

**Western representations of the African 'Other':  
Investigations into the controversy around Geert van Kesteren's  
photographs of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zambia  
(2000)**

**by**

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own original work and that where use has been made of the work of others, it has been duly acknowledged in the text.

Signed:

Date:

## **Abstract**

The focus of this study is the controversy around the photographic representation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zambia (1999) by the Dutch photojournalist Geert van Kesteren. The controversy evolved around the 13<sup>th</sup> International Aids Conference in Durban (9-13 July 2000) between the photojournalist and AIDS activists, who argued that the photographs depicted their subjects – all black Zambians – in a victimising, stereotypical and racist manner. An investigation of the controversy on the issues generated forms the premise from which this research is conducted. This is intended to illuminate the nature and context of the more general socio-documentary encounter between the observing photographer (the Western 'Same') and his/her subject (the sub-Saharan African 'Other') in terms of the politics of representation and the power involved.

The study is undertaken within a broad visual anthropological framework of representing the African 'Other' from a Western perspective. The theoretical focus is on differing debates on representational processes and possible claims involved, especially by highlighting and questioning discourses of 'Othering'. Face-to-face, unstructured interviews were conducted with the key actors in the controversy and used to examine how subjectivity and institutional positionality in terms of socio-historical background, class, gender and race influence both the construction and interpretation of representation. Further, the study addresses some of the limits of the representation of power relations and illuminates that the regime of representation is a system of knowledge production, implying issues of power and inequality. It has to be understood as a discursive site of power relationships, an arena for oppositional political discourses, of which adversary parties consider themselves responsible.

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## Introduction

The question of AIDS is an extremely important terrain of struggle and contestation. In addition to the people we know who are dying, or have died, or will, there are the many people dying who are never spoken of. How could we say that the question of AIDS is not also a question of who gets represented and who does not? AIDS is the site at which the advance of sexual politics is being rolled back. It's a site at which not only people will die, but desire and pleasure will also die if certain metaphors do not survive, or survive in the wrong way. Unless we operate in this tension, we don't know what cultural studies can do, can't, can never do; but also, what it has to do, what it alone has a privileged capacity to do (Hall, 1992: 285).

The objective of this research is to investigate the controversy around the photographic representation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zambia (2000) by the Dutch photojournalist Geert Van Kesteren. This is intended to illuminate the nature and context of the more general socio-documentary encounter between the observing photographer (the Western 'Same') and his/her subject (the sub-Saharan African 'Other') in terms of the politics of representation and the power involved. The theoretical focus will be on differing debates on representational processes and possible claims involved, especially by highlighting and questioning discourses of 'Othering' within an anthropological framework. The controversy evolved around the 13<sup>th</sup> International Aids Conference in Durban (9-13 July 2000) and resulted in the non-selection of the photographs for display on the Cultural Programme. An investigation of the controversy on the issues generated forms the premise from which this research will be conducted.

This particular example has been chosen and is relevant for two main reasons: Firstly, Van Kesteren's photographs seem indicative of the dominant paradigm of representation of Africans by Western media practitioners. In this case, a Dutch photographer travelled to Zambia on several occasions for a limited amount of time with the intention to visually portray the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zambia and its effects on society. This culminated in "a blood-curdling reportage about love and death, hope and despair, and the daily life that, despite everything, continues" (Van Kesteren and Van Amerongen, 2000: reverse cover). Secondly, the case raises interesting questions around possible objections: for instance, the objectors to the sample pictures of Van Kesteren's representation of the Zambian HIV/AIDS

pandemic, Lynn Dalrymple and Beverley Mpho Motlhabani,<sup>1</sup> argued that the controversial pictures stereotyped and victimised their subjects, while at the same time being racist.

Thus, the negotiation of the non-selection of the photographs will be analysed, focusing on politics and social implications for depicting and representing the 'Other' (cf. Fabian, 1990; Mudimbe, 1988; Said, 1978, Pieterse, 1992; Spivak, 1987),-from the point of view of both the objectors and the photographer. At the centre of this investigation will be issues of Western photographic representations and their power to reinforce familiar stereotypes about the less-developed world (cf. Lemke, 1993; Pieterse, 1992 and 1994) and their power to portray subjects as, and to turn them into, victims (cf. Holohan, 2000; Tomaselli, 1999a). Assuming that visual representations, including photographic images, are "produced by and are productive of particular forms of knowledge, ideologies, power relations, institutions and practices" (Williams & Chrisman, 1993: 4), questions about the production and politics of knowledge will be examined.

Section One will define the context of the controversy to further an understanding of the factual event. Section Two will establish the framework of this research in terms of anthropology's intellectual construction of the 'Other'. This theoretical framework has been chosen in order to theoretically position the key actors in the controversy<sup>2</sup> and to highlight the historical context for its discussion - in terms of anthropology's approach to science and its study of images. Here, issues, such as the legitimisation of visual anthropology as a sub-discipline of anthropology, anthropology's colonial heritage and the shift to a more reflexive mode of representation come to the fore.

