph to be presented without commentary. This reminds us of the claims made around 1900 for genre photographs, which I described in the last chapter. These should work without captions, due to the strength of their internal narrative, as well as the popularity of particular image topics.

In all of the photographic situations I described so far, historical actors positioned themselves in between various media, between image examples and conventional forms of recreating them, such as photography and theatre. Both White and Black contemporaries thus engaged with various forms of performance. Elizabeth Edwards has distinguished three forms of performance in relation to history and photographs (Edwards 2001:20): first, "the performance of the image through the spatial dynamic of its framing"; second, "the performance of making photographs"; and third, the "theatre or performance within the frame". Edwards states that "[t]hese categories are not mutually exclusive, but rather integrally interconnected in the performance of history". These kinds of photographic performances are most clearly exemplified in images that involve and engage other images epistemologically. Such images, like the ones I am about to discuss, have been referred to by William J.T. Mitchell and others as "metapictures" (Mitchell 1994:35, 2008; also see Nöth 2007; Stoichita 1997).

All three photographs were made close to Mariannahill Monastery between approximately 1891 and 1905 (Figures 35, 36, 37, and without a second camera also Figure 30 [1914]). Four photographs, with the same or similar compositional intention over more than 20 years, implies that the photographers attempted to re-produce the same image idea. The photographs make us wonder about the presence, the position, and the performance of the photographers, as well as about who the photographic subject is. We may wonder what the photograph's intended narrative is, and for what purpose it was created. Over the next pages I discuss the photograph regarding

²⁰¹ The following authors either sourced the photograph from the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, the Ethnological Museum of Berlin, or the Ethnological Museum of Leiden (All versions differ slightly. The copy at the Pitt Rivers Museum is considerably cropped to the left, only showing half of Leyendecker's body). In chronological order: Edwards and Williamson (1981), Wright (1992), Pytlik (1997), Jaireth (1999), Adler (2000), Stevenson and Graham-Stewart (2001), Griffiths (2002), Warner (2006), Thompson (2007), Edwards (2013); also see Roodenburg (2002), Bool (2007) for reproductions of Figure 35. Both photographs have also been used in various exhibitions including colonial photographs.

the collateral knowledge, which contemporary audiences would have brought to it by considering the visual economy regarding colonial humour.



Figure 35: original caption: “*Ein Kaffer läßt sich photographieren*”²⁰²—“A Kafir has his photograph taken”. Fr. Isebard Leyendecker (acting as if?) causing an exposure by lifting the camera’s lens cap, approx. 1891 (NMVW-A15-71).

²⁰² This caption appears in Müller (1899). Alternatively it may be translated as “A Kafir *permits* to have his photographs taken”.



Figure 36: original caption: “*Eine photographische Aufnahme*”²⁰³—“The making of a photograph”. Fr. Isebard Leyendecker with a group of unidentified Africans near Mariannhill, approx. 1896 (NMVW-A15-12).

²⁰³ As captioned in Müller (1899); alternatively captioned “*Photographische Aufnahmen im Kraal*” (mind the plural) in Müller (1901).



Figure 37: original caption on glass plate negative: “*Photographische Aufnahme im Kaffernkraal*”—“The making of a photograph in a Kafir kraal”. Br. Aegidius Müller with a group of unidentified Africans near Mariannhill, approx. 1905 (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives).

The three photographs are shown here in chronological order (approximately 1891, 1896, and 1905). The first and second involve Fr. Isembard Leyendecker, and the third Br. Aegidius Müller, both apparently involved in communication with Africans. All three photographs must have been taken relatively close to the monastery, as two sets of cameras had to be taken along. For all three photographs I could find others that have been taken during the same photographic occasions. In each case they were taken from exactly the same vantage points, however, do show entirely different protagonists and activities. A succession of unrelated performances in the exact same photographic space indicates a staging of the photographic scene. No photographs exist that may have been taken with the cameras visible in the photographs under discussion. This may have had the simple reason of ideal lighting, and further indicates that the scenery was indeed only set up for the second camera. We have to consider the fact that the photographer had only two possibilities to position himself in the field, in order to achieve technically and aesthetically ideal lighting conditions. In order to create shadows accentuating the models’ features, light had to fall on a model either from the right or the left. Unless the sunlight was diffuse due to clouds, or the

sun was very high, photographing with or against the sun was not an option. This is also due to the fact that dark skin in combination with strong sunlight is much harder to photograph than light skin.

In the first case we can see a very young Fr. Isembard Leyendecker in, or just after 1891 (Figure 35).²⁰⁴ Fr. Isembard is shown during the very brief moment while removing the cap from the camera's lens, in order to expose the negative. The man in front of the camera poses with an umbrella next to a spear. Several similar photographs in Mariannhill's archive depict the already mentioned opposition between supposedly "modern" and "traditional" material culture. Some of them are intended as, and even captioned as "*Scherzbilder* [pictures with a visual pun]". One of those shows a Black couple adorned with beadwork. The man is dressed with a loincloth, the woman with a larger cloth covering the entire torso. Additionally, they are posing with an umbrella, cylinder, and white gloves. In an alternative take both are shown in the same pose, but instead the man carries shield and spear, which indicates that both scenarios were enacted for the camera. The photographs discussed here may be no exception to this practice of performance and framing. However, we must also consider the possibility that the umbrella is a prop of the model's own liking. We will return to this point repeatedly.

Several years after 1891, 20 Africans posed with Fr. Isembard for the next photograph I wish to discuss (Figure 36). Fr. Isembard had by now grown a substantial beard. This photograph suggests an even greater confrontation of sartorial "tradition" with technological "modernity" by depicting a scantily dressed resident of the homestead while handling a second camera. On first sight, there is no indication whether Mariannhill Missionaries understood this "reversed" photographic encounter as generosity in sharing knowledge, or as a visual pun to entertain a European audience. In both South Africa and Europe, representations of a "native photographer" may have been considered uncommon, and even inappropriate. As Fabian and Fiedler suggested for colonial situations (Chapter One), it may even indicate that the colonialist involved in such a situation had lost control within the social relationship. In order to control the evolving mimetic excess, humour may have appeared as an adequate and appropriate device at the time. In order to comprehend the contemporary conventions of humour, circumstances of production, and their consequences, we now require a detailed analysis of the photograph.

The photograph can be divided into three sections: Fr. Isembard dominates the left part and appears to point out to a group of men and women what is happening ahead of them. A still camera on a tripod takes in the right part of the image. One of the African men peers through the camera lens while being covered under a dark cloth. This was essential in order to block light and provide contrast for the image to appear on the camera's matt screen—in fact mirrored and on its head. The man has exchanged the apparatus for his shield and sticks, which lie in between the tripod's legs. The camera's lens itself aims back towards the group with Fr. Isembard. It is crucial to realise that at this moment the camera did not contain a glass plate negative. The plate

²⁰⁴ We recall that Fr. Isembard only received his full Trappist dress in 1891. The printed caption indicates 1894, but imprinted dates do not always comply with the date of the photographic occasion.

would only have been inserted after the act of bringing the subjects into focus on the matt screen. As shown in the previous photograph (Figure 36), during the actual moment of exposure the photographer no longer viewed the scene as it appeared through the lens or on the negative. As a third section we may consider the photograph's background, which is constituted by a group of sitting, apparently uninvolved, but nevertheless attentive spectators.

The third person suggesting interpretative agency—next to Fr. Isembard and the man behind the camera—is the young woman directly in front of the lens. First of all, her position makes it unlikely that the man behind the camera saw anything at all while peering through the lens. This is one more indication that the scene was only set up to create a pictorial arrangement. Secondly, the woman points—just like Fr. Isembard—to the lens of the visible camera, while looking straight into the lens of the invisible camera. Also several other bystanders direct their attention towards the lens of the visible camera. Everything in the image seems to rotate around this lens, which turns the camera into an extraordinary item of entangled material culture.

The seemingly out-of-the-ordinary exchange of roles constitutes a tension between photographer and models. While the woman points to the one lens, she looks at the other and her eyes simultaneously release and confirm the tension built up through the photograph's staged nature. The woman's eyes indicate her awareness of the invisible photographer's presence, whose perspective we inhabit as viewers of the photograph. This constellation exemplifies the triadic relationship between the photographer, the sitter, and the viewer (cf. Geary 1991a:36-37, Mitchell 1994:58). The photograph mimics and reflects upon the social and representational relations lying behind the frame of the second camera. One may think of this constellation as endlessly involving yet another camera, and thus the repeated encasements of authorship, a *mise en abyme*. This means that the process of photographic representation can never be fully represented photographically.

The third photograph shows Müller with a group of 12 Africans, mostly women and children, as well as two men (Figure 37). Like in the previous photograph the group enacts the production of a photograph with the help of a second camera, with the only difference that the sides are reversed and Müller is turned away from the visible camera. One of the African men handles the camera, while the other poses with a woman. Reminiscent of European courtliness she links arms with him, while he is pointing his stick towards the camera's lens. The poses may have been arranged by Müller, who appears to use his left index finger and his right thumb to indicate how the "here" of the referent, and the "there" of the camera are connected. Like in the previous photograph, these gestures effectively separate spaces and thus constitute an original, as well as its potential future representation in a nevertheless connected spatial arrangement.

There are at least three possible scenarios of what Leyendecker, Müller, and the two respective invisible photographers behind the second cameras thought to perform: the first scenario would have simply been one in which the African men are shown while actually preparing a photograph as photographers. The second scenario would have imagined Leyendecker and Müller as enacting a demonstration in the role of photographer: they are

explaining and directing the scene, before the proper act of exposure is taking place. In this case they would eventually have stood next to the camera, while lifting the lens cap (cf. Figure 35). They would have allowed the African men only a temporary peek, while they themselves were setting the scene. The third scenario would have been the creation of a staged genre photograph to *simulate* either scenario one or two. In this case the photographed camera was merely a dummy and prop, and was never supposed to take an image in the first place. As a matter of fact, so far I have discovered no photograph that may have been taken with one of the “visible” cameras. The contemporary caption (“taking of a photograph”)²⁰⁵ around 1900 appears to suggest to the reader that the intended narrative was indeed scenario one. However, we can assume that it was clear to many contemporary viewers, even if only vaguely familiar with photography, that the African men are not depicted in the moment of photographic exposure. Therefore, at least some contemporaries may have interpreted the photograph as scenario two.

Independently of the question whether contemporary viewers only attributed partial, or indeed full photographic agency to the African men behind the cameras, it is important to recall that many of Mariannhill’s photographs were primarily taken with a European audience in mind. This audience was well acquainted with the earlier-mentioned caricatures, employing sartorial and technological frictions for humorous effect. German satirical magazines, such as *Fliegende Blätter*, *Simplicissimus*, or *Kladderadatsch* are likely sources of inspiration (cf. Ciarlo 2001, Henisch and Henisch 1998, Joch 2004, Langbehn 2011). Since the 1880s, *Fliegende Blätter*, for example, frequently presented drawn cartoon caricatures about the practices of professional and amateur photographers in cities, caricatures of the encounter between photographic technology and rural German peasants as clumsy and unexperienced sitters, but also caricatures of Africans in the German colonies as “greedy cannibals”, some in interaction with missionaries (cf. Nederveen Pieterse 1990). Next to the distinctions in dress, which I already discussed, two other distinct topics were either the comical confrontation of Africans with European forms of technological “modernity”, or cartoon imaginations of Africans appropriating local means to imitate European technology, for example the employment of a giraffe as an elevator.

Most relevant for our case is the contemporary Euro-American take on the replacement of the commonly male White professional photographer with its social Others for humorous effect: children, women, animals, and colonial subjects. The first two were of course only mild attempts at humour, as female lay and professional photographers had become more common by the 1890s.²⁰⁶ Animals instead were supposed only to be photographed, and not to take photographs themselves. Explicit examples of such “role reversals”, showing monkeys taking photographs of explorers, appeared for example in the British satirical magazine *Punch* in 1860,

²⁰⁵ Müller applied this caption twice, first in a catalogue he produced in early 1899, and later in a 1901 article (cf. Chapter Six).

²⁰⁶ Of course women had been considered as a growing market for cameras since the 1890s (Jacob 2011), and thus been treated seriously along the line. The most extreme form of replacing the male White photographer may be the anthropomorphisation of the camera itself, having its own agency as to what and how to photograph (Krauss 1978).

and still in *Harper's Weekly* in 1909, the latter being captioned as “Photo-safari” (Henisch and Henisch 1998:126-127). In yet another example from 1948 “two natives have just taken a snapshot of [two] captured travellers [tied together in a cooking pot], with one saying to the other: ‘If these shots don’t sell, we’ll have to eat the explorers’” (Morgan 1948:62 [quoted in Henisch and Henisch 1998:126]).²⁰⁷ In all cases, the humorous effect was drawn from the fact that the colonial situation had turned against the coloniser. Eventually, the very first anthropological publication using Mariannhill’s photograph (Figure 36) in the early 1980s stated that it “shows an amusing village scene” (Edwards and Williamson 1981:16). Originating from the time of the photograph’s production, this pictorial narrative apparently still worked many decades later. The following example will support this assumption.

Similar compositions were common in South Africa, in particular those produced for, or appropriated by, the local market in postcards. Prime examples are the two South African companies Sallo Epstein & Co and T.H. O’Flaherty. The most explicit examples in Epstein’s series show scantily, supposedly “traditionally” dressed “Zulu” women playing table tennis, men playing pool billiard, or a Black couple riding a fancy motor car. Both publishers also reproduced Mariannhill’s photographs, once the picture postcard economy began to proliferate in the late 1890s (Geary 1998, 2013; Langbehn 2010; also see Beukers 2007:164). Once copyright legislation allowed to freely reproduce photographs as picture postcards, this caused distress for the authors of photographs. At least in the German juridical system this transfer between media did not fall under the contemporary law of copyright (Dommann 2006:356). At least in practice, the same happened in South Africa to Mariannhill’s photograph. First O’Flaherty, and later individual senders added to the apparent potential of its narrative.

²⁰⁷ From the magazine “Camera: A Practical Magazine for Photographers”, 1940.



Figure 38: original caption: "A native photographer". T.H. O'Flaherty, Copyright. Sent from "Lalpoora" Durban, 1 August 1904 (By courtesy of Christraud M. Geary, private collection).

The postcard's producer, O'Flaherty, captioned the card with the printed title "A Native Photographer", thereby ironically investing the Black man with full photographic agency. In so far, this is an even more detailed ascription of photographic roles than in Mariannhill's captions. Already guided by this first interpretation, the sender of this particular card (Figure 38) added yet another layer in 1904, by addressing a friend or relative in London as follows:

My dear Winnie,

Have recommended Dolly to try her luck down here when she has got the buisness [sic] at her finger-tips. Warriors would like being posed / Fred.²⁰⁸

Presumably Dolly was a British amateur photographer, whom Fred had earlier invited to visit Durban. According to him, the area provided photographic models who were not only exotic, but at the same time eager to pose. Fred re-narrated this invitation to Winnie, maybe as a joking commentary on their mutual friend's or relative's hobby. In addition to the fact that the Mariannhill photograph was published in a series of explicitly satirical postcards, this particular commentary is in line with my earlier suggestions about a contemporary culture of colonial humour. Missionaries, postcard publishers, as well as the card's senders and receivers apparently

²⁰⁸ I am grateful to Christraud Geary for making this postcard available to me.

shared a discursive field, to which they added successively. Only the existence of such discursively established power relations would let the depicted Africans appear “deficient”, instead of merely “different” (Joch 2004:68).

In the next section on Mariannhill’s theatre productions, as well as in other chapters, we will once more see that Mariannhill Missionaries joined other players in the European press in a discourse on the supposedly “imperfect” imitation of European culture by Africans—on which the intended humour eventually relied (cf. Joch 2004:68, also see Pels 1989, Rippe 2018). In the case of Figure 38, a potential difference in the photographer’s qualification is thus simply implied by the visual facts that he is African, undressed, and the resulting caption stating that he is “native”. For the contemporary viewers, the appropriation of the camera by a person, who was in their eyes likely unfamiliar with photographic technology, appeared imperfect. Through the act of trying nevertheless, the person appeared as “amusing”.