Section Three will examine the different perspectives on Van Kesteren's photographic representation of the Zambian HIV/AIDS pandemic, using the three most controversial pictures as a starting point. An introductory personal reflection on these photographs, based on the methodology of semiotics<sup>3</sup>, aims at providing the reader with an understanding of how the representation in question caused the generation of the issues at stake. The main emphasis of this section, however, are the objectors' and photographer's conflicting, ideological views

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<sup>1</sup> Lynn Dalrymple is the director of the HIV/AIDS, sexuality and life-skills education programme DramAidE, and Beverley Mpho Motlhabani was in charge of the Community Programme of the 13<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference in Durban (9-13 July, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> The three key actors are as mentioned: Geert Van Kesteren, Beverley Mpho Motlhabani and Lynn Dalrymple.

<sup>3</sup> The research-method selected is semiotics, according to the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (cf. Peirce, 1965 and 1966; see also Tomaselli, 1996).

on the representational process, which will become evident through a discussion of theoretical discourses of 'Othering'. Drawing on face-to-face, unstructured interviews with the key players in the controversy, this section will show that Van Kesteren's photographs can be perceived in very different ways: according to the reader's specific historical and cultural circumstances, as well as his/her class and gender. In addition, my analysis will critically examine the different claims made by the conflicting parties. My intent is to expose some of the limits of the representation of power relations.

In addition to applying various theoretical assumptions within the framework of visual anthropology, this research draws on debates in the field of postcolonial theory<sup>4</sup> (cf. Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1983; Spivak, 1987 and 1988), since it theoretically supports the objectors' stance on Van Kesteren's photographic representation. According to Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, postcolonial theory serves to investigate the global forces on social and cultural identity and critiques "the process of production of knowledge of the Other" (1993: 8). Edward Said's seminal theory of *Orientalism* (1978), for example, is useful in highlighting historical relationships of power (initially between the Orient and the imperialist) in terms of cultural productions. This theory produces forms of knowledge, "responsive to Said's central question: 'How can we know and respect the Other?'" (Williams and Chrisman, 1993: 8) – and, arguably, this crucial question represents the all-encompassing undercurrent for the objections put forward by Dalrymple and the conference organisers in charge of the Community Programme of the 13<sup>th</sup> International Aids Conference in Durban against Van Kesteren's pictures.

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<sup>4</sup> The field of postcolonial theory has been widely contested. On the problematic status of 'post-colonialism', see, for example, McClintock (1992) and Hall (1996).



## Section 1: Context

Representation of Africa has tended to be embroiled in social politics of the media. Media reporting on Africa, for example, has been largely dominated by images of war, violence, famine, starvation, disease and death (cf. *New African*, July 2000). These images, termed by Jeremy Seabrook “principally as pathology” (1991: 14), have become commodities<sup>5</sup>, “used and exchanged in contexts in which they have no intrinsic connection” (Tomaselli, 1999a: 5). In this way, the media continues to influence international thinking and perceptions of Africans as, simply, victims of one disaster or another. As Seabrook states: “The people, when they figure at all, appear as helpless victims of human made or natural disasters” (1991: 14). One such disaster is the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

On the African continent, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has had significant effects on the organisation of life across economic, political and social structures. As a social phenomenon, HIV/AIDS is of crucial importance and concern, regionally as well as globally. According to UNAIDS (2001), 28.1 million people of an estimated 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide are in sub-Saharan Africa. Of this total, 4.75 million people live in South Africa (<http://www.thebody.com/unaid5>; see also <http://www.unaids.org>). While the HIV/AIDS pandemic “in industrial and postindustrial societies is believed to be complex, intellectually and politically contested, and theoretically interesting, Third World epidemics are seen to be simple material disasters” (Treichler, 1999: 7).

At the same time as being a biological and biomedical problem, the HIV/AIDS pandemic can be interpreted as cultural and linguistic, since it “has produced a parallel epidemic of meanings, definitions, and attributions”, which Treichler calls an ‘*epidemic of signification*’ (Treichler, 1999: 1). Her extensive study on ‘AIDS and HIV Infection in the Third World’, which explores representations of ‘Third World AIDS’ in “typical ‘First World’ publications”, has revealed that there is a:

limited set of words and images through which people themselves are portrayed: wasted, naive, and passive “natives” lie on mud floors, under trees, on bare mattresses in stark hospital wards. While to a degree these portrayals mimic Western photographic

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<sup>5</sup> The commodity is the most common embodiment of capitalism and “commodification is the process of transforming use values into exchange values” (Mosco, 1996: 141). Commodified media images may not correspond with people’s self-perception, but are rather mythical constructions. As Tomaselli (1999b) suggests: “Cultures have been turned into commodities even if the subjects of these ways of life do not themselves feel commoditized or integrated into the global relations of image production” (Tomaselli, 1999b: 205).

conventions for depicting the dying, nothing is provided to offset the hopeless, apocalyptic devastation (Treichler, 1999: 1).

Hence, photographic images play a vital role in this *epidemic of signification*. Due to their iconicity<sup>6</sup>, photographs have the power to reinforce the illusion of 'truth' – reproducing, for example, familiar representations and stereotypes of the less developed world. Thus, conventional Western photographic representation or, in more general terms, "deeply entrenched institutional agendas and cultural precedents in the First World prevent us from hearing the story of AIDS in the Third World as a complex narrative" (Treichler, 1999: 99). One possible result of a narrow portrayal of the phenomenon of HIV/AIDS in Africa can be the creation of social myths<sup>7</sup> around the issue.

Because of the *manufactured realism* of photographs, social myths about their subjects appear more authentic. The disseminated image becomes larger in life than the constructed subjects; beyond this, this has the implication of shaping public consciousness and, in the extreme, social policy. It is against the background of mainstream media representations of Africans in the West that the AIDS 2000 Committee of the 13<sup>th</sup> International Aids Conference declined to exhibit the photographs of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zambia by Van Kesteren (2000) for display in the Cultural Programme (*The Natal Witness*, July 14, 2000; see also interview with Dalrymple, 2000). The South African newspapers *The Mail & Guardian* (July 7-13, 2000: 5) and *The Natal Witness* (July 14, 2000) reported that this equalled censorship and created a controversy around it.<sup>8</sup> Issues of media freedom, ethics and social responsibility come to the fore when discussing such concerns.

The HIV/AIDS, sexuality and life-skills education programme, DramAidE, and its director, Professor Lynn Dalrymple, were at the centre of this controversy (*Natal Witness*, July 14, 2000; interview with Dalrymple, 2000). The organisers of the AIDS conference preferred other exhibitions, such as 'Positive Lives' by Gideon Mendel (cf. Mendel, 2002) and 'Living

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<sup>6</sup> The American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (cf. 1965 and 1966) distinguished between three basic types of signs: the iconic, indexical and symbolic sign. "The photographic image is the iconic sign 'par excellence', since it is based not on a system of interpretive cultural conventions but on close physical resemblance" (Deacon et al., 1999: 188).

<sup>7</sup> Myths are "dominant popular meaning[s.] ... culturally constructed dominant connotations (Heck, 1980) that represent an ahistorically represented condition" (Tomaselli, 1995: ii). The power of myths is invested symbolically rather than in the real (Bregin, 1998: 141).

<sup>8</sup> Note that this research does not include an investigation of the media response to the event, in order to keep within the fairly narrow frame of this study. However, the media's response in terms of 'censorship' is highly important for the specific, historical – post-apartheid – South African context and, thus, is recommended for further examination.

Openly' by Gisele Wulfsohn (interview with Dalrymple, 2000) and therefore, did not allocate any space for Van Kesteren's photographs. It was suggested that DramAidE might exhibit Van Kesteren's pictures in conjunction with the display of the AIDS Memorial Quilt (cf. *The South African AIDS Memorial Quilt. A Guide for Facilitators*, 2000), which Dalrymple coordinated (interview with Dalrymple, 2000).

After viewing a sample of the pictures, DramAidE decided not to exhibit them alongside the Quilt, arguing that they reinforced negative stereotyping and victimology (cf. Holohan, 2000; Tomaselli, 1999a) in the West of sub-Saharan people living with HIV/AIDS and that they might offend certain sectors of the South African audience (interview with Dalrymple, 2000). This argument stemmed from the fact that the majority of the sample-photographs portrayed their subjects, all black Africans, as helpless, often in their final stages of life or already dead. The implication was that the subjects of the photographs had little or no agency in the processes of representation, dissemination and distribution – an argumentation that echoes early anthropological traditions and endeavours for depicting and constructing the 'Other' from a Western perspective. This argumentation therefore, is rooted in colonial discourse<sup>9</sup> contending that the observed (the 'Other') has been passively subjected to the colonial gaze of the Western explorer (the 'Same').