All three photographs (Figures 35-37) present the encounter of Africans with photography, a particular technology, craft, and practice that required particular skills. The same idea with a different effect is reproduced in photographs showing crafts and trades carried out at Mariannhill’s workshops: scenes of young African apprentices engaged in shoemaking, carpentry, sewing, or building activities, all show them on the monastery’s premises. They are depicted while being supervised and instructed by a lay brother. But other than the “native photographer”, they are wearing “modern” clothes. The depicted situations therefore present less of a confrontation, and the protagonists appear as “imitating” well, especially because they were under the supervision of a Trappist monk. Most importantly, they do not invert, and thus do not question representational authority. Had the “native photographer” in our photograph been dressed in “modern” clothes, he may have been perceived as doing just this. Accordingly, the two photographs under discussion can be read as combining European and colonial image traditions: they challenge the very question of representative authority in a controlled way through (a likely caricature of) a representation of photographic representation.

Curators, historians, and anthropologists—whether Black or White—may find themselves in an uncomfortable situation with this colonial photograph (Figure 36): apparently, it is capable of creating a tension between, on the one hand the excitement of seeing how a photograph may have been taken by a Black person, and on the other hand a disgust of colonial situations epitomised in a potential parody. Only one of the authors mentioned above ever analysed Mariannhill’s photograph in detail. All other authors either considered it as unnecessary to comment on it, or avoided it. Jaireth (1999), building on Bakthin’s *heteroglossia*, refers to the intersections of gazes in Mariannhill’s “*Photographische Aufnahme*” (Figure 36) as *heteroscopia*. He considers this as “the presence of someone else’s seeing in my seeing” (ibid.:9). Other than making similar points to the ones I presented above, he considers the gaze as determined by the captions provided along with an image, as well as one’s subjective and culturally determined ways of seeing. Essentially, he describes an experience of intermediality *in* the image and *of* the image, which depends, as I have explained, on the contemporary collateral

knowledge.

When discussing aspects of the colonial gaze in her essay “Looking at Photographs: Between Contemplation, Curiosity and Gaze”, Elizabeth Edwards (2013) does not refer to any of the photographs illustrating her article. Assuming that she herself selected these photographs, she gave Mariannahill’s photograph the title: “a photographic encounter”. Without any textual explanation the photograph indeed only relies on those gazes visible in the photograph, as I described them above. It then becomes impossible not to think about gazing, while gazing at a genre photograph that has this very topic. Edwards’ intention may eventually have been exactly this, to present the image without further explanation as a provocation.

Few similar photographs from the 19th century, and to my best knowledge none with reversed roles are in circulation today.²⁰⁹ This allowed Mariannahill’s photograph to take a centre-role in the reconsideration of photographic occasions in colonial situations. Leyendecker and Müller unintentionally created a photographic study of the practice of their very subject for anthropologists and historians of photography: a visual elaboration on Müller’s textual account of his own profession, which I presented at the last chapter’s beginning (Müller 1909). Not only did the photographers reflect on their own presence, but they used the medium photography to reflect on its own production as a practice in a colonial encounter. This is what Mitchell called a “metapicture” (Mitchell 1994), where we see a performance of the production of an image.

Earlier, the painting *Las Meninas* by Diego Velázquez (1656) has been considered as a “posed tableau [*gestelltes tableau*]”, ergo a *tableaux vivant* in 1888 by the German art historian Carl Justi (Justi 1888:314, also see Stratton-Pruitt 2003:125) in the late 19th century, as much as it has been identified as such in the recent past (Mitchell 2005:50). It is often considered as the prime example of the artistic representation of representation. In the same way, Mariannahill’s reflexive meta-photographs are elaborately staged *tableaux vivants*. Likely built on ideas of colonial humour they are genre photographs with the explicit intention to delineate actors, their actions, and their relationships. In particular the role-reversal makes this argument plausible. This is of course only one possible interpretation, and today the photographs are certainly capable of accommodating several others, in particular without a caption. How then does Mariannahill’s photograph “work”, or what does it “want”? Like *Las Meninas*, the Mariannahill photograph creates an ideal subject position, placed into a discourse of representation (cf. Hall 1997:60). With a similar idea as Hall, Mitchell considered this intention of what *Las Meninas* “wants” as a *tableau vivant* (2005:50): like the beholder inhabits the space of the sovereign in the case of *Las Meninas*, in Mariannahill’s composition the beholder takes the place of the (potentially Black) cameraman. Following Foucault, Mitchell further argues that *Las Meninas* displays an “order of things”, “an epistemic field that produces a sense of the kinds of objects, the logic of their speciation, their taxonomy” (Mitchell 2005:155, also see Langbehn 2011:95).

With Michael Taussig one may further observe “mimetic excess” within the situations I described for around 1900, as well as more than 80 years later: a self-reflexive awareness of the

²⁰⁹ Amongst others, see for example Geary (1991a), Geary (2002), Bernhardt (2006).

multiple dimensions of colonial roles and representational directions in a situation of “second contact”, where the binary of Self and Other appears to be dissolved (Taussig 1993:252). One may argue, however, that this kind of “second contact” already took place around 1900, when Mariannhill’s photographs were taken: they merely simulated an encounter situation of “first contact” for humorous effect. In this sense, Mariannhill’s photograph may thus be said to reveal parts of a colonial common sense (Stoler 2009). The photograph in fact at the same time confirms and denies the presence of a “native photographer”, and eventually questions the arrival of the truly *creative* Black African photographer possessing artistic authority: this holds true for the photographing African in the image itself, as well as the (potentially Black) photographer behind the invisible camera. This *doubled* presence of the “creative native”, as both artistic model and sovereign artist, was only fully realised with Gerard Bhengu’s 1927 self-portrait, possibly the very first identified self-portrait of a Black South African figurative artist (Chapter Seven). The following examples in this chapter will likewise deal with the establishment of colonial relationships through the simultaneous involvement of multiple media.

Staging Faith: “Histrionic Zulus”

On 15 November 1904, Bishop Henry Delalle OMI (1869-1949) visited Mariannhill for the celebration of his recent inauguration as Vicar Apostolic of Natal.²¹⁰ During the festivities, the play *Joseph in Egypt* was performed by the Black boys of Mariannhill’s school in the English language, and thus continued a tradition of religious theatre at the mission. As early as 1886, for Pfanner’s inauguration as abbot, musical performances had been presented by Black children dressed in Tyrollean fashion (Gross 1887:20). As I explained in the introduction to this chapter, already two years later, in 1888 for Pfanner’s silver jubilee, the missionaries performed religious and non-religious plays. They eventually continued a tradition of theatre at Mariannhill beyond both World Wars.

While the first plays in 1888 included popular German comedies, such as *Madame Pompadour und ihre Katzen* by Moritz Peuschel, or *Das Polnische Juden-Quartet* by Emil Neumann, those after 1900 were mostly of religious nature and included the already mentioned *Joseph in Egypt* (1904), the *Nativity Story* (1906, 1908, 1909) or Wiseman’s *Fabiola*, as well as *The Prodigal Son* (both 1907).²¹¹ Performances by students of the St. Francis College after the Second World War also included plays by Shakespeare, Dickens, and Shaw, as well as adaptations of “Zulu folklore” (Hermann 1987:59). In the second half of the 20th century, even Mariannhill’s own foundation history was turned into theatre plays on several occasions (Vorspel et al. 1921-1989:537).²¹²

Stage plays at Mariannhill have been acknowledged as initiating “Zulu theatre” (ie. in the Zulu language) in South Africa between 1918 and 1925 (Fuchs 2001:279, Groenewald 2002:33, Peterson 2000).²¹³ “For educational purposes” the early plays before 1913 had been explicitly not performed in Zulu, but in the English language (Anon. 1907a:147). As Peterson (2000) explains, theatre at Mariannhill was intended to be both recreational and educational for African converts, in order to control their leisure time by keeping them away from the bad influences of urban life. Peterson discusses the social and educational debates around *Joseph in Egypt* and other Mariannhill plays for the time period after the First World War under Fr. Bernard Huss (1876-1948). Performances at Mariannhill predating 1918, however, have so far not been studied. As scripts of these earlier plays did not survive, it will not be possible to say whether the versions by

²¹⁰ The French Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (*Oblati Mariae Immaculatae*) were the first Catholics to arrive in Natal. Delalle succeeded Charles Jolivet as Apostolic Vicar, who had accepted the Trappists in his vicariate in 1882. Before Natal was reorganised into a diocesan system in 1951 under a Bishop, it had been structured in form of vicariates under a Vicar Apostolic (cf. Brain 1975, 1982, 1997; Brown 1960).

²¹¹ Reviews on these plays can be found in the respective issues of the *Vergißmeinnicht*.

²¹² For the centenary in 1982 a competition-call on the history of Mariannhill was published in the periodical *Umafrika*. One of the competitors “Mr. Alexius Buthelezi wrote a play in Zulu on Mariannhill, with original musical compositions. This was staged on 24. July by the *Umabatha* group of players and students of St. Francis College”. Plays were increasingly documented with photographs during the second half of the 20th century, of which some are preserved in albums at Mariannhill’s St. Francis College.

²¹³ This is contested by Kruger (2002). Without providing evidence she claims that Lovedale Mission already performed plays during the mid-19th century.

Huss were adaptations of earlier scripts.

Peterson further speculates that the parallels between *Joseph in Egypt* and the actual Natal history of wars, calamities, and natural disasters since the 1860s, must have been obvious to the African audiences. Christianity may thus have appeared to them as a likely solution to their own compromised situation (ibid.:45-49). At least the two following contemporary sources I accessed did not indicate such interpretations for the plays just after 1900. Parallel performances to Mariannhill's theatre plays, however, did comment on current political events, such as the so-called Bambatha Rebellion between 1906 and 1907 against the implementation of higher taxes for Africans. These were presented in the form of parody, for the purpose of entertainment: "Amongst other things two [Black] lads performed. In a highly comical dialogue they acted out the dispute between a Kafir and an Englishman about the splendid [*famos*] Poll-Tax or Head-Tax" (Anon. 1907:146).²¹⁴ I will address the related historical circumstances in Natal in more detail in Chapter Four.

The very first recorded performance of *Joseph in Egypt* in 1904 was conceived and directed by Fr. Thomas Neuschwanger (1872-1962).²¹⁵ The monastery's organist, Fr. Emanuel Hanisch, arranged the musical score. As reported by the *Natal Witness*, Neuschwanger had procured the play from America and "adapted it to the exigencies of the occasion".²¹⁶ Other than suggested by Groenewald (2000) and Peterson (2000), the early plays were neither only "in-house" performances, nor were they only for a Black audience. Instead, they also included guests, and especially many White spectators.

After their ordination in 1908, both Hanisch and Neuschwanger were transferred to Centocow Mission in the Polela District. Hanisch became superior of Centocow in 1911, and Neuschwanger assistant priest (cf. Chapters Three and Four).²¹⁷ Just like at Mariannhill, they introduced a tradition of theatre. In 1913, Fr. Thomas once more staged a "Dramatic Play in Zulu 'Joseph in Egypt', interspersed with Songs & Choruses" for Centocow's 25th anniversary and the solemn benediction of its new church (also see Peterson 2000:236). The illustrated programme of the festivities (Anon. 1913) even listed the play's 25 "*dramatis personae*" with either their Zulu or baptismal names.²¹⁸ Unlike in the description of earlier plays, the missionaries here partially extended theatrical authorship to the actors.

Initiating the local reception of Mariannhill's theatre plays in 1904, the *Vergißeinnicht* reported on the performance of *Joseph in Egypt* at Mariannhill:

²¹⁴ My own translation from the German original.

²¹⁵ Earlier histories wrongly suggested that also the play in 1904 was directed by Fr. Bernhard Huss (see Groenewald 2002:33, Peterson 2000:33). Huss may have nevertheless already been present during these early plays, as he joined the community in 1895.

²¹⁶ See Morgan (2007) for a Protestant view on the "Passion Play" and *tableaux vivants* in America around 1900. These were also filtered through the discourse around the performances at Oberammergau in Germany. Morgan however presents them as focussing on the religious experience, not on the theatrical one.

²¹⁷ For their portraits see Chapter Two. In 1921, Neuschwanger moved to the USA permanently as one of the first Mariannhill priests.

²¹⁸ Usually the first name was Christian, and the surnames were either Zulu or European; depending on whether a benefactor was involved in "adopting" the respective person as a patron, and by so doing supplying the surname.

Seven times the curtain rose, and every time the same surprising picture: Zulu Kafirs as highly skilled actors!— Altogether 25 people performed, and every single actor rose to the occasion, to which most of them were unaccustomed. Especially the leading roles were performed with a certain mastery. There was nothing forced and nothing that could be called artificial. It was nature and life.²¹⁹ (Anon. 1905:35)

Also the local English newspaper *The Natal Witness* reported approvingly in the same week as the event, under the title “A Unique Drama—Histrionic Zulus.” Setting a somewhat more ambivalent tone, the article focused on the interaction of the play’s director with the actors:

The performance is probably unique in the history of the stage, principally because the actors were natives who doubtless had never witnessed a play in their lives before, or seen the interior of a theatre. [...] There were only about thirty, or fewer, boys on the place who could speak English, and most of them were not linguists by any means. However, he [Neuschwanger] persevered with his task, and demonstrated the power of teaching which the European possesses, and the ability to imitate and more especially to learn by rote which are apparently inherent qualities of the Zulu.

It could not be expected that they would give the words the necessary declamation, and this, of course, they failed to do, and the result was the audience laughed occasionally where they should have been sad, and preserved solemn countenances when they should, according to the nature of the piece, have laughed.

²¹⁹ My own translation from the German original.



Figure 39: original captions: “Dreikönig. Weihnachtsspiel”. “Eine Weihnachtsaufführung der Kaffernkinder in Mariannhill”—“A Christmas play by the Kafir children of Mariannhill”. This scene was restaged as a *tableau vivant* in Mariannhill’s photographic studio (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives, published in *Vergißmeinnicht*, January 1907:9).

While the German review in the *Vergißmeinnicht* was exceedingly positive, the English review by the *Witness* was ambivalent and considered issues of imperfect imitation and its unintended humorous effects on the audience. In the following pages of this section and the next, I will analyse the layers of performance and imitation between the plays as such, as well as the photographs taken of these plays. To my knowledge, no photographs survived of the 1888 production, and apparently none were taken during the 1904 production. It was only in the January edition of 1907²²⁰ that the *Vergißmeinnicht* published a photograph showing an enactment of *The Nativity Story* (Figure 39), as performed during the Christmas festivities of 1906. The photograph was given the title “Eine Weihnachtsaufführung der Kaffernkinder in Mariannhill”²²¹ and had the following extensive caption:

²²⁰ 1907 marked the monastery’s 25th anniversary. This occasion also saw the introduction of photographs to the periodical *Vergißmeinnicht*. Previously only the *Mariannhiller Kalender* had been illustrated, albeit with engravings derived from photographs.

²²¹ “A Christmas-play by the Kafir children of Mariannhill”.

The actors conceived of their roles with such seriousness, and performed, despite their inborn southern animation, with such religious character, and also a calmness, dignity and certitude, which was most appropriate to the play. They would have certainly received greatest honours on one of the bigger European stages. Also very charming indeed was the effect caused by the contrast between the children's black skin colour and the colourful costumes, which the sisters had skilfully made from aprons and pieces of cloth.²²² (*Vergißeinnicht*, January 1907:9)

When discussing theatre at the mission, Mariannahill's publications repeated the same trope of ambivalent imitation beyond the 1940s. While the publication often rendered imitation as well-executed, they sometimes stressed this ambivalence by drawing it into daily life: "Most Africans love acting" and have "the wonderful gift [...] of acting *on and off the stage*, as most of them are born actors" (Kneipp 1963:100-101, Schimlek 1949:42).²²³ The "natives' quality" to *imitate*, rather than to *create* was stressed by several more authors at the time of the plays, such as the two missionaries Dudley Kidd (1904:282) and Alexandre-Henry Junod (1905:6, also see Chidester 2010:148, Peterson 2000:70, Thomas 1994:133). As we will see in Chapter Seven, these rhetorics only changed by the 1920s.