## **Section 2:**

### **Anthropology and the study of images: a theoretical outline**

This research institutionally positions the photojournalist Van Kesteren in broad anthropological terms (Kahn, 1995) and it does so for two reasons:

1. In his work, Van Kesteren, a freelance media practitioner from the Netherlands, represents cultural difference and otherness (for a Western audience) (interview with Van Kesteren, 2001; see also *Newsweek*, January 17, 2000: 16-26) – just as conventional anthropologists ventured into 'exotic', remote and unknown places in order to research non-Western cultures, their customs and behavioural patterns (for

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<sup>9</sup> According to Robbins (1992), the 'standard model' of colonial discourse suggests that colonialist knowledge has been projected onto colonised subjects, implying that they are essentially passive in relation to its production (see also Chapter Three, section on 'Contesting claims of authority').

academic purposes)<sup>10</sup>. Examples of Van Kesteren's earlier works, such as assignments on 'Child slavery in Ivory Coast' and 'Female Mutilation in South Africa' (interview with Van Kesteren, 2001), as well as his representation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zambia (2000) and its effects on certain sectors of society, mainly the peasantry, are cases in point. In addition, as Van Kesteren's international success as an award-winning photographer<sup>11</sup> for pictures taken in rural locations indicates, his portrayals seem to fascinate the Western world exactly for their visual depiction of radical cultural otherness: his photographs of people living with HIV/AIDS in rural Zambia, for example - the periphery in global terms (see, e.g., his pictures taken at Kaoma District Hospital; Van Kesteren & Van Amerongen, 2000) - point to the vastly differing, almost binary opposed, realities of the urbanized, Western viewer at the so-called global centre.

2. Van Kesteren's photographic representation is 'anthropological' in the sense that it bears the "stamp of 'authenticity' established by the experience of [the] author as close observer of, if not participant in, the cultures being represented" (Kahn, 1995: 3). On several visits, Van Kesteren spent a total of four months in Zambia and worked closely with the AIDS activist Clement Mufuzi who functioned as his informant (interview with Van Kesteren, 2001; see, also, Van Kesteren & Van Amerongen, 2000) and presumably his translator. Therefore, Van Kesteren's ventures into Zambian society in pursuit of cultural knowledge can be understood as a kind of ethnographic fieldwork (cf. Kahn, 1995). It follows that his photographs, the recorded product of this fieldwork, are ethnographic texts in the broad sense – albeit, arguably, with a much higher emphasis on aesthetic (and political) value than ethnographic photographic texts in the strict sense. Claiming truth (interview with Van Kesteren, 2001; see also Section Three), Van Kesteren's photographs seem to provide evidence of what he has 'discovered': in classical anthropological and metaphorical terms, a 'disappearing society' (Fabian, 1985), ravaged by a deadly disease.

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<sup>10</sup> Strictly speaking, the *purpose* of representing cultural difference and otherness by anthropologists is dissimilar to Van Kesteren's aim. While anthropologists in general are motivated by furthering academic research and knowledge about other cultures, Van Kesteren's work is targeted at a wider public. Consequently, his interface with the broader public assigns him with more power on public consciousness and, thus, more social and ethical responsibility.

<sup>11</sup> Van Kesteren won the Holland Photographer of the Year Award in 1999 for his series of HIV/AIDS pictures (<http://www.thebody.org>).

The discipline of anthropology, the study of cultural knowledge, has since its early development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, undergone a shift from its 'classical' form to 'critical' anthropology. Classical anthropology has had a colonial heritage (see, for example, Tomaselli, 1996) and has been based on a largely positivist, Cartesian world-view. Premises and epistemological assumptions, such as scientific, value-free knowledge and theory about its object, the 'Other', derived from fieldwork observations and recordings and the 'brokerage' of cultural difference (Tomaselli, 1996: 3), characterise classical perceptions of the anthropological study of cultures. In relation to the argument of this chapter, Van Kesteren's claims for the depiction of truth (interview with Van Kesteren, 2001; see also <http://www.misanet.org/>) place him in terms of his professional self-understanding within a positivist paradigm.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, this research argues that Van Kesteren professionally operates from a classical anthropological basis as opposed to a (more) critical one, perceiving of himself as an 'objective' mediator of a scientifically existing, outer reality. As exemplary 'texts', Van Kesteren's photographs allow for "a journey into the realm of 'anthropological' representation" (Kahn, 1995: 5). According to Joel Kahn, critiquing representations of non-western 'Others' - "the subjects it is said not so much of western or European economic exploitation, but more of a 'cultural hegemony' by which ... non-western or non-European peoples have had their cultures denigrated, [and] their voices silenced" (Kahn, 1995: 5) - takes the form of a challenge. It has to be acknowledged, though, that a critique in this line of thought is mainly based on an early, Eurocentric anthropological understanding, as it was prevalent at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The most elementary aspect of professional authority of anthropology was the postulate of cultural difference and the subsequent necessity to translate this difference into anthropological, Western terms (Pels & Nencel, 1991: 13; see, for example, also Loomba, 1998; and Hart, 2000). The analysis of the 'Other' is rooted in intellectual imperatives and discourses which were obsessed with 'difference', 'primitivism', understood as a 'lack' of

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<sup>12</sup> The positivist perspective believes in the neutrality, transparency, and objectivity of reality. According to this view, "reality can be captured on film without the limitations of human consciousness. Pictures provide an unimpeachable witness and: source of highly reliable data" (Ruby, 1996: 1345). However, Tomaselli (1996: 35) points out that, in semiotic terms, "different contexts of sign production and reception ... question the positivist idea that signs necessarily have totally fixed meanings", due to historical processes into which individuals are born and of which they may be unaware. Examples are conflicting historical, social, economic, political, and psychological discourses, which in turn can also change "over time and across space ... Signs and their meanings

civilisation, and 'the exotic'. 'Others' "are semiotic representations made to look different from 'us' as insiders. The 'Other' is the lack, the Left Out, the Unsaid, the Incomplete. ... The way the 'Other' is constructed is, of course, basic to the entire anthropological enterprise" (Tomaselli, 1996: 42). According to Said (1978), the 'Other' was subjected to a complicated apparatus of creating difference, which was part of occidental strategies to reproduce its global power, and which served the anthropologist's professional interests (see also Pels & Nencel, 1991: 13).

Critique of classical anthropology's authority with its claim to 'political innocence' arose in the late 1960s by radical voices and their 'reflexivities' (Pels & Nencel, 1991: 2). The consequence was the 'reinvention' of anthropology through the emergence of critical anthropology, which illuminated anthropology's role and professional legitimization in colonialist and neo-colonialist practices. In Peter Pels and Lorraine Nencel's words:

The history of anthropology has its own rhythm; it is more closely linked to colonialism and neo-colonialism than any other science. The end of political colonialism in the 1960s has hurt anthropology's authority more than that of other disciplines. However, now that anthropology questions its capacity to define authoritatively the non-Western other, it returns to the metropolis with fresh approaches of the Western self. Nowadays, ethnography and anthropological theory are developed to investigate and criticize the central metaphors of Western identity ... Thus, because of its sociohistorical position on the boundaries of Western culture, anthropology promises a more radical reflexivity, which can be of use to all scientists (1991: 2-3).

It seems to be with the longstanding tradition of dominant, Western ways of representing non-Westerners in mind that the objectors to Van Kesteren's photographs have put forward their concerns about his portrayal of the *Zambian HIV/AIDS pandemic*. Although this research does not institutionally position the objectors (exclusively) in anthropological terms – but rather in postcolonial ones (see 'Contesting claims of authority', Section Three), it is proposed that their objections fit a more critical understanding and approach of anthropology's quest for authority. Indirectly, then, the objections ask for more self-reflexivity on behalf of the photographer, in order to avoid stereotyping, victimization and racism. It seems important, though, to already point out at this stage that it might be far too simplistic to consider the discourse on Van Kesteren's photographs and the objections as either hegemonising or resistant – just as it might be simplistic to assume that there occurred a

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are bound by social, cultural and historical experiences of groups of people who agree on broad meanings at particular moments" (Tomaselli, 1996: 36).

radical break without any continuities between colonialism and postcolonialism (cf. Kahn, 1995) or classical and critical anthropology.

“Critical anthropology is hard to define, as it corresponds to no distinct social entity, subdisciplinary boundary, content or method” (Pels, 1991: 6), but Marxism and feminism are, arguably, the most influential streams occurring from this development. “Many critical anthropologists found a rival theoretical legitimation in Marx. The relegation of culture to the domain of ideology ... made room for a rival conception of difference which stressed the power differences created by global capitalism” (Pels & Nencel, 1991: 7). While the Marxist stream of critical anthropology investigates the global subjection of the world to capitalist domination, feminism illuminates and critiques the assumption of woman’s universal subordination. Therefore, both Marxism and feminism aim at shifting the power relations on a global scale and, in more particular terms, between observer and observed.

Similarly, the objectors to Van Kesteren’s photographs, taking account of existing global imbalances, are highly concerned with questioning the power inequalities between photographer and observed, especially in terms of notions of gender and class (see Chapter Three). Marxism and feminism also shared a similar epistemological approach: “Their stories gained their validity from the fact that they could claim to speak from a subordinate position: the world’s truths were deemed easier to apprehend from the bottom up than from top down” (Pels & Nencel, 1991: 10). As will become evident in Section Three, the objectors in certain ways, and due to their spatial and historical positionality in post-apartheid South Africa (part of the so-called less-developed world), seem to legitimise their critical stance by theoretically positioning themselves from the bottom up.