Likewise ambivalent were the ideas about *whom* the children imitated in the first place. While the text indeed mentioned that their imitations of Biblical protagonists were outstanding, other voices in the *Vergißeinnicht*, like in the above example, stressed that Black Africans were even more fitting actors for the Bible's oriental characters. Even more so, one description stressed the fact that the play *Die Heilige Elisabeth von Thüringen* (1909) had been adapted for, or maybe even adapted by the African actors themselves:

Only with difficulties she proceeds, supported by her stick. Without further ado she squats on the floor in front of the princess, and pulls from her wooly hair a small spoon made of bone. Entirely after the fashion of the Kafirs [*ganz nach Kaffernart*], off and on she begins to take snuff with it, and to catch the endlessly gushing tears. In short, one could see that the actors were *Kafirs*, but they also understood it to imitate their Black fellow countrymen perfectly.²²⁴ (Anon. 1909:137)

Missionary accounts for propaganda purposes often moved between positive spectacle and negative drama. This is why we have to pay attention to the mediating role of missionaries and photographers, and the role they played in a situation of colonial mimicry. Mariannahill's editors used photographs of theatrical performances to suggest to benefactors that converts not only successfully *performed* faith, but effectively *attained* faith. In order to avoid the impression of a performance, and instead present a transformation, the photographic practice at Mariannahill thus had to claim representations as truthful. Nevertheless, missionaries and other commentators considered it necessary to express an anxiety, but also an excitement about African imitation, in particular as it was connected to various media, such as photography and theatre. This is phrased most poignantly in the slightly ironic heading employed by the journalist of the *Witness* in his

²²² My own translation from the German original.

²²³ My own italics.

²²⁴ My own translation from the German original. Italics as in the original.

review of Mariannhill's play: "Histrionic Zulus". This may also be considered as what Taussig called "mimetic excess" (1993), an anxious awareness of the mimetic faculty.

It is therefore important to ask whether the fact that a photograph was posed, was explicitly pointed out to audiences in Europe. In the publication involving the nativity scene (Figure 39) the anonymous author did indeed point out that it was a play, but he did not point out that it had been reenacted for the purpose of being photographed. As the painted backdrop in this particular photograph of the Christmas play makes clear, it was re-staged in Mariannhill's studio. Far from the original setting in a large hall or open-air, this studio re-enactment can be considered a *tableau vivant*, as they had already been performed at Mariannhill in 1888. Before 1914, plays were thus staged at Mariannhill not only for the sake of public performances, but also exclusively to be captured in photographs. However, this fact was not made explicit at all times.

As we already know, *tableaux vivants* were dramatically staged scenes, often drawn from popular literature or the Bible, which photographers soon came to reproduce for commercial purposes (Petersen 2008b). At Mariannhill after 1900, Black actors still concluded their theatrical performances by posing for *tableaux vivants* (sometimes also referred to as "*Gruppenbild*"); these *tableaux* often epitomised the play's moral message. In 1905, when the curtain rose for the last time, the actors were grouped around the throne of the Pharaoh in a "painterly manner", thus forming a *tableau vivant*, while being illuminated with Bengal fire. The *Vergißeinnicht* referenced photographs of the later occasions in two cases, in 1907 and in 1909: "One year later they performed Kafir Christmas plays, of which Nr. 1 of this year reproduces a group portrait performed at the end in truthful depiction [*getreuer Darstellung*]" (Anon. 1907:146).²²⁵ In 1909, after all, the author pointed out the rupture in the representative process, which had been obscured in previous accounts:

As our photographer happened to be visiting [the mission station] Mariatal during Christmas, he produced a photograph of one of the various scenes, which we present here to our honoured readers in zincographic reproduction. Due to the circumstances, the photograph has been made in the *open air*—therefore the garden-like backdrop. But otherwise it is a truthful representation [*getreue Wiedergabe*] of the interesting Christmas play, about which our Blacks at Mariatal will speak for a long, long time.²²⁶ (Anon. 1909:137)

The "circumstances" referred to in the quote must have been the fact that the actual theatrical performance took place at night and had been illuminated once more with Bengal fire. This apparently constituted an inconvenience for the photographer, which required him to re-stage the entire scene once more in daylight. Nevertheless he considered it to be a "truthful representation" of the entire experience.

The photographs that show explicitly *theatrical* performances of religious faith, form only a small part of Mariannhill's remaining photographic oeuvre. Nevertheless, I argue that they can help us to better understand the various other kinds of *explicit* and *implicit* photographic

²²⁵ My own translation from the German original.

²²⁶ My own translation from the German original. Italics as in the original.

performances at Mariannhill between the 1890s and 1915. Acting in the space of the theatre stage may be considered the quintessential, and also the most accepted form of imitation. But, as I have shown already, ideas on theatrical imitation easily slipped into photographic practice. The aspect of performance is explicit in Mariannhill's photographs of Catholic, as well as African rituals, ceremonies, celebrations, children's plays, children's drills, and more generally posed portraiture. In the following sections, I explore how the missionaries extended the ideas developed within the practice of theatre photography to other photographs. This allowed to improve performance of African models in order to mediate complex ideas, and so to better convince benefactor audiences.

The previous reviews of theatre performances at Mariannhill and beyond initially described Africans as unimaginative copyists. But the ability to create *resemblances* was in the case of Mariannhill's plays also presented as a desirable talent to be cultivated. The *Nativity* photograph and its caption may be understood as such an attempt of bridging Europe and South Africa by creating mutual empathy. The accompanying text suggested to European benefactors that South African children had the potential to adapt: not only by carrying out theatrical mimesis of a classic Christian Biblical topic involving faith and adoration, but by doing this in a most skilful and professional manner.

Therefore, despite this apparent reiteration of stereotypical ascriptions of imitation to Blacks by Whites, we once more need to acknowledge that social actors' appropriations of otherness as a valuable addition to their own performative repertoire were more multi-faceted and multi-directional. In 1908, for example, Robert Baden-Powell introduced the invented tradition of a Zulu war song to the Boy Scouts Movement (Chidester 2010:143). In 1936, the Black South African writer Herbert I.E. Dhlomo "traces the origins of African drama to the rituals performed in 'primitive' African societies. The rituals, he argues, were based on the instinct of imitation, the belief that like produced like" (Peterson 2000:190). Dhlomo indeed suggested that "these ceremonies were based on what anthropologists call Sympathetic Magic", however without making reference to the anthropologist in question, J.G. Frazer (Dhlomo 1977 [1936]:3; also see Chapter Eight). Eventually, Dhlomo advised that "the African dramatist should not fear being mocked as an 'imitator' of European art (Dhlomo 1977:7)". While the missionary Junod had described magic and imitation as a contemporary character trait of Africans to keep them at a distance (1905), Dhlomo instead embraced the anthropological profession and framework, but used it to trace the "civilised" African's evolvement from the "traditional". At the same time, like Dhlomo during the 1930s, some African intellectuals repeated the exact same "before/after" dichotomy—as used by missionaries decades earlier—in print culture (eg. *Bantu World*). Apparently, in this case the opposition criticised European caricature imaginations of the "tribal" by confidently opposing it with the image of a "modern" African (cf. Robbroeck 2011:123, 2008; also see Oguibe 2002). Dhlomo thus nevertheless suggested that Africans participated in, rather than imitated global practices of fashion, science, and art. This is also what Ferguson (2002) suggests in his "anthropology of imitation" (also see Chidester 2010). Both

White and Black social actors used theatre, performance, and photography to articulate difference and race through the related tropes of imitation.

In 1931, Mariannhill's stage director of the 1920s, Fr. Bernard Huss, picked up on these issues in an article published in the journal *Africa*. Retrospectively based on his 30 years of experience and perspective as a missionary at Mariannhill and its stations, and with the help of "social anthropology and ethnology", he argued against the contemporary opinion by Africans that "one must be a native in order to understand the native" (cf. Chapter Seven). Huss referred to the new generation of self-conscious African intellectuals, such as Dhlomo, as the "New Native". To make his point, Huss distinguished a particular "European mind" from a "Native mind", of which he once more divided the latter into two variants:

In some cases the native mind is a reaction, a revolt, a protest against the European mind. The native slogan 'Africa for the Africans' is a retaliation for the European's 'a white South Africa'. In other cases the native mind is a more or less feeble or crude imitation, sometimes also a ridiculous caricature or pathetic distortion of the European mind. [...] In consequence of this metamorphosis we may, in theory, distinguish two main schools of thought in the native mind, the school of unrest and that of adjustment. In practice there is much overlapping and elements of both schools may be mixed in the same mind. (Huss 1931:448-451)

This account by Huss is a crude psychological essentialisation of the relationship between Africans and the missionaries. Before 1914, Mariannhill Missionaries had formulated the opposition between "unrest" (before) and "adjustment" (after) in so far that Africans either had to adjust to the conditions on the mission's land, or had to leave (cf. Chapter Three). The economic and social relationship to the mission was thus determined by Africans' attitudes towards labour, land, and religious affiliation. Access to these benefits depended on Africans' adjustment to the mission's terms of conduct, dress, and material culture, at least externally. As I explained, the missionary also used these points to represent successful conversion.

Due to the remaining uncertainty in performance, however, the missionaries divided this attitude of "adjustment" once more: on the one hand there were supposedly those Africans who imitated required Christian conduct sufficiently in order to be baptised, and to then reap the benefits; accordingly Mariannhill missionaries referred to them as "bread Christians [*Brotchristen*]", whom they thought to be a product of Protestant education. On the other hand, the Trappists prided themselves with the production of "quality", instead of "quantity". They claimed to educate "true Christians [*richtige Christen*]", by training them "to work from their earliest youth with relentless discipline by example and instruction" (Anon. 1895:30). The quality of "true faith" however needed to be represented, not only as imitation in the form of theatre plays, but as an authentic experience for both converts and audiences. Stories in the periodicals did this by narrating textually the conversion experience of individual Africans, or the good deeds they had supposedly done. These textual accounts explained that the converts had been genuinely motivated by their newly adopted Christian conviction, which had often been triggered by a particular transformative experience. When the *Vergißmeinnicht* introduced photographs in 1907, the editorial quoted in Chapter One claimed that these photographs would

eventually enable readers to become “eyewitnesses” to these processes. Next I turn to an example where this drama of conversion is most explicit, but not explicitly pointed out as a performance.

Confronting Faith

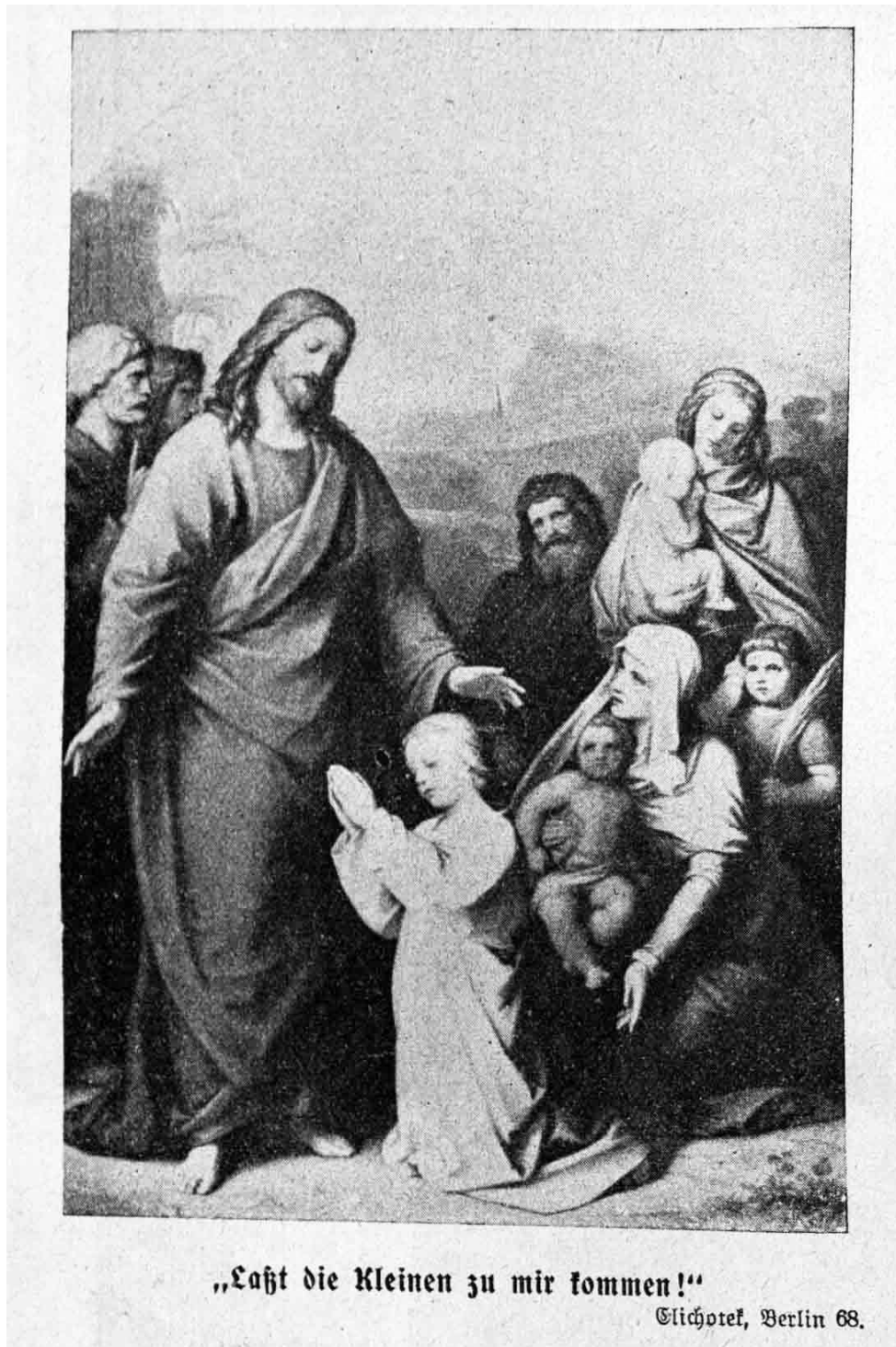


Figure 40: original caption: “*Laßt die Kleinen zu mir kommen!*”—“Suffer the little children to come unto me” (published in *Vergißmeinnicht*, October 1913:230).

Several of Mariannhill's photographs from the turn of the 19th to the 20th century depict fully clothed Africans posing in front of rectangular buildings, some engaged in prayer. In contrast, other photographs depict scantily dressed men and women in front of dome-shaped "beehive huts", either posing as if fighting, performing acts of divination, or engaged in household activities. Captions, either in photographic albums or in the published periodicals, tell us that the first group shows Christian subjects and the second group "heathens". I introduced such images in the introduction of Chapter One, as they appeared in their most opposed fashion on the frontispiece of the *Mariannhiller Kalender*. In 1905, editors even added captions, indicating either a "before" or "after" of the conversion process.

Sometimes this dichotomy also involved a third category of photographs showing the interaction of missionaries with Africans in the process of conversion. There are however only few examples in the photographic collection which show all three conditions—the "before", the "in between" and the "after"—within one single image. In order to combine all three in one photographic composition, the photographer had to stage the scene in a theatrical manner. Like with the last examples, it is therefore important to distinguish whether this fact was pointed out to the audiences of the periodicals. In order to analyse photographic performance and production in a theatrical off-stage scenario, I will now compare two photographs. As an extension to the opposition of the "before/after" construction, the opposition of "adjustment" and "unrest" described by Huss in 1931, is here performed photographically in its most poignant way.

Educational Catholic literature or illustrated Bibles of the late 19th century frequently presented the scene of "Jesus blessing the Children" from Mark 10:13–16.²²⁷ In the years prior to 1909, this scene is repeated every year in Mariannhill's periodicals in the form of painted illustrations with the exact same bible reference (eg. Figure 40). Therefore, it would have been a scene immediately recognisable to a Catholic readership in Europe.²²⁸ The missionaries used it to stress the importance and malleability of children for the mission project (cf. Thomas 1992). Performances such as the one within theatrical productions like the Nativity Story in Figure 39, and "Blessing the Children" in Figure 40, may have been part of the inspiration for Figure 41. In all cases, only the priests are identified, and no personalised names were given to the other actors.

²²⁷ King James Version (KJV). (13) And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. (14) But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. (15) Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. (16) And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

²²⁸ See Morgan (2005) for the use of similar imagery in a Protestant context. See Gullestad (2007) for the use of textual and visual Bible references by the Norwegian Missionary Society.



Figure 41: original caption: “*P. Solanus erteilt Unterricht*”— “Fr. Solanus catechising”. Fr. Solanus Peterek and a group of parishioners, St. Bernhard Mission, Alexandra District, Natal, 1908 (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives, published in *Vergißmeinnicht*, September 1909:198).

Figure 41 was published in September 1909 in the *Vergißmeinnicht*. It shows the Priest Fr. Solanus Peterek interacting with a group of Africans at St. Bernhard Mission in 1908. The photograph was thus taken not more than a year after the theatrical nativity scene, and thus makes it likely that Müller continued experimenting within the social and technical conventions of theatre photography, involving the repeated photographic choreography of the same scene with different models. Like with the genre photographs I described in Chapter One, an internal narrative is visible. The priest seems to bless a young woman with his right hand, while resting his left palm on the head of a child. The woman, with her eyes closed, raises the hands of the child next to her, and directs them into a praying gesture. Similarly, all the other children are addressing the priest with folded hands, while one is even holding onto his sleeve, so as to make even closer contact.

The text accompanying this image in the *Vergißmeinnicht* is from the Bible passage Luke 2.24: “And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against” (Anon. 1909a). According to the anonymous author, the last line sets the scene for the photograph taken

in South Africa, and at the same time refers to the contemporary struggle of European nation states against Catholicism, during the aftermath of the so-called “Culture Wars”. The author identified and denigrated three factors, which supposedly accompanied this confrontation: the “immoral arts”, the “lying press”, and “ungodly science”. Both situations, the one in Europe referred to in the text, and the one in South Africa in the image, enabled the author to identify several of the depicted protagonists in the photograph, whom he framed as particular established literary figures: the “antagonist” to the right raises his opened hand in the direction of the priest. His forehead is creased and his concerned look seems to express disapproval of the scene. The author identified him as “a real magician [*wirklicher Zauberer*]”. He is the only man in the image who is adorned with various items of “Zulu” material culture: a head-ring, large earrings, and an assortment of sticks. At least it was such items that accrued value as heavily charged identity markers within the colonial, ethnographic, and missionary discourses on the Zulu, as I shall explain in Part Three.

The author continued to identify counter-clockwise more figures, such as a “disapproving woman”, a “mocking man”, the “type of the complacent Pharisee”, as well as the “arrogant sceptic”, who all appear to mimic the corresponding facial expressions in a theatrical way. The author then went on to describe the principal woman, and the child whom she is directing as representatives of the ones who are receptive to Christianity. Eventually, he pointed to the children as “untouched by the spoiling of sin”. We are presented here with a particular set of gestures performing faith, as well as its antagonisms. At least European audiences would have perceived them as such according to images they had been presented with earlier.



Figure 42: original caption: “P. Emanuel Angelicus lehrt in Kevelaer Dec. 1908”—Fr. Angelicus teaching at Kevelaer Dec. 1908”. Fr. Angelicus Konieczka, with parishioners at Kevelaer Mission, Polela District, Natal, December 1908 (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives, unpublished).

In the same year, 1908, Müller staged an almost identical scene at Kevelaer Mission, another outstation of Mariannhill (Figure 42). Here, Fr. Angelicus Konieczka takes an almost identical pose as Fr. Solanus Peterek, pointing to an entity in the distance with a serious look. As in the other photograph, the man directly in front of Fr. Angelicus tilts his torso backwards, in order to avoid whatever it is he associates—or is meant to associate—with the hand of the priest. And, like in the other photograph, children are posed in devout prayer, though here it is an adult holding on to the priest’s sleeve. It may not be a coincidence that both priestly figures are dressed in white, contrasting with the darker dresses of the parishioners. Even though the compositional advantage of contrast is evident, there is no confirmation in the textual narrative that the photographer intended to portray the missionary as the bringer of “light into darkness”, as other authors argue (eg. Acke 2013, Langbehn 2011, Kirkaldy 2005). Because these two remarkably similar photographs were made in the same year, 1908, but in places far apart, I argue that the composition was devised by the photographer rather than by the protagonists. Müller traveled between the mission stations, and seems to have tried out certain scenes with different

protagonists. The narrative of the article closes with the commonly repeated appeal for the needs of the mission; in order to relieve the very oppositions just shown, the mission needed money. Therefore the “before/after” construction is here presented to the benefactors as the even more effective argument of “already/but still”.

In order to create this mechanism, the photographer and author (possibly, but not necessarily the same person) had to translate the immaterial idea of faith and its antagonism into one single physical performance. The visualisation of the scene obviously had to appeal to the European imagination, rather than the one of Africans. Therefore, Müller employed a topic that would speak strongly to European middle-class Catholics. He had to translate a complex social situation into an likewise complex visual configuration, which people in Europe would be able to place into an understandable framework. Without making it explicit, also Nicholas Thomas points to an “already/but still” formation. He states that an ambivalence like the one I just presented is “rhetorically central, a necessary predicate for the history of conversion (1992:375)”. Being “naturally innocent”, children are thus constructed as the natural entry point for the mission (ibid.:376).

As I explained in Chapter One, Africans at mission stations were familiar with photographic practice, theatre performances, as well as religious performances during important feast days or celebrations. By 1908, they would have been familiar with the general idea of *tableaux vivants*, the striking of a pose so that it could be contemplated, and in this case photographed. Even if Africans performed as the antagonists in a photographic *tableau vivant*, this very fact indicates the opposite: that they actually performed as collaborators with the mission (cf. Chapter Four). In Chapters Three and Four I will show that Africans’ decisions to either agree to or avoid having their photographs taken, were based on the actual relationships with missionaries, as these can be established via sources alternative to photographs. If one compares the two photographs presented above, the poses are very explicit and distinct, not only in their singular appearance, but as a consistent arrangement. It is therefore unlikely that the textual narrative in the *Vergißeinnicht* was applied independently to the first photograph. Rather, image and text must have been composed purposefully in interaction.

A general “instability and mutability” (Thomas 1991:153, 157) in missionary conversion narratives interchangeably ascribed positive and negative attributes to mission subjects. This eventually helped to intensify the impression of conversion. Mariannhill photographs of this kind thus show Africans *performing* Catholic ritual. The photographs emulate religious practice through acts of religious faith in form of generally recognisable gestures: hands folded in prayer, giving blessings, or by the normative script of rites of passage, such as baptisms, marriages, or funerals. According to the basic structure of the conversion story, the photographs increased faith in its performative power when it was contrasted with the presence of an antagonist, such as the “magician”. The missionaries here imposed a textual propaganda narrative on “the heathen”. “The magician”, so the author explained, acknowledged the existence of God, while remaining opposed to it. The mission’s narratives often presented the polarity between heaven and hell as a

reality, equally recognised by African protagonists themselves, who are then left with the “proper” choice.

The scene presents the idea and the space of the mission station, but at the same time evokes the one of its “heathen” exterior through the respective performed relationships. According to the article’s author, the configuration represents social relationships supposedly present in South Africa, infused with those prevalent in Europe (cf. Van der Veer 1996:11). The idea of children as “true believers”, as well as their employment for the mediation between Europe and South Africa becomes even more explicit in the next section.

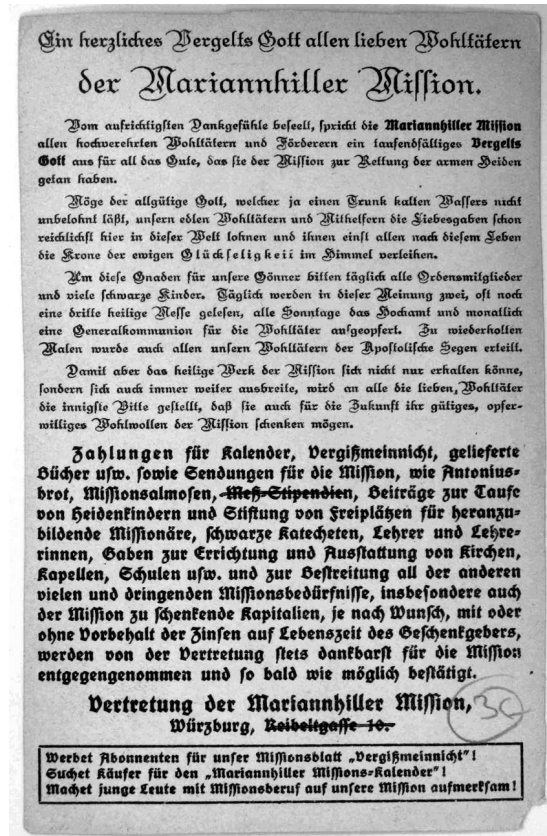
Ventriloquizing Faith

African children were dominant in Mariannhill's texts and images as the main aim of conversion, but occasionally they also appear as the main protagonists, or even as actors. Propaganda involving children differed somehow from the above "before/after" constructions, because the missionaries also presented children as independent of this equation. More specifically they presented children as mediators between these two poles. In the three examples presented in this section, we take a second look at the two surfaces of text and image in combination. We then explore the backstage to these constructions, which the missionaries did not present as such to the benefactors in Germany, whom they hoped to win as allies.

The dominant presence of children in photographs and texts did not fully correspond with the missionaries' actual focus on potential converts at all times. Frequently, the missionaries presented children in text and image as suffering physically and materially from the economic situation their parents had allegedly created for them. At the same time they presented the children as being fully aware of this situation and of the two sides of the construction. While "picturing pity" was thus a representational strategy directed at benefactors (Gullestad 2007, also see Hölzl 2014, Jenz 2018), the grass-roots strategy of conversion differed initially: in a letter written to the local magistrate Jackson in 1885, Prior Pfanner argued that Mariannhill's focus was foremost on young men, who would then, once converted, bring along their families.²²⁹ Who in fact motivated whom, is difficult, if not impossible to recover (but see Chapter Three). In the journals at least, it was the children instead, whom the editors made to appear as mediators between missionaries, their "heathen" parents, and the benefactors. In this capacity (aided by the missionaries in various ways) the children introduced and translated for benefactors what the "mission" was about.

The first example I would like to present is a propaganda card with a hand-coloured photograph on its front, showing a priest holding two children by their hands. The verso contains a call for funds, dating to approximately 1900. The text promised to European benefactors that celestial benefits before death were indeed possible, and that all the priests, as well as the Black children at Mariannhill not only prayed for the wellbeing of the benefactors on a regular basis, but that even 2-3 daily masses were celebrated with this intention.

²²⁹ DUR: SNA 141/1885. No. 32. 25.2.85.



Figures 43 and 44: original heading: “Ein herzliches Vergelts Gott allen lieben Wohltätern der Mariannhiller Mission”—“May God bless all benefactors of the Mariannhill Mission”. Front and verso of a propaganda card. Even though it was printed before 1914, this particular card was only circulated after 1918, as the changed address was crossed out (collection of the author).

The discursive principle underlying the relationship between missionaries and benefactors, was one of reciprocity. Not only would the missionaries, with the financial support of their benefactors, save “heathens” for the supposed betterment of humanity, but they also promised to pay back the benefactors by celebrating mass for them. Furthermore, the text on the card mentions that in an even greater effort Mariannhill had negotiated an Apostolic blessing, exclusively for their benefactors. Many versions of this card, dating from the period between the 1890s and 1920s, are still stocked in CMM archives. In similar formulations, also the frontispiece of the periodical *Vergißmeinnicht* made the same promises. The propaganda card discussed here, mentions several forms of financial contributions, for which the benefactors could expect the earlier named benefits in return: payments for the *Mariannhiller Kalender*, *Vergißmeinnicht*, donations of books etc.; donations of material goods; *Antonius-Brot* [donations for those in need]; *Missionsalmosen* [Alms or charity]; *Meß-stipendien* [mass stipends];²³⁰ donations for baptisms of heathen children; donations for the education of missionaries, black

²³⁰ Few volumes registering so-called “mass stipends” are still preserved in the monastery’s archive: benefactors paid a particular sum to a priest in order to have their “intentions” included in the prayers during mass.

catechists, and teachers; donations for the foundation or equipment of churches, chapels and schools, etc. The enumeration of categories of payment however overlapped, as all money given by benefactors was generally referred to as “*Almosen*”. A crucial part of this exchange was constituted by the symbolic “adoption” of children. Benefactors were given the possibility to secure a single child’s livelihood for several years by donating “at least 400-500 Marks” (Gütl 2005:320). In return, they received the right to give their first and second names to the respective child; apparently, not an uncommon promise with Catholic missions in general (Hölzl 2014:277). These circumstances also explain the diverse array of German names in Mariannhill’s baptism registers (cf. Chapters Three and Four). The missionaries meticulously recorded these transactions in ledgers, either in Germany or at Mariannhill. Confirmations that the money had been received, were later returned to the benefactors (Gütl 2005:320-322).

Religious images of Bible protagonists, as well as photographs of “mission life” involving the full spectrum between “before” and “after” constituted a crucial part in this exchange. Not only were these images and photographs supposed to bring home the messages conveyed in the accompanying texts, but they were in themselves presented as gifts to benefactors: the missionaries promised elaborately designed single photographs and albums, photographic foldout booklets (*leporellos*) with a variety of Mariannhill’s photographs, or a selection of coloured religious images to benefactors for finding new subscribers for the mission’s periodicals.

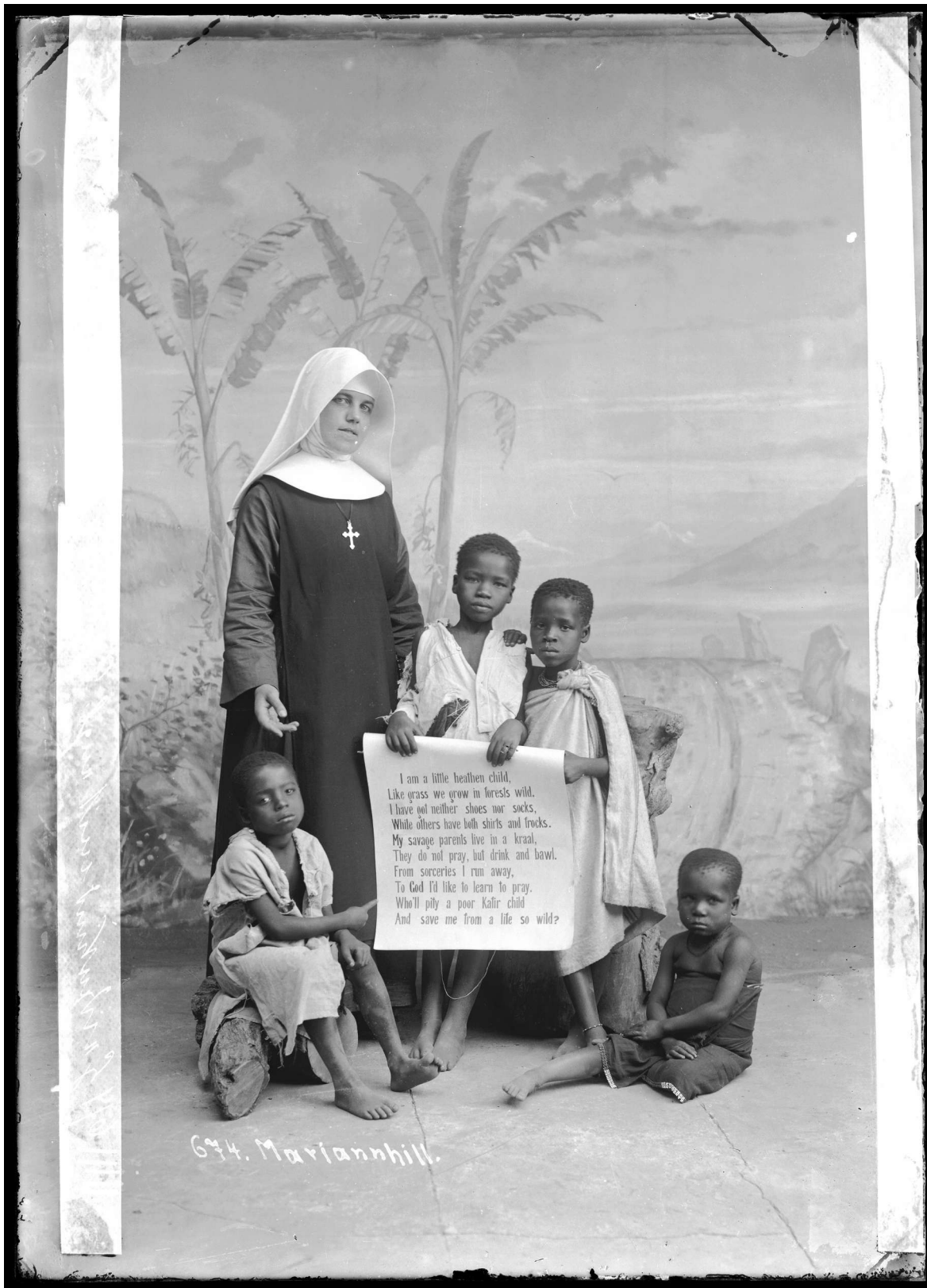


Figure 45: original title: "*Heidenkinder mit engl. Spruch*"—"heathen children with Engl. rhyme" (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives).