However, Pels & Nencel argue that “in a sense, Marxists and feminists encountered a similar predicament in relation to non-Western others as the critique of classical anthropology had brought forward” (1991: 10). According to this view, classical anthropology, proclaiming value-free social science, kept silent about its political alliances with colonialism and its politics of knowledge, understood as the claim to professional status on the basis of a privileged access to ‘other cultures’. Similarly, Marxism and feminism initially, while not keeping silent, failed to problematise their politics of knowledge. “While they did not hide their non-academic engagement behind a neutral object, the claim to speak from the viewpoint of the oppressed *did* conceal a politics of knowledge, a claim to authority which gave Western

academics the power to define problems and solutions” (Pels & Nencel, 1991: 11; see also Spivak, 1988). As will be shown in the section ‘Contesting claims of authority’ (Section Three), the objectors, probably unwillingly, also played a powerful role in relation to the represented Zambians, on whose behalf they claimed to speak.

Certain issues raised by Marxists and feminists, such as unequal rights of ‘powerful’ observers and ‘disempowered’ observed, seem to have impacted on visual anthropology and its emergence as a contender for status as an academic discipline. For example, “the methodological claims and counterclaims made with respect to ethnographic film have become prominent in recent years as people globally have begun to assert their right to a greater say in the ways in which their lives are represented” (Tomaselli & Shepperson, 1997: 44). Visual anthropology, the analysis of patterns of culture through representation, has never been completely incorporated into the mainstream of anthropology.<sup>13</sup> “Most academics continue to disparage media in favour of written modes of recording and communication. Yet the use of film and photography within social and anthropological analysis has been occurring for over a hundred years” (Tomaselli, 1996: 1-2).<sup>14</sup> It seems that, as a result of its ‘unofficial’ status, visual anthropology teams up with other disciplines, such as visual sociology, cultural studies or film theory.

In spite of its ‘immaturity’ (Tomaselli, 1996: 10) there exists a substantive body of literature on visual anthropology (see for example, Heider, 1976; Hockings, 1995; Worth & Adair, 1972; Ruby, 1996; and Tomaselli, 1996), leading to ‘emergent sophistication’ (Tomaselli, 1996: 10) at communicating anthropological knowledge, documenting and conceptualising all patterns of culture that are visible, such as ritual and ceremonial performances and nonverbal communication. While visual anthropology lacks a tradition of a commonly accepted all encompassing theory (Worth, 1981),<sup>15</sup> its origins are to be found historically in positivist

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<sup>13</sup> Tomaselli (1996: 3) identifies two historical impediments to anthropology’s delay in accepting the benefits of the new tool (ethnographic, moving film) in recording social and cultural behaviour: Firstly, “the expense of filming, the dangers of using inflammable nitrate stock, the extreme cumbersomeness of the technology, slow film speeds, and other technical limitations.” And, secondly, “the almost total lack of ethnographic film theory through which to develop a production methodology” (Tomaselli, 1996: 3).

<sup>14</sup> In this respect, Ruby (1996) states that visual anthropology “is trivialized by some anthropologists as being mainly concerned with audiovisual aids for teaching. The anthropological establishment has yet to acknowledge the centrality of the mass media in the formation of cultural identity in the second half of the twentieth century” Ruby, 1996: 1345).

<sup>15</sup> Tomaselli (1996: 21), for example, meshes visual anthropology, visual sociology and documentary/ethnographic film (including photography), incorporating production and reception, textual analysis and contextual research, “in need of a unified theory” (Tomaselli, 1996: 23). “Clearly, a method of methods is required to overcome this conceptual fragmentation and inter-academic othering. *Semiotics*, the study



assumptions and notions of an objective reality and scientific truth. “Since 1974 anthropology has ... changed, and the more naive hopes expressed for “objective” film records are heard more rarely today ... It is more generally accepted that the positivist notion of a single ethnographic reality, only waiting for anthropology to describe it, was always an artificial construct” (MacDougall, 1995: 129). As in mainstream anthropology, the result of this change in perception was a shift in emphasis from positivist thought to a more contemporary and critical one, based on a reflexive manner.

This ‘critical’ view approaches the study of visual anthropology in more social terms and “emphasizes the socially constructed nature of cultural reality and the tentative nature of our understanding of any culture” (MacDougall, 1995: 129).<sup>16</sup> Being socially constructed artifacts, ethnographic films and photographic works, for example, are political and ideological tools and they stand for and stress two things: the culture of those filmed (the observed) as well as the culture of those who film (the observer). The idea of a reflexive ethnography and the reflexive and/or participatory use of technology (see for example, Ruby, 1996) seems to have been a natural quest in response to an ideological understanding of representation. The aim of this reflexivity has been the alienation of “viewers from any false assumptions about the reliability of the images they see” (Ruby, 1996: 1345) and a shared authority of anthropologists with the people they study. According to Tomaselli, reflexivity was welcomed as a “means to protect subject-communities from thoughtless academic and commercial exploitation” (1996: 13).<sup>17</sup> And, arguably, the protection of subject-communities, in this case the photographically depicted Zambians living with HIV/AIDS, constituted the vital driving force for the objectors’ criticism of Van Kesteren’s photographic representation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zambia (2000).