The previous example involved the textual construction of children as praying for benefactors, and their separate depiction in interaction with a missionary. The next example shows children, supposedly as active agents within the mission dialogue, now even employing text themselves (Figure 45). By posing children in torn rags in the photographic studio around 1900, the photographer gave them a voice, so to speak.²³¹ He provided them with a scroll showing a German text in rhyme form, ventriloquising as follows:

<i>Bin ein armes [poor] Heidenkind,</i>	I am a little heathen child,
<i>unser so viel wie Gras wohl sind,</i>	like grass we grow in forests wild.
<i>hab' keine Strümpf und keine Schuh</i> <i>auch weder Hemd noch Kittel dazu.</i>	I have got neither shoes nor socks, While others have both shirts and frocks.
<i>Vater u. Mutter liegen nackt im Kraal,</i>	My savage parents live in a kraal, They do not pray, but drink and bawl.
<i>Gottes Gebet macht uns keine Qual.</i>	
<i>Aber Zauber- und Hexengeschichten,</i>	From sorceries I run away,
<i>'s graust mich Euch davon zu berichten.</i>	
	To God I'd like to learn to pray.
<i>Bin ein armes Heidenkind,</i>	Who'll pity a poor Kafir child
<i>such ob ich wohl Mitleid find.</i>	And save me from a life so wild?

At least four similar versions of this poem exist in many different setups: either showing children by themselves, or occasionally accompanied by a sister. The texts appear in three languages: German, English, and Polish. The particular poem presented here sums up the essential themes of the general propaganda narrative in seven lines. Above are presented both the original contemporary German version and its English translation, as it appears in photograph. The first line introduces the idea of the “child” in a transitory state, which is still “poor”, because it is not yet part of the Christian community. The concept of the “heathen” thus creates a dichotomy between those who believe, and those who do not believe, accordingly allowing for the idea of a transition. The second line points to the great numbers of “poor heathen children”, and therefore to the necessity to take action for both missionaries and benefactors. The third line indicates that (proper) clothing is essential to have, but is here only implicitly connected to Christianity. The fourth line indicates that the children’s parents are undressed, idle, and potentially promiscuous, and therefore not capable of taking care of their children adequately.

²³¹ Dressing up children in torn rags and posing them before the camera for advertisement purposes was not an uncommon practice at the time. In the 1870s, the photographs of Dr. Thomas Barnardo, proprietor of an institution for homeless children in London, caused a legal media scandal for misleading the public through staging and thus manipulating photographs. Barnardo worked with before-after constructions, thus already presenting a solution to a problem, instead of having the children “voice” it themselves (e.g. Hirsch 2007, Tagg 1993).

The fifth line presents the children as fully capable to receive and comprehend the Christian message, which is provided by the missionaries. In the sixth line eventually, “sorcery [*Zauberei*]”, people who use it, but also those who believe in it, are presented as the main obstacles of the missionary endeavour. The final line repeats the initial identity, and eventually requests pity from benefactors.

In an inherent contradiction, “heathen” children are here presented as already more rational and as more capable of morally informed decisions than their parents. As the first *potential* Christians, they are constituted as mediators between their “heathen” parents, the missionaries, and the benefactors. Potentially “unspoiled”, so the narrative of the rhyme goes, they can still be set on a course towards civilisation, while the same was difficult with their parents (cf. Thomas 1992). Through the presence of the text scroll, the children were explicitly invested with the ability (whether real or not) to read, write, argue, and therefore to translate both ideas and language. Implicitly, however, the missionaries aided the very act of mediation by providing the infrastructure, the media, and, presumably the content. This image act may therefore be considered as an act of ventriloquism.

Social realities within the Catholic mission cosmos were not hermetic. However, its construction through the mission’s print media and archival documents had consequences for using them as historical sources. The birth identities of Africans (ie. their Zulu names), which may have facilitated their location as historical personalities through documents in civil archives, were often covered up with the baptismal name in the mission periodicals and baptism registers (cf. Chapter Four). To fully understand the missionaries’ narratives, it is therefore necessary to look at the parallel discourses in colonial society.

Comparison with themes of contemporary British legislature of Natal in the late 19th century shows that several concerns were overlapping. In the *Natal Native Code* of 1891, the registration of “native diviners and healers”, or the control of “native unrest” caused by alcohol abuse, were increasingly surveyed and legally codified. The missionaries did not identify all aspects of the lives around them in form of photographs, which they had earlier identified textually: polygamy, the abuse of alcohol, violence, could only be indicated in photographs as potentials, through depicting the multiple huts of a homestead, indicating the multiple wives of a patriarch, when women are shown brewing beer, or men posing as if engaging in battle.²³² At the same time, there were antagonistic intentions between missionaries and other White South Africans. The very idea to educate Africans was not in the interest of every colonial settler, or government official, as this would have diminished an uneducated, and easy-to-control labour force (eg. Etherington 2010, Khandhlela 1993). This debate, which was one aspect of the so-called “native question” (cf. Chapter One), involved Mariannhill with endless correspondence and public disputes in newspapers during the 1880s and 1890s (cf. Gütl 2005).

As we could see in the last section, the photographer and converts (re-)enacted concrete events at Mariannhill and its stations. The example of the last section was a staged theatrical act,

²³² For the representational categories used at Mariannhill see Chapters One, Five, and Six.

but presented in the periodical as the representation of an actual occurrence. Catholic rituals, such as baptisms, were not as obviously staged, but nevertheless engineered to various degrees, as we shall see in the next section. Various transformatory rituals, as both performances and experience of religious faith manifested the ideal relationship between missionaries and their subjects. If one defines a successful conversion in form of a baptism as the permanent transformation of a “heathen” individual into a faithful Catholic, the missionaries were left with the problem how this new presence of faith could be described in either text or image (cf. Van der Veer 1996).

Photographs at least constituted one possibility for the missionaries to present additional *quality* of conversion towards benefactors, instead of only recording *quantity* by counting baptisms over a certain period. Eventually, there is no way of determining whether attempts of conversion at Mariannhill were indeed successful, unless the converted attained agency by acclaiming and recording faith through their own testimony. This agency of course could be enacted, as we already saw in this section. No available sources allow for any conclusion whether conversions around 1900 were indeed successful or not: published narratives, archival records and statistics, registers, and indeed photographs only stated that the formal and institutional process of conversion had taken place, and that converts had displayed external signs of conviction; these documents never proved whether the person eventually became permanently convinced of the transformation. In the rest of this section I present several instances where Br. Aegidius Müller attempted to solve this problem by using combined photographs and texts to enhance the agency of children at the mission station Mariathal. This mode of alleged documentation involved concrete events, as well as named protagonists, rather than stereotypical sceneries and types.

How better to convince European benefactors to supply the mission with more money, than having the receivers of the financial support write letters of gratitude themselves (cf. Van der Veer 1996:2)? The historian Carolyn Jeannerat looked for evidence of tracing faith in the textual archive through the letters of a Lutheran missionary wife in the Transvaal (Jeannerat 2009). Erdmuthe Giesekke summarised letters—supposedly written by Africans—for a European audience in the 1920s and 1930s. While Jeannerat provides a literal reading of Giesekke’s letters, my own research leads me to believe that missionaries may have enriched the accounts of their African protégées, in order to provide an even more committed experience and practice of faith, both verbally and visually. Missionaries would obviously prompt their subjects, and, on occasion, speak for them, if not become ventriloquists.

I will present one last example that demonstrates two epistemological aspects of a convert’s faith, both of which were intended to impress potential benefactors. As I showed, versions of Figure 45 have been in circulation since the 1890s, where anonymous and scantily dressed children had been placed in the photographic studio, and made to hold large scrolls with written appeals for money, often in rhyme-form, in either English, German, or Polish. Even though the rhymes were often formulated in the first person, it would have been obvious to

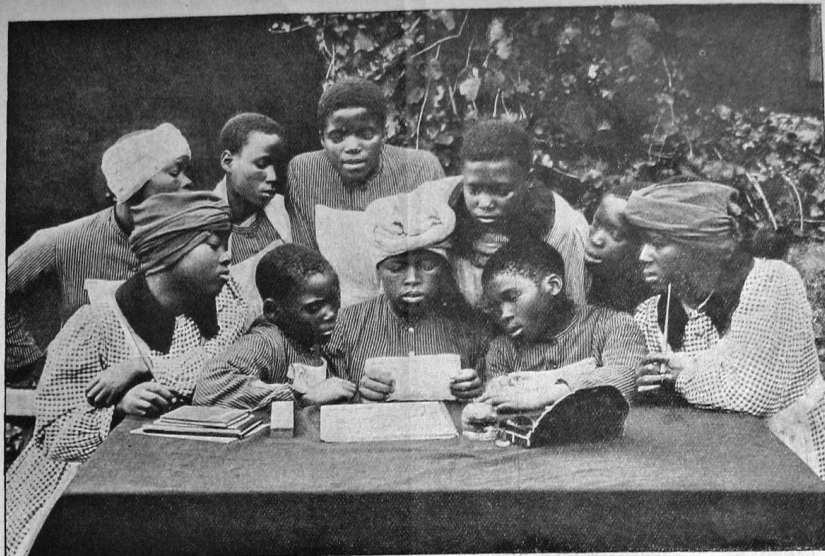
benefactors that the five-year-old children would not have written such elaborate requests themselves. The example I present next is more sophisticated, and probably was more effective, as the children's agency appears to be genuine.

While descriptions of the people around Mariannhill in the 1880s and 1890s were rather remote and stereotypical, around 1900 converts came to be named in stories, and were given their own voices; moreover, editors would identify the individuals in the photographs they published. This tendency is confirmed by the historian Richard Hölzl (2014:283ff), who explains it with the rise of mission literature explicitly produced for children at this time. One such example is an article in the *Vergißmeinnicht* of 1911:²³³ “*Neujahrswünsche der Kafferkinder von Mariatal*” (Anon. 1911) reproduced several supposedly original letters by children of Mariannhill's school at the station Mariathal as “autographs” in Zulu, and even in the children's original handwriting. While being a lithographic transfer process, an “auto-graph” is also an account in one's own script, not merely a signature.²³⁴ The article's author promised to the benefactors “*eine Probe der Gesinnung* [an example of disposition]”, which the children actively conveyed with the help of the two media, text and photography. Thus Melchior Nkandi writes: “Dear Europeans, greetings to you good people, at the beginning of the New Year! We Blacks received religious faith [*Glauben*] from you. And for this we thank you very much. Live well and happily on this earth for many, many years! We will meet in Heaven [...]” (Figure 46).²³⁵

²³³ For an additional interpretation on these photographs see Rippe (2014).

²³⁴ The handwritings are literally referred to as “autographs” in the German text: a lithographic transfer process. The OED refers to an autograph as “1. A manuscript written in the author's own handwriting. 2. A person's own signature”.

²³⁵ My own translation of the German text, which the article presents as a translation of the Zulu Original. One may nevertheless wonder which of the two is the original. Zulu: *Mariathal, January 1st 1911. Balungu abatandekayo! Sanibona bantu abahle ekuqaleni kwalo nyaka. Iina abamnya ma satola ukukolwa ngani. Siyabonga kakulu. Salani kahle nihlale kamnandi emhlabeni imi nyaka emi ningi. Sobonana ezulwini Y'imi na. Melchior Nkani. owas'e xopo.* German: *Liebe Europäer; Seid gegrüßt beim Beginn dieses Jahres! Wir Schwarze haben den Glauben durch Euch bekommen. Dafür danken wir recht sehr. Lebet wohl und glücklich auf Erden viele, viele Jahre! Im Him-mel werden wir uns sehen. Ich. Melchior Nkani, von Ixopo (Mariathal).*



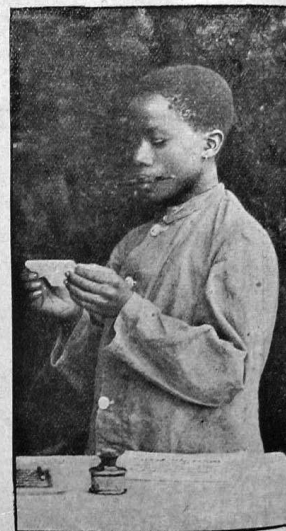
Einer für viele.

Mariathal, January 1st 1911.
Balungu abatandekayo!

Sanibona bantwana abahle
ekugaleni kwalo nyaka. Tina abamnyama
satola ukukholwa ngani. Siyabonga kakulu.
Salani kahle ni hlale kamnandi emhlabeni
imi nyaka emi ningi. Sobonana ezizulwini

Y'imi na

Melchior Nkandi
ovras' e xopo.



Melchior.

Liebe Europäer,

Seid gute Leute, begrüßt beim Beginn dieses
Jahres! Wir Schwarze haben den Glauben durch Euch
bekommen. Dafür danken wir recht sehr. Lebet wohl!

und glücklich auf Erden viele, viele Jahre! Im Him-
mel werden wir uns sehen.

Ich

Melchior Nkandi,
von Xopo (Mariathal).

Figure 46: “Neujahrswünsche der Kafferkinder von Mariatal”—“Good wishes for the New Year from the Kafir children of Mariathal”. The autograph and photograph of Melchior Nkandi (published in *Vergißmeinnicht*, January 1911:4).

The article explicitly indicates that some of the nine candidates were not yet baptised. Melchior—who is portrayed in the photograph re-reading his very letter before it is published—nevertheless mentions that they had received their faith from the Europeans. However, they would never meet the benefactors, so he writes, at least not during their lifetimes. Melchior further indicates the spatial distance between Europe and South Africa, as well as South Africa's dependence on Europe for its faith. In this way, Melchior's narrative establishes the benefactors as living in the centre of faith, and the mission as its periphery.

On the following page, Johannes Ndhlovu writes, albeit in plain print: "Dear Europeans! I wish you all the best for the New Year! I thank you for having pity on us blacks. May God make you rich, most of all in your soul. Pray, so that we may all have faith. I close with greeting you most warmly. Johannes Ndhlovu". Like Melchior, Johannes refers to the transmission of faith, which needs to be sustained by Europeans through their prayer. Others of the nine children likewise ask for prayers, but also for material goods. Even more, they, "the believers", offer to pray for the Europeans, while complaining that "alas, otherwise here heathens still roam everywhere [in South Africa]". The writings eventually become even more elaborate and promise the benefactors "much grace on earth, and thereafter the eternal life" for what they had done for "the Blacks" so far. The series of texts and images indicate a relationship between missionaries and children, but even more so between benefactors and converted children. The children are portrayed as being even more pious than the benefactors may have thought of themselves. An educational component for European audiences—including children—may have been the article's additional intention (cf. Acke 2013, Hölzl 2014, Thomas 1991:144).

In the previous examples only three spaces are conflated within the image-text relationship: the moment of the mission encounter between the "heathen" exterior and the mission station are posed against an ambivalent Europe, where Catholics too were said to struggle with non-Catholics. In addition, the images in this section introduce yet another dimension to connect these spaces: the article represents instances of the converts' very own agency, which they had attained through the fact that the missionaries had once come to South Africa. The portraits show them in the very moments of writing and re-reading, as well as the extracted original texts themselves. This representational return-movement thus rhetorically complements the missionaries' original agency through their "sacrifice" by physically moving to Africa (cf. Pels 1999). As a result, the children are presented as personalised individuals to the greatest extent possible on the pages of a periodical: with portrait photographs, personal names, and their very own handwriting in photographic reproduction. Through their autographs, the young converts appear to be capable of multiple reflexive acts, and therefore to be in control of their own situation: they address the European audience directly via their texts; and, in some instances, they look straight at the camera, and therefore at the audience to which they are writing. Whether the original letters, written in Zulu, were ever sent, and whether they would have been understood by German benefactors, are not issues that the article addresses.

Eventually, the children are presented with an awareness of the representations they had

produced of their own situation. To use the terminology of theatre, in multiple ways the children are breaking the “fourth wall”, which is in this case constituted by the surface of the photographic image-object: this physical division of the narrative, between actors on-stage on the one hand, and the audience on the other, after all determines what is “real” and what is “play”. While the “breaking” of this division is clearly not the case in the previous genre photographs I discussed, both cases explored in this section actively connect and invert the “here” and the “there”. The mission’s editors intended this movement to involve and draw audiences into the narrative created by photograph and text. The article emphasised that the photographed space inhabited by the children can be transgressed in both directions by texts, photographs, as well as prayers, goods, and money.²³⁶ Like the previous example of children in rags holding scrolls, the children in this case became entangled in particular stereotypical material culture in regard to clothing and writing. But in contrast to the last example, they are here presented as being properly dressed and having fully mastered the skills of script and rhetorics, necessary in order to go through the process of conversion successfully (cf. Thomas 1991, and Chapter Three). Similar to this chapter’s first example of the “native photographer”, the situation creates an ideal subject position for the benefactor audience, and thus once more provides the audience with a sense of mimetic excess.

²³⁶ Also see Ferguson (2002), who presents a similar case about a letter by two African boys, addressed to Europe at large.

Retouching Faith: Signs in/of Transition

The following three sections rely to different degrees on the idea of montage. Montage is here simply understood as the physical practice of combining and arranging different images either into a new still image, or in consecutive fashion into a moving image or film. In order to fully comprehend the process of mediating faith and conversion photographically around 1900, we need to consider the contemporary possibilities to manipulate the photographic image as a material object during the post-production process. As I already explicated in the previous chapter, Müller and his predecessors followed the technical standards as they were promoted for example by Hans Arnold (1892) and Wilhelm Vogel (1894). The highly conventional practice of retouching photographs could relate to the minute adjustment of details such as wrinkles, but as we shall see also to exchanging or eradicating faces, even entire bodies. The merging of separate photographs into one, must instead of retouching be considered as a photographic montage. Reasons for such manipulations could have been manifold, and related to either enhancement, beautification, or simply the addition or erasure of things either desired or denied.

The manipulation of photographs, either through retouching or montage, was not only more common at the time, but also much better executed, than today's common sense would have it. Unless we have access to the original glass plate negative, or to contemporary stories about the manipulation, we can no longer retrace all the manipulations as they were performed at the time. When evaluating a historical photograph as a historical trace, the realisation of a manipulation challenges our belief in a photographic reality even more. At the same time, however, the multiplicity of historical traces within one image increases our possibilities to understand historical actors' intentions. After we have established the idea of "photographic resemblance" as a subjective claim, instead of semiotic iconicity, we now proceed to question semiotic indexicality, as established by Charles. S. Peirce. Writing in the 1890s, he stated that

[p]hotographs, especially instantaneous photographs, are very instructive, because we know that they are in certain respects exactly like the objects they represent. But this resemblance is due to the photographs having been produced under such circumstances that they were physically forced to correspond point by point to nature. In that aspect, then, they belong to the second class of signs, those by physical connection. (Peirce 1980:106)

With "instantaneous photographs" Peirce referred to what I have earlier called "snap-shot" photographs. Peirce did not consider, or at least never referred to the common practice of retouching, which was highly common during the time he wrote. Once a photograph has been retouched, it does no longer "correspond point by point" with a historical original as a representation. But as I explained through the conventions of genre photography and *tableaux vivants*, it is often uncertain anyway what the exact nature of an original was. With this realisation the claim collapses that photographic representation would provide what Daston and Galison (2007) called a "mechanical objectivity".

Photographers at Mariannhill also manipulated negatives in a way that went far beyond

the common and relatively subtle retouching of blemished skin, wrinkles, and the accentuation of facial features. In the last chapter we have seen that Müller produced fantastic montages of African toddlers mounting giant butterflies. Such montages, consisting of two different photographs, placed a subject into a new space, or before a new backdrop. In this mode of montage audiences were supposed to recognise the manipulation for humorous effect: the act of defying reality in an obvious way eventually constituted the precondition that a photograph could work as entertainment. In a second mode, Mariannhill's photographers either added, exchanged, or eradicated crucial components of photographic compositions. Similar to the explicit and implicit presentation of theatrical performance, this form of manipulation was not supposed to be apparent. I now proceed to demonstrate this with two examples where it is possible to reconstruct the manipulation. As I already indicated, in many other cases this may no longer be possible, which eventually forces us to reevaluate Mariannhill's photographic oeuvre with even greater care.

The *rites de passage* of Catholic life constitute many images within the photographic collection: starting with baptism, proceeding to communion and marriage, and naturally ending with a funeral. These are four regularly photographed instances of what is usually referred to as the "holy sacraments" (also see Pels 1994). The missionaries tried to represent their subjects as passing these rites "successfully". The holy sacraments are per definition ritualistic performances following a common script. Therefore they presented the quintessential occasions involving African subjects, which a western audience was able to understand. As I already explained, in order to present the photograph of a Christian rite even more effectively, it was necessary to present a negative "heathen" scenario that supposedly preceded it. An example are the earlier described "first-fruits ceremonies", which some Mariannhill Missionaries envisioned as morally opposable and even as "the devil's wedding" (cf. Chapters One and Seven). These rituals would have been imagined and re-imagined quite differently by European or African communities, depending on how they could place them in their previous canons. "To enact any kind of rite is to *perform*, but to enact a rite of passage is also to *transform* (Grimes 2000:7)". The photograph below can consequently be thought of as a *performance* of a *transformation*. However, to transform this performance into an effective photographic representation, it was necessary to enhance some of its features by retouching it.

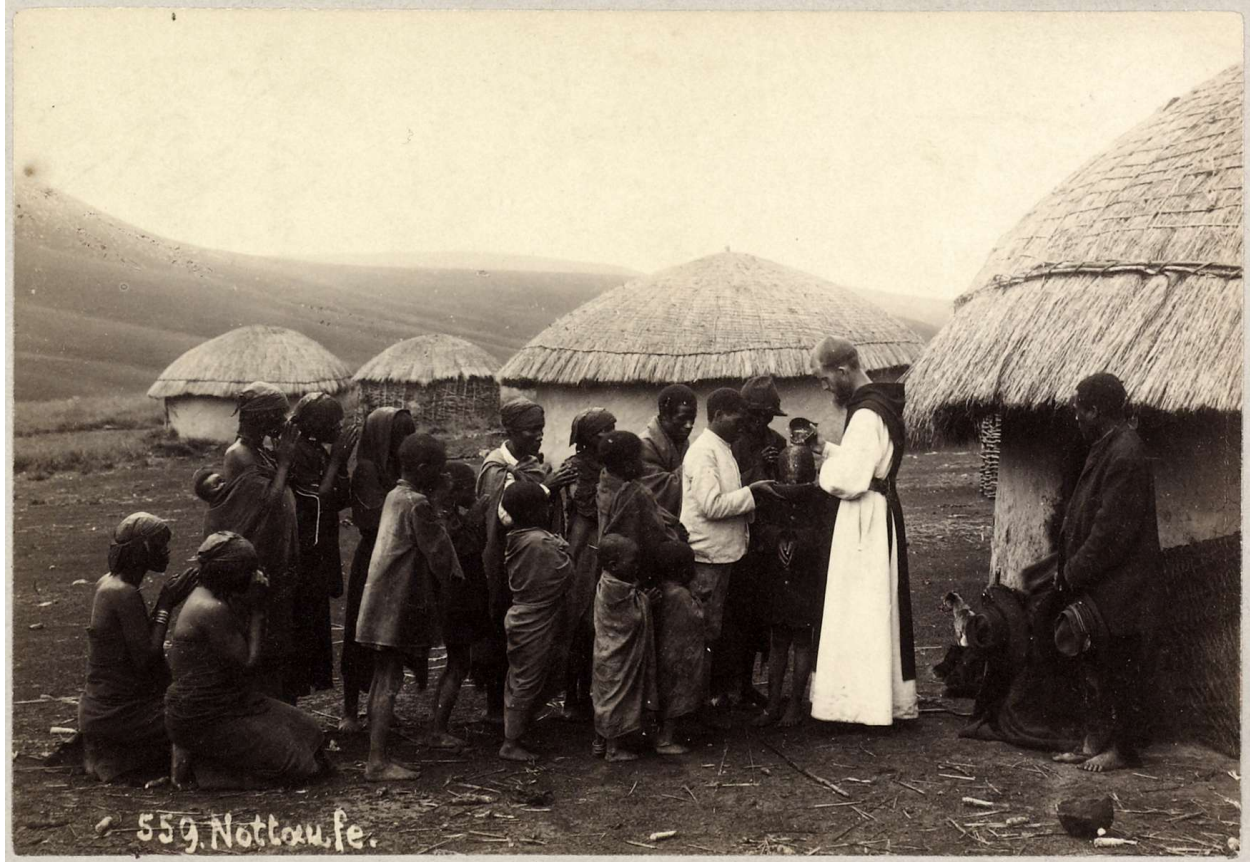


Figure 47: original caption: “559. *Nottau fe.*”. Fr. Isembard Leyendecker performing an “emergency baptism”, East Griqualand, approx. 1897 (NMVW-A15-124).

Figure 47 depicts the performance of a baptism somewhere in the Umzimkhulu valleys of the Eastern Cape (East Griqualand) in approximately 1897, close to Mariannhill’s mission stations Lourdes and Centocow. The photograph is captioned as “*Nottau fe.*”.²³⁷ Such “emergency baptisms” were a common and reoccurring topic in the mission’s periodicals. Reading the photograph under this pretext, Fr. Isembard Leyendecker can be seen pouring water over a child’s head, which is supposedly in the anticipation of death, so that a baptism had to be performed in *periculo mortis*, either just before or in the moment of death. Some fifteen bystanders support the act (as a performance for the camera) in prayer. One male member of the community collects the poured water in a calabash below the child’s head. The context of an “emergency” can of course only be provided by the caption. As a matter of fact, the photograph therefore combines two rituals at once, a life ritual as well as a death ritual. Whether the child was really about to die, and whether the bystanders were aware of the intended narrative involving death, is yet another question.

The active and powerful substance in the image is the holy water. In both photographic space and historical space it is effective for both the bystanders and the beholders of the *mise en*

²³⁷ Not the same as “extreme unction”, which could also be given to an already baptised person.

scene. At the same time, the substance is ephemeral in several ways. As the actual agent of conversion, holy water was a necessary component to make the ritual work for the people on the ground, but likewise for the benefactors, towards whom the photograph was directed. Assuming that the water had indeed been present in the first place, it was not at all times possible to capture the timid stream of liquid photographically. In the mid 1890s, photographic lenses and plates may have been fast enough to capture motion to some degree, but not fast enough to appropriately capture ephemeral liquids under bad lighting conditions.

Once the photographer had developed the glass plate negative at Mariannhill's studio, he retouched the holy water, so to make it more prominent (see negative and positive details, Figures 48 and 49). The keen observer may realise that negative and positive are not identical, which indicates that Müller made at least two attempts at arranging the scene, and accordingly two attempts at retouching the images. The effort that went into the repeated staging of the scene, as well as the repeated manipulation of retouching the water indicates that the photographer considered the water as an essential, if not the most central element of the ritual. But factually the water is unreal, or at least missing the clear indexical referent which is commonly believed to define photographic authenticity.



Figures 48 and 49: details of Figure 49: the pouring of holy water. A detail from a positive print on the left, and a detail of a digitally inverted glass plate negative to the right (CMM Archives).

The fact that the water had been retouched does not necessarily mean that it was not there when the photograph was taken; it may have only been enhanced. But at the same time, we can never be sure whether a “valid” baptism with actual holy water had indeed taken place. This detail makes clear that the initial staging of a scene, and its later post-production manipulation are on consecutive epistemological levels. The creation of the photographic image included the photographer’s tactile involvement, not only during the photographic occasion itself, but also with the negative as object. As I showed, retouching and manipulating photographs was a common practice at the time. Müller and his predecessors had studied contemporary European literature on the topic, were well versed in the art, and applied it frequently. Likewise, they added other ephemeral substances and details that were in moments of transition: the flames of open fires under *utshwala* cooking pots, the smoke from cigarettes, or the wheat grains an African woman pours from a basket, in order to separate them from the chaff. Also faces had to be retouched occasionally so to become more prominent as compared to the bodies. All these details were crucial, in order to convey an experience of religious faith in the case of the emergency baptism, as well as a more general sense of trust in Mariannhill’s photographs.

In a second example I would like to discuss, a priest had to be eradicated from a group photograph, as he had fallen into disgrace with his superiors. Fr. Willibald Wanger (1872-1943) was considered a problem soon after arriving in Mariannhill in 1892, due to his “deficiencies in character” (Mettler 1968:13), his smug behaviour, and his non-submissive attitude within the Trappist community. The exact nature of his offences are hard to define. They were never clearly spelled out in writing (but see Mettler 1967:13, 15), and only inscribed once they escalated, so that disciplinary measures had to be taken. The entire story is too long to tell, so a few details must suffice. Wanger soon established himself as a distinguished Zulu linguist, not only at Mariannhill Monastery and Lourdes Mission, where he worked between 1896 and 1906, but also internationally. After Abbot Gerard Wolpert had resigned in 1904, the newly installed American administrator Obrecht maintained a hard line against the community of active missionaries, of which Wanger was one of the most outspoken and critical against the new regime. As a result, Obrecht planned to punish Wanger with temporary exlaustration for one year. By his own decision, Wanger instead left the Trappist congregation for good. In 1909, the new Provost, Gerard Wolpert, took Wanger in once more as an “*Oblate*”. By 1912, Wanger had taken on editorial tasks at Mariannhill’s press, and published a highly controversial Zulu Catechism, which was disputed for many years, and only circulated with restrictions (cf. Mettler 1967).²³⁸ Once he had unsuccessfully applied for the chair of social anthropology in Cape Town in 1921, Wanger left South Africa to Germany for good.

²³⁸ As one example it was once more holy water that stirred problems. During the catechism quarrel, one of the contested issues was that terms that had previously been used for “superstitious” substances in Zulu were not deemed adequate by Wanger’s critics as a translation for “Holy Water” (cf. Mettler 1967, Sauter 1958:22-23).



Figure 50: priests at Mariannhill, 1906. Original version, not retouched. Fr. Willibald Wanger sitting in the bottom row, far right (CMM Archives).



Figure 51: priests at Mariannhill, 1906. Retouched version. Wanger's head has been replaced with the one of Fr. Isembard Leyendecker (CMM Archives).



Figure 52: novices at Mariannhill, approx. 1905. The origin of Leyendecker's head, sitting at the table with a book (CMM Archives).