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of how meaning is made, offers one way of redesigning the differentially inflected lenses and replacing them with an inter-perspectival one” (Tomaselli, 1996: 22).

<sup>16</sup> This understanding opens the opportunity to view, for example, filmmaking and photography as cultural behaviour and negotiation of meaning via the method of imaging.

<sup>17</sup> However, Tomaselli argues that apart from Stoller’s work (cf. 1992, 1989 and 1984) and “Jean Rouch’s existential integration of himself into practices, behaviour and beliefs of his subjects, the concept and application of reflexivity remains grossly under-researched, under-theorized, often naive and uncomfortably forced in practice” (Tomaselli, 1996: 13).

### **Section Three: Different perspectives on the photographs**

Various discourses on Van Kesteren's representational process of the 'Other' (the black Zambians living with HIV/AIDS) as initially emphasized by Dalrymple (2001 and 2001) and Motlhabani (2001) as critical, and subsequent representational processes are the main concern of this chapter. It consists of three parts. The first section will introduce Van Kesteren's three – as pointed out by the objectors - most controversial photographs in a constructed, personal reflection based on the methodology of semiotics.<sup>18</sup> This serves to familiarise the reader with the kind of representational process at stake in the controversy and an understanding of why Dalrymple and Motlhabani might have taken issue with it in the first place. This short reflection does not intend to provide a thorough discussion of the photographs; after all, as has been stated, photographic texts are constructed according to their readers' socio-historical, institutional positionality, class, race and gender. They take on different meanings in different contexts. This introductory analysis, thus, represents a personal construction and reading of Van Kesteren's photographic text from a critical perspective. According to the subject matter in terms of the hopeless depiction of the 'Other', this construction indirectly seems to imply that the observed subjects could hardly have had any agency and co-authorship in the socio-documentary encounter with the Western 'Same'.

However, such a generalised understanding of the encounter between observer and observed, derived from colonial discourse analysis, might be simplistic - in spite of the photographs' ethnocentric depiction of the subjects (see 'The controversial pictures – a personal reflection').<sup>19</sup> Among other issues, this will become evident in the second part of this section, entitled 'Discourses of Othering'. This section will constitute the main part of the

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<sup>18</sup> The method of semiotics is used to interrogate possible meanings, which occur in the language of photographic representation. Photographs contribute to a sense of 'being there'. They inscribe a variety of contexts and interpretations touching on the imaginary, political meanings and emotional indexes. They equal the sum of material manifestations of the imaginary and are able to produce what seems 'real' (cf. Peirce in Hartshorne and Weiss, 1965).

<sup>19</sup> The claim that this understanding might be simplistic derives, for example, from remarks made by the photographer regarding the production process (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001). According to him, some of the subjects, indeed, had not only agency, but also co-authorship. This would point to an understanding of the encounter in terms of cross-cultural communication (cf. Barnett, 1997). However, since it has not been within the financial, spatial and time-means of this research to verify Van Kesteren's claim, this research will not discuss the issue further. Also, Van Kesteren neither states his methodology in his book nor does he provide any captions with the photographs other than in an appendix. Thus, he opens himself up to critique.

controversy's analysis<sup>20</sup> and aims at establishing the ideological framework of the 'objections' by highlighting notions of 'Othering', supported by exemplary evidence from the interviews with the key players. This analysis will be informed by the background, against which the photographs were not selected for display on the Cultural Programme of the conference: namely, the issue of mainstream visual representation of Africans in the Western media and their power to, as argued by Dalrymple (interview with Dalrymple, 2000), reinforce stereotyping, victimology and racism.

This analysis will concentrate on the question of 'Africa and AIDS' as portrayed in the Western media as opposed to the general portrayal of Africans in the Western media – a more narrow and suitable focus, it is believed, for the contextualization of Van Kesteren's photographic representation of HIV/AIDS in Zambia. The issues generated through the controversial pictures will be discussed, highlighting the conflicting views by juxtaposing the objectors' stance and the photographer's response. The main argument of this section is that both the photographer's understanding and approach to his subject matter and the objectors stance on it, constitute two differing editorial processes. As will be shown in the third part of this section entitled 'Contesting claims of authority', each of these editorial processes is influenced by their individual author's subjectivity, in other words, determined by their historical, social, racial and gender backgrounds. In addition, this last section will critically investigate the power involved in the knowledge production of the controversy from all perspectives: the photographer's, the objectors' as well as the researchers – all practising discursive power over the representational process at stake.