Wanger's quarrel with Obrecht coincided with the preparations for Mariannhill's 25. jubilee. The already discussed *Festschrift* contained a photograph of the community of priests, who had been present at the monastery during 1906, with Obrecht at their centre (Figure 50, published in Frey 1907:7). Once Wanger had been expelled from the monastery in 1907, Obrecht apparently considered Wanger's public photographic presence as intolerable, in particular in published form. It was apparently not possible to reassemble and rephotograph the group of priest. Instead, Müller went to work and replaced Wanger's head with the one of Fr. Isembard Leyendecker (Figure 51), which he had taken from yet another studio photograph (Figure 52).²³⁹

In the Fourth Chapter, I will present yet another retouched photograph, in which one subject has even been removed entirely (Figure 82). Photographed in a homestead near Mariannhill Monastery in the year 1891, a monk's figure can only be recognised as a blurred silhouette. Apparently one of the photographers had made a rather crude attempt at eradicating the foreign presence in a setting which otherwise shows no obvious evidence of European influence. The exact motivation for this manipulation can only be guessed at, but seems to have

²³⁹ According to a note by Mariannhill's biographer Br. Joseph Welzel, there were two editions of the publication. This story appears in an unaccessioned manuscript, which Mariannhill's archivist in Rome ascribed to one of Mariannhill's biographers, Fr. Joseph Welzel. However, I doubt that the publisher Herder in Germany could have been convinced to immediately run a second edition, only because one single photograph had to be retouched. It is more likely that the change was made after the first proofs had been provided by Herder.

been the wish to delete the missionaries' influence for the achievement of an even more exotic expression. In all cases I just described, the mission's photographer heavily manipulated the photographic image in order to establish a set of relationships between the missionaries, their subjects, and the mission's benefactors in Europe. Other than the previous examples, the artificiality was by definition covert.

Filming Faith: Photographs as Filmic Devices

After the Second World War, Mariannhill Missionaries continued with an insistent self-representation. This is most poignant in a propaganda film produced during the 1950s. Here the amount of exotic images is minimised, while the film's narrative instead focuses on the recruitment of new members, already implied by the title *Mariannhill ruft!* (*Mariannhill is Calling!*).²⁴⁰ Photographs here explicitly became narrative devices within the medium of film, in order to establish a relationship between the missionary community, potential future novices, as well as benefactors at large. In fact, in the production process photographs became filmic props: in a first instance, they serve to convince the film's protagonists to join the mission as novices. In a second instance, the photographs were ultimately directed at the film's viewers, to follow the film's protagonists in their decision to become missionaries. As a Mariannhill priest told me, after its release in the 1950s, the film would have been screened during mission talks, or other fund raising activities. The occasion of watching the film was an experience of intermediality, complemented by memories of photographs in the mission's periodicals, explanations by the missionary screening the film, and the supplementing propaganda material he brought along.

Even though it is beyond the time frame I set out to analyse, and even though it is like the photographs themselves a choreographed performance, the film does give an impression of how central photographs still were for propaganda efforts during the 1950s. As a performance, the film intentionally shows how missionaries used photographic albums at the time, like they had already done in the decades before the Second World War. Keeping in mind what we have said about the internal narratives of genre photographs, the film makes clear how the missionaries understood photographs as inherently narrative devices, even during their temporary superimposition in and through the moving images of the film.



Figures 53 and 54: opening lines of the film *Mariannhill Ruft!* (1957) in its initial title stills: “Mariannhill is calling! —Come across and help us! (App. 16:9). The career of a missionary”.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ In 2008 the film was recovered, digitised, and released on a DVD with the title *Unterwegs mit Menschen* (Rohring 2008). The CMM press editorial staff in Reimlingen compiled and edited the DVD in cooperation with Steyl Medien e.V., the media organ of SVD.

²⁴¹ My own translation from the German original.



Figures 55 and 56: still images of two boys approaching Mariannhill's boarding school Aloysianum near Lohr am Rhein, Germany.

The film's first scene shows how two boys, not older than 12 years, approach a big mansion.²⁴² They stop at the front portal and look around. One of them rings the bell under the doorplate "*Mariannhiller Mission*". A young man in a black cassock, obviously a Catholic priest, opens the door and invites them in. The scene is narrated by a strongly over-articulated German male voice in very simple sentences:

These two boys are visiting the mission seminar of the Missionaries of Mariannhill. They would like to know how to become missionaries. With pleasure one of the priests will explain it to them. The Missionaries of Mariannhill have been working cheerfully for 75 years for the expansion of the Kingdom of God. Their field of labor is foremost the garden of South Africa, the Christmas Country Natal, also the land at the whooshing waters of the Zambezi, as well as the sunburnt salt veldts of the Kalahari. Much has been achieved in these 75 years: much work for the kingdom of God, and much work to further German culture. Unfortunately there are not enough workers in the wine gardens of the Lord. But still, there are always courageous young people who want to commit themselves entirely to the work of the mission. They fill in the ranks of the missionaries, to keep the work of Christ alive. Already at a young age the training of the future missionary begins. For this purpose the Missionaries of Mariannhill have several beautiful seminaries in the German *Heimat*.²⁴³

After inviting the two boys into the house, the young missionary presents them with a photographic album. He points out several things, including the school where the training of novices takes place. Two photographs on the same page, however, go unmentioned: a Black African couple, as well as a Black toddler eating from a cooking pot. The last photograph belongs to the genre of colonial humour described earlier, and was popular with postcards of Natal (cf. Geary 2013a, also see Figure 78).

At this point the scenery changes. As viewers of the film we now join the boys being immersed into the story of the photographic album, as its images are literally animated by the narrator's voice, who is speaking instead of the young priest: The voice explains to us, the audience, what the priest explains to the boys. The next scene thus shows a boarding school, where boys are prepared for a good Catholic life, and are eventually trained for a career as

²⁴² The building can be identified as the Aloysianum near Lohr am Main, Germany, a boarding school run by CMM between 1910 and 2003.

²⁴³ My own translation from the German original.

missionaries. Photography therefore appears even more explicitly as a performed medium, which not only appears in the film, but actually carries the filmic narrative itself. It appears as if the priest would tell the story—which we as viewers experience through the film—to the boys with the help of photographs in the album.



Figures 57 and 58: still image of a priest showing a photographic album to the two boys; still image of a close-up of the same album.

Accordingly, the film of 31 minutes functions within a three-level-narrative: (1) the disembodied voice of the narrator, (2) the mute scene of interaction between the two boys and the priest, and (3) the content of the priest's explanations to the boys with the help of a photographic album, which is instead presented to the viewer as a re-enacted documentary on the training of missionaries. It is always the one voice that narrates the explanations of the missionary about how the boys may become members of the congregation: the one a lay brother, the other a priest. The visualised narrative further accompanies unnamed candidates through schooling, learning a trade (brothers), and academic study (priests), and eventually to the practical preparations for becoming missionaries.

Under the heading *Afrika rückt näher* ("Africa comes closer") we eventually are told how the missionaries-to-be take classes in the Zulu language at Mariannhill's Pius Seminar in Würzburg, which had been founded as a priest seminary in 1927 (Wendl 1998:252). Like the two young boys, the young novices are now introduced by an even older and more experienced priest to the still unfamiliar flora and fauna of their future field of action. The narrating voice remarks that "a well-equipped mission-museum is available for this purpose". The leopard to the right (Figure 59) was by 1957 already well-traveled through mission fairs and exhibitions for at least thirty years, as earlier photographs from the 1930s show. Today, the same leopard is still on display at the seminary's museum, however toothless. The white-haired priest holds out a stuffed lizard for the young men to see and touch (Figure 60). Again with more distance, the next shot pans along a life-size diorama installation of an African homestead, while the narrator's voice describes it as a "picturesque group, portraying the special peculiarities of the heathen world,

their way of life, as well as their habits and customs true-to-life” (Figures 61 and 62).²⁴⁴



Figures 59 and 60: still image of a zoological display, including a zebra and two leopards; still image of an older priest showing a stuffed lizard to novices, right next to the display.



Figures 61 and 62: still image of a homestead, including plaster-modelled inhabitants.

It is remarkable that the film references the actual subjects of missionary endeavours only in passing: references to South Africa are shown only in one still image within the opening titles in the form of Mariannhill’s church, and via the two before-mentioned photographs in an album, a map, taxidermically prepared animals, as well as an African homestead with the just described life-size plaster-modelled inhabitants. One possible explanation may be that it was too expensive to shoot on location, even if historical and contemporary still photographs as surrogates could surely have been provided.

Even if the film reproduced visual and narrative tropes similar to the early photographs, it focuses on the missionaries’ training, which had been relocated to Europe just before the First World War. From there, representations functioned as a push narrative, rather than a pull narrative from South Africa. Prior to the First World War, propaganda had only been written from a South African perspective. The film portrays the preparation of going to Africa, and not

²⁴⁴ A similar diorama display still exists in the museum of the Pius Seminar in Würzburg today. For the discussion of a similar “Zulu” diorama from the 1920s at the Smithsonian’s Museum of Natural History, see Arnoldi (1999).

the encounter on the ground, which is only hinted at through the replicas of animals and people, as well as photographs. Through the integration of the medium of photography as a prop, the film explores in a first step the promised future situation of schooling and training.

In a second step, the film eventually shows the anticipated movement towards Africa, in order to implement and apply the acquired skills to the anticipated religious void. The anticipation of travelling to South Africa is shown in the last scene of the film's documentary part where a group of missionaries and missionary sisters depart at an unidentified airport. This may indicate that the film was not only directed at potential future novices, as represented by the two young boys, but also to their parents and families. Through the imagination of a movement, the scene not only invokes the leaving behind of relatives as a sacrifice, but also the anticipation of effecting cultural change. In the film's final scene we eventually return to the two boys. Immediately after the priest's story ends, they leave the mansion confidently, having made the decision to join the congregation and to re-live the proposed movement.



Figure 63: still image of one of the film's last scenes. Family members are waving goodbye for the departing missionaries and missionary sisters.

This film was made at a time when the photographic studio at Mariannhill had already been closed for at least 15 years. The film nevertheless re-traces narratives based on the same mimetic capital in form of photographs and objects, which had been made and collected several decades earlier. It must be doubted whether Africans near Mariannhill in the 1950s still lived in the way

the plaster models portrayed them. The film thus maintains a certain historicity and connects it to the early production period of the photographs, which the priest showed to the boys. The film constitutes a last major statement that displaces Africans as “less-civilised” by visual means, before the mission’s representational strategies changed during the 1960s. The film still presents various media as important devices to help the mission’s work, such as photographs, collected specimens and objects in museums, as well as the study of languages as they were presented and taught at the seminary. These devices, as represented in the film, exemplify a missionary’s essential skills of mediation between benefactors, novices, and Africans. The film itself was a new and even more efficient device to combine other devices within a montage.

Equalising Faith: Individual and Ideal Resemblance



Figure 64: stained glass window at Centocow Mission, KwaZulu-Natal. Produced in 1911 by Oidtmann, Linnich near Aachen, Germany (photographed in 2007 by Dudley and Glen Smith).

Once Centocow Mission had been founded in 1888, a moderately sized church was opened in 1892, but quickly outgrew the demands of the increasing number of parishioners. Therefore Mariannhill's architect, Br. Nivard Streicher, began planning a new Church in 1910. In the previous year, not only had the founder of Mariannhill died, but at the same time the community of Mariannhill was separated from the Order of Reformed Cistercians.²⁴⁵ On 28 December 1913, Centocow Mission celebrated its 25th anniversary, as well as the consecration of its new church, which was dedicated to the Heart of Jesus.

These historical occurrences and the exceptional effort of recollection at Centocow apparently created an impetus to bring together what had happened to the community at large since the monastery's foundation in 1882. The construction of the new church at Centocow in 1912 eventually presented the opportunity to encapsulate the past thirty years in form of one particular artwork: a coloured stained glass window became the artistic centrepiece of the new church, incorporating many of the key figures, who had influenced Mariannhill's development

²⁴⁵ Mariannhill therefore ceased to be a Trappist monastery. Temporarily it became a Mission Institute under the name "Religious Missionaries of Mariannhill" (RMM), until in 1923 it was established as the "Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill" (CMM).

since the 1880s. The window was the first attempt to visually manifest and to permanently unify the main actors in Mariannhill's grand hagiographic play.²⁴⁶ Commissioned in 1911 with the German artistic window manufacturer Oidtmann in Linnich, close to the city of Aachen, the window was installed in the new church in 1912. In 1913, the community eventually consecrated and officially opened the church. For this event Fr. Thomas Neuschwanger once more staged the play "Joseph in Egypt".

Initially, the window was created to manifest Mariannhill's foundation story for a local audience of parishioners and allies, as well as an international audience of benefactors. In both cases missionaries could use it to point out specific actors, and explain their role in Mariannhill's history, but at the same time position the roles of parishioners and benefactors in relation to these historical actors. Since 1912 until today, the stained glass window has been present during every service above the high altar (cf. Figure 66). With a diameter of 2.6 meters, the window can be observed fairly well from the front ranks of the audience. Perhaps priests would have referred to the window when preaching, or when showing visitors around.

Over the years many people have tried to make sense of the window's arrangement. This effort even increased with the availability and circulation of various close-up photographs within the CMM and CPS communities. In 2010, the window became even more visible, mobile, and therefore interpretable through its photographic reproduction on the cover of a promotional CD by the Ingwe Municipality near Centocow. Since then, photographs of the window also circulate on the internet. I now present my own analysis of its content to show that the montage of the window's components and their interpretations are not always matching their historical image prototypes. Rather, the window's interpretations have always been malleable. The window nevertheless made sense to social actors as they created resemblances through memory by positioning the window in the ongoing development of narratives of the mission encounter, rather than in historical evidence.

The protagonists in the window can still be identified, first, by resemblance with historical photographs in CMM archives, second, through documentation in the contemporary mission periodicals, and third, through the available correspondence in CMM Archives between the architect of the church and the manufacturer of the window.²⁴⁷ The window's style is commonly referred to as "*Nazarenerstil*" in Germany and was popular between the 1880s and 1920s with Oidtmann's stained glass images.²⁴⁸ Oidtmann's still-existing register book for commissioned works, dating June 1911, further identifies the window as a "*Mantelschaft Marien*", denoting a conventional group arrangement of classic Catholic iconography. As such, it is commonly referred to as "*Schutzmantelmadonna*" in German, or "Virgin of Mercy" in English. Over the past centuries it has been manifested in form of statues, painted altar pieces, or like the image

²⁴⁶ See what I write above about theatre plays involving Mariannhill's own history.

²⁴⁷ The archive of Oidtmann was destroyed during the Second World War. Therefore no correspondence on the underlying ideas on composition could be retrieved. Also the photographs, which have been used as blueprints, no longer exist in Oidtmann's remaining archive.

²⁴⁸ Personal communication, Heinrich Oidtmann, Linnich, December 2012.

under discussion, in form of stained glass windows (eg. Belting 1990:398ff, Phillips 2005).

Phillips (2005) discusses the much earlier, but similar case of one particular altar piece, which is commonly referred to as *The Virgin of the Seafarers* (1531-1546). She argues that the painting, commissioned for the House of Trade's Hall in Seville, represents the Spanish Monarchy's understanding of its expansion in South America. Even more than the single protagonists involved in the imperialist endeavour, the Virgin is supposed to protect the project in its entirety. According to Phillips, contemporary beholders would have recognised the painting's internal narrative and its protagonists, and understood the respective elements of the iconography. For the case of Centocow Mission, we may assume that this was indeed the case for the missionaries and visiting Catholics, who could have explained elements to African parish members, if necessary. Like with *The Virgin of the Seafarers*, the respective group of protagonists at Centocow, and thus the mission project at large, is placed under Maria's protective cape ("*Mantel*"). Maria, the mother of Jesus, is therefore the most central figure in this image. The arrangement seems to suggest that every beholder, given that he or she joins the depicted religious community, will be protected under the mantel. A resident of Centocow, Br. Adrian Pellazino, stated that "the image depicts the community of all in Christ in a profound way" (Pellazino 1914a:37).²⁴⁹

From left to right the window shows historical depictions, either confirmed by photographs or by their sartorial distinction: Bishop Jolivet of Natal (1826-1903); Pope Pius X. (1835-1914), who separated Mariannhill from the Trappists; two unidentified CPS sisters;²⁵⁰ Cardinal Gotti (1834-1916), who was instrumental in the negotiations; Fr. Edward Müller (1870s-1945), Mariannhill's first Black priest; Abbot Franz Pfanner (1825-1909), the first abbot of Mariannhill; Amandus Schölzig (1836-1900), the second abbot of Mariannhill; and Br. Robert Eichholz,²⁵¹ who had been one of the first lay brothers to arrive at Mariannhill in 1882. The depicted Africans were initially referred to as generic figures of the conversion narrative, but later occasionally drawn into particular local narratives as concrete historical personalities: African ministrants; a man with a spear over his shoulder; a Christian mother with child; and two African converts. For these figures I was not able to find any matching photographs. The intended relations between missionaries, subjects, and benefactors can nevertheless partially be reassembled through the ensuing correspondence.

Shortly after the death of Abbot Franz Pfanner in 1909, Mariannhill's architect, Br. Nivard Streicher, started negotiations with the window's manufacturer, Heinrich Oidtmann. Once Oidtmann had presented the first sketch for the window, Streicher replied with several requests on two important issues he wanted to be adjusted in Oidtmann's sketch (Figure 65): due to his importance, Abbot Franz should be moved closer to the centre. Concerning Bishop Jolivet,

²⁴⁹ My own translation from the German original: "*Die Gemeinschaft aller in Christus ist auf dem Bilde sinnreich dargestellt*".

²⁵⁰ CPS members today refer to one as Mother Natalia, the first CPS superior, and the other as Sr. Philippine Treumund from Centocow.

²⁵¹ Alternatively identified as Br. Phillip [Ettl] (Pellazino 1914:37).

Streicher remarked that “the artist should also rework the image of Bishop Jolivet according to the supplied photograph, especially the mouth, so that it will resemble him better. He is still so well remembered by everyone”. Br. Nivard Streicher here invoked the contemporary notion of “photographic resemblance”, as I explained it in Chapter One. “Resemblance” could only be established within a subjective relationship of individuals, and thus the recognition by memory.

When Streicher further discussed the image’s other features with the monastery council, his confreres found the “kafir-heads and faces not kafir enough, too tame [*zahn*], too European”. Accordingly, Streicher suggested to Oidtmann that “a better study of the photographs may solve this problem”.²⁵² While Jolivet’s resemblance, and thus his recognition, relied on a personal encounter, Br. Nivard wanted the African faces to become distinctly generic African types and explicitly non-European. It is unfortunately unclear to which photographs Br. Nivard referred. A general tendency of European artists to depict non-Europeans as “too European” had already caused anxieties about mis-representation in ethnological circles over several decades, with Gustav Fritsch in 1872 (cf. Broeckmann 2008:148), Everard im Thurn (1893:185), and Fritz Graebner (1911:54).²⁵³ All three observed a practice of europeanising non-Europeans, in particular for the late 18th century, and instead hoped for more accuracy in contemporary representational practice around 1900. Like Fritsch claimed to control all stages of the reproduction process of photographs into engravings in close cooperation with engravers, Br. Nivard negotiated the window with Oidtmann. They extended the idea of “resemblance”, first from original to photograph, and second, from photograph to artistic reproduction. For Jolivet’s depiction, Br. Nivard demanded *individual* resemblance, and for Africans *ideal* resemblance.

Even in later years, resemblances in the window were either denied, or newly established. The window’s prominent position, its general claim to represent a historical situation, as well as the general malleability of interpretations enabled social actors to update the window’s function according to their contemporary needs. Next to the identities Streicher was worried about, a close study of photographs in Mariannhill’s archives enabled me to analyse three other identities of individuals depicted in the window. They are ambivalent, however, because no contemporary statement during the time of production ever confirmed them. Due to the importance of the prominent identities, which people applied to the portraits over time, they had to be stabilised according to how they fit within the window’s overall assemblage of identities.

All Black figures in the window appear to be generic depictions, but nevertheless received identifications. The Cape of Maria did exclude non-Christians, apart from one character. An African man in non-European dress with a spear can be seen to the left side of the window. The inclusion of a single supposedly unbaptised person once more pronounces the earlier-mentioned narrative feature of presenting resistance within assimilation. People around Centocow, as well as Mariannhill’s historically informed members, commonly identify the man as Chief Sakajedwa

²⁵² My own translation of the German original: letter, Streicher to Oidtmann 15.09.1911, in Streicher and Seubert (2003).

²⁵³ Also see Lips (1984 [1937]:42) and Poole (1997:34).

of Polela. But no provenience for this portrait or any historical identification is traceable. In the late 1880s, several reports in Mariannhill's periodical *Vergissmeinnicht aus Mariannhill* describe Chief Sakajedwa as a man of considerable age. Any depiction of him as a young man is unlikely to be taken from a photograph, and indeed no identified photographs of him exist in the CMM archives. Similar to the situation at Mariannhill with Chief Manzini (cf. Chapter Four), relations had deteriorated by the early 1890s, and Sakajedwa left the Trappist's farm before the relationship could be captured photographically. The man in the stained glass window most likely was not intended to be Sakajedwa in the first place, but rather a generic "African warrior". This is confirmed by a report on the church's opening by Br. Adrian Pellazino. He referred to the figure simply as a "heathen warrior with a pike [*Lanze*] (Pellazino 1914:37)"²⁵⁴, and thus a representative of the "untamed" African world, to which Br. Nivard referred in his letter to Oidtmann.

Just below the left hand of Jesus one can see a depiction of Fr. Edward Cece Mnganga Müller (1872-1945), which can be matched with several of his photographs. He was one of the first children to be baptised at Mariannhill Monastery in 1884. In 1889, Alfred T. Bryant took Müller with him to Rome, where he studied for the priesthood. As the very first Black Catholic priest of South Africa, Mnganga returned to Mariannhill in 1898 (cf. Mukuka 2008). Bryant, too, is thought to appear in the window, as the young blonde man to the far right, behind Mnganga. Even if the figure is often orally referred to as Bryant, this identity is very unlikely, as there is no resemblance whatsoever to the existing photographs of Bryant. But as recorded in Centocow's chronicle, Bryant did indeed spend the year 1894, his last year as a Trappist monk, at Centocow. This may be a reason why he was eventually included in the window, if only by later identification.

When inquiring about the identities of Africans with residents at Centocow, I was told that the person standing in for Sakajedwa's portrait was a Mr. Shulembe, who used to live close to the bottle store of the neighbouring village of Emakhuseni. On another occasion, the priests at Centocow told me that descendants of Chief Sakajedwa had recently made a pilgrimage to see the window, as they had heard by word of mouth that the window contains a depiction of their ancestor. In the same vein, a woman in her eighties told me that the person I had identified as a "true" photographic image of Fr. Edward Mnganga, was in fact a depiction of her father. Being an early convert of the mission, her father Ivo Made indeed played a similar role as an interlocutor of the mission. During the celebrations for the opening of the new church at Centocow on 28 December 1913, the programme for the festivities identifies Made as the actor performing as "Juda" in the play "Joseph in Egypt" (cf. Anon. 1913:8). Possibly due to his general social prominence, Made's family carried his identity into the window.

From the beginning, Abbot Franz Pfanner was granted a doubled presence in the window's composition: first, to the lowest right, and second, at the centre, next to the cross descending from the hand of Jesus. This bi-location must have occurred when Br. Nivard requested with

²⁵⁴ My own translation from the German original.

Oidtmann that Pfanner should be moved closer to the centre. Apparently, Oidtmann failed to remove the abbot's first depiction. Members of Mariannhill today explain this by saying that because Pfanner was the window's most important protagonist, he is present twice: once as an active missionary, and once during his contemplative period of retirement at Emaus after 1892.

In the early efforts to create the window, but also in its later interpretations, various levels of intermediality were at play. Throughout the years, people tried to make sense of the window by negotiating what *should* be visible in it, according to the evolving histories of Mariannhill and Centocow. The church window can therefore be approached according to what we know about *tableaux vivants*. Even if the window was not "performed" by models interacting communally, it nevertheless unites several photographic performances within a montage as a conventional type of Catholic imagery. In this conventional form the composition is enlarged to monumental proportions, in order to be viewed publicly. It can furthermore be compared to earlier well-known montages involving multiple photographs in a single arrangement, such as David Octavius Hill's depiction of the First General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (1843), Henry Peach Robinson's *Fading Away* (1858), or Oscar Gustave Rejlander's *The Two Ways of Life* (1857). Even though the makers acknowledged these compositions as montages, the remaining ambivalence between their truth value on the one hand, and their artifice on the other still caused much irritation with contemporary audiences in the mid 19th century (cf. Benjamin 1963b, Font-Réaulx 2012:211). Likewise, the window at Centocow is questioned and reinterpreted continually.

Other than all the previous examples involving portable photographs, temporary performances, or texts, the stained glass window of Centocow Mission is more or less irremovable, and has therefore been accessible at all times since 1912. During its more than one hundred years of presence, it accommodated multiple interpretations as a historical trace, always according to the contemporary needs of the people who contemplated on it. This permanent, re-composed—and most importantly—un-captioned exposure of an image differed from the temporary circulation of photographs: either as photographic negatives, or as published and captioned prints, they can easily disappear in archives or bookshelves. On their reappearance they may cause a temporary rupture, as I learned once I went about trying to evoke knowledge with and on them in 2007 and 2011. This may lead to experiences of surprise, excitement, but also of shock and anger, due to the felt loss or deprivation of a visual past. In contrast, the window's permanent presence became such a common view that some identities in the window slowly sedimented with the local community. Apparently, people rarely questioned these identities and occasionally reanimated them with few modifications. The window thus constituted a stable focus point that enabled, but also directed the re-production of Mariannhill's past according to particular subject positions, as I showed them in the meta-photographs at the beginning of this chapter.



Figure 65: original caption on glass plate negative: “*Vorbereitung zur Beichte 1914 Janr. Centocow (od. Katechese etc.)*”—“Preparation for confession 1914 January Centocow (or catechism etc.)”. Fr. Emanuel Hanisch with a group of young men, women and children (men to the left, women to the right) in the Sacred Heart Church of Centocow Mission (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives).



Figure 66: original sketch for the stained glass window for Centocow Mission, prepared by Oidtmann in 1911. The bottom line reads: “*Sub tuum praesidium* [lat.: under your protection]” (CMM Archives).

Conclusion

I began both chapters with the idea that we can never fully reconstruct consumers' ideas on the mission periodicals; be they missionaries, African subjects, or benefactors. In particular the personal opinions of individuals can be rarely discerned. In the case of the mission's photographers and editors, we can follow their narratives intended to summon allies, but not their personal convictions. We can thus only reconsider the photographs as both images and objects as they circulated between interpretive communities. Photographs were a staple within a religious economy that existed between Europe and South Africa. It dealt in (representations of) people, ethnographic objects, narratives, and prayer; all of which provided incentives for the various social actors—Europeans and Africans alike—to imagine the respective other side of the transaction. Whether audiences in Europe took these images at face value or not, we can only retrieve for a limited number of cases with respective sources, such as reports by visitors to Mariannhill Monastery (Chapter Three) and ethnographic museums (Chapter Six). Nevertheless, the analysis of photographs in their relationships to other media showed that benefactors considered these constellations as sufficient evidence for the mission's success to keep the money flowing. With the introduction of photographs to the *Vergißeinnicht* in 1907, the periodical experienced an increase in subscriptions, despite the fact that a remuneration was introduced at the same time (Boneberg 1936).

An analysis of the situation at Mariannhill made us realise that photographs, cameras, and several other media played a considerable role as artefacts in the missionaries' imagination of their relationship with both their subjects and benefactors. The photographs discussed here show the awareness and understanding of African photographic models concerning the representational process and its related images and artefacts. It nevertheless remains unclear how great their representational agency was after all. The depiction of photographic practice and artefacts in meta-photographs—one medium used to reflect upon itself—may suggest more generally that the mutual and combined involvement of media strengthens their efficacies and social salience. This may be argued through the realisation that *tableaux vivants* constitute a medium in themselves. Only the medium of the *tableau vivant*, a performance held by models over a prolonged period and manifested in a photograph, can accommodate oppositions, which otherwise do not occur in such condensed form. Even if many of the photographs show only *one* place—the place of the conversion story—they indeed imply multiple spaces, as they would have hardly existed in co-presence. These spaces at the same time implied each other and created an ideal subject position for benefactors. I showed this, first, for the African photographers, the theatrical performances, the staged narrative of opposition, the fundraising photographs involving children, the propaganda film situated in Europe, and eventually for the stained glass window. The effectiveness of photographs as “immutable mobiles” to address benefactors as allies, must be based on the premise that photographs were intentionally presented to benefactors as trustworthy at least in the sense of “typicality”, despite the fact that they could be occasionally

recognised as performances.

Religious faith, as well as the appearance and conduct that supposedly came with it, was something that Christian missionaries wanted their subjects to attain. Equally the mission needed to convince their benefactors in Europe that this very experience had really taken place. Faith—and thus the development from a supposed “traditional” and “heathen” state of mind and body towards a “modern” and Christian one—was the very promise that missionaries gave to European benefactors, for which the latter provided financial aid in return. Whether the promise was ever fulfilled, was for many benefactors impossible to check upon in person. Photography was one way of showing to European audiences that it was indeed possible to “civilise” Africans by exposing them to the constituents of Catholic faith. With photographs, missionaries could indeed recreate the dystopia, allegedly existing before the arrival of Europeans. In a Mariannhill photograph titled “heathen kraal”, it is the caption—not the image itself—that claims that the subjects’ “heathenness” is apparent in the supposedly insufficient dress and “primitive” architectural construction.

In all the articles I discussed in this chapter, the authors portrayed conversion by emulating a European identity, and by amending an African alterity by mimicking familiar imagery in an African setting to a near “coevalness” (cf. Pels 1994:337, also see Fabian 1983). The idea of theatricalisation may be applied to the entire photographic production of Mariannhill, but especially to the examples I presented. Balme described theatricalisation as the process of a performance becoming metonymic for an entire cultural group, for example when performed as plays in Europe (Balme 2007). With Greenblatt’s “mimetic capital” (1991) the accumulation of iconographic material at Mariannhill can then be rethought as genealogies of performances. The missionaries used photographs to document the interactions with their converts in such a way that the ultimate goal—the conversion of as many South Africans as possible—remained ambivalent. The photographic record was an attempt to anticipate and thus promise a plot-line, in order to make something a reality, which was not yet the case. Catholic families, foremost in German-speaking countries would have followed the periodicals for decades and even across generations. Through the constant repetition of familiar and conventional human types and narrative tropes, they were not in regular need of explanation: oppositions like “good” and “bad”, “before” and “after”, “magic” and “religion” all began to imply each other.

The Trappist editors wrote about and next to photographs they had chosen selectively from the growing image stock available to them. The stories and photographs in the periodicals had to be well balanced: on the one hand, they needed to be sufficiently powerful to convince benefactors that the suffering missionaries and their suffering subjects indeed were in dire need of financial support and additional novices. On the other hand, they had to be encouraging enough in order to reassure benefactors that the mission would eventually succeed and that the mission field was in fact a pleasant- and interesting-enough environment to spend one’s life as a missionary, even if far away from the conveniences of home. Various forms of allies, sets of relationships, and dependencies were created in this way. Apparently, they remained stable

enough to be reassembled at later points in time. Faith in images, in an epistemological sense, can thus also be built up effectively on seemingly fictional assemblages (cf. Latour 1990:28).

In the case of Mariannhill, religious faith was reproduced through narrative compositions that tapped reproductive power from popular images and visual conventions. In some cases, however, photographs indeed refer to historical events. Even if such a composition implies a shared history of its protagonists, it instead often lacks a strong narrative such as the one of the genre images I discussed. Therefore its fragments can be re-interpreted selectively according to alternative narratives than the one of the mission. One of the key questions here is whether we can deduce from performances in photographs about historical occurrences either before, after, or during the photographic moment. This is the topic of the next two chapters, and will consider the photographic occasion in its entirety, as its can be reassembled for specific coordinates in space and time. Photographs do not provide a way to study either social interaction or material culture of a photographic *préterrain* independently. Both must be considered in interaction with social actors and their multiple traces before and behind the camera as social and material constituents.