While the objectors have, in retrospect, argued that the photographs did not fit the 'ethos' of the conference, namely 'Breaking the Silence',<sup>21</sup> this research concludes that their individual self-understanding in terms of their gendered position in post-apartheid South Africa has not only strongly informed their analysis of the photographs, but has even been the strong driving force in their critical reaction to Van Kesteren's quest to have his pictures exhibited. As will become evident, the objectors seem to have been deeply concerned and hurt about the

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<sup>20</sup> While Van Kesteren's photographs stimulated and provoked a strong reaction, this research can only take them as a starting point for a wider, more general, theoretical discussion on the representation of Africans by Westerners for the following reason: Strictly speaking, the 'objections' to Van Kesteren's photographs are – apart from one or two exceptions – not objections to his pictures as such, for example in terms of their aesthetical value, but more general reservations and 'political' and ethical concerns about common ways of representing sub-Saharan Africans by Westerners, as referred to before and mirrored in some instances in his pictures. Thus, the main focus of this section will be on 'Discourses of Othering'.

<sup>21</sup> For a more elaborate discussion, see 'Discourses of Othering'.

portrayal from a gender perspective, and in Motlhabani's case also in racial terms, when confronted with the controversial portrayal of their female Zambian counterparts – an additional factor that situates Van Kesteren, in their view, in the long-standing, historical European tradition of white, middle-class male media practitioners who construct the non-Western 'Other' for their home audience, or, in Lemke's words (1993), represent the Rest for the West.

### **The controversial pictures – a personal reflection**

'Mother of Mercy Hospice', Chilanga, 1999

(see Appendix A)

The depiction of death and dying of a cultural 'Other' is a recollection of Western photographic conventions. This picture is almost an icon and symbol of death, acting as a subject and lifeless object and serving to satisfy the gaze. Symbolically, this picture is a depiction of a faceless death. The fact that this portrayal of human suffering and dying, from HIV/AIDS, only shows the back of the person reinforces the symbolic, 'non-human' nature of the picture. In a way, this picture operates on a level beyond its immediate context. It has become the signifier of death and disease. It demonstrates that, what was seen in a Zambian village, is what is there presently: people dying. HIV/AIDS is overexposed to this image.

Reducing the picture to its message - death, a body without life, a skeleton, a symbol - seems to have become a necessary coping mechanism, in order to deal with immense pain that its content would otherwise cause. Does the photographer hide behind his camera? Does the camera provide a safe anchorage? The picture does not necessarily relate to HIV/AIDS, but any form of death from disease. It is only for the knowledge of the context that this photographic text is active and thus interpreted in terms of the dying of an 'Other' from HIV/AIDS. Viewing the 'Other' from such a perspective seems to allow the viewer distance and desensitises him/her from likely effects - whether these are positive or negative. A framed image is a marker of political, economic personal and social privilege. Roland Barthes, for example, states that "pictures [...] are more imperative than [for example] writing, they impose meaning at one stroke, without analysing or diluting it" (1972: 110).

This picture does not put across the message that one can live with HIV/AIDS before dying from it. Rather, it seems to provide evidence for Motlhabani's statement on the hegemonic understanding of the disease in South Africa: "If you have the virus, you are dead" (interview with Motlhabani, 2001). As will be shown in 'Discourses of Othering', this is a message, which the objectors did not want to convey. On the contrary, their agenda was to create an environment and atmosphere of hope in order to counteract a stereotyping of people living with HIV/AIDS, a struggle against taboo. This is an editorial process. Thus, the picture does not lift the taboo and stigma of the possible 'face' of HIV/AIDS. It does not create the impression that HIV/AIDS could affect anyone, even your neighbour, people who look healthy – or ... you.

Lusaka, mortuary of the UT Hospital, 1998

(see Appendix B)

This picture can be simply interpreted as representing a typical mortuary of people supposedly dead from HIV/AIDS. Victims of the virus are wrapped in cloths covering their entire bodies. Again, this photograph raises the stakes on a 'faceless death implication'; a decoding process, which says a lot about people who have been overcome by HIV/AIDS beyond the physical. The shocking aspect of the photograph: it is the children's section of the mortuary.

The lexicon of expressive features in this photograph is extremely bleak. Children, in other contexts, seem to represent new life, hope and the future. Applied to the future of Zambia, the message conveyed in this picture is hence, hopelessness. Meanings both stated and subtle, distributed in this image, send a dour signal to the 'Western' gaze, potential donor agencies, researchers and the general public. In terms of visual representation and its politics, meanings of this image send negative cues even to the community, from which this picture is taken. How would they react to such a portrayal of their loved ones?

Aesthetically, the photograph is well composed in terms of lighting and composition, amidst a darkly encoded background. It is as though death from AIDS is photogenic. The whole story behind this disease is rendered artistically determined. African AIDS is hopeless, in those already dead; bleak in claiming young lives (children's corpses for example), and ultimately

recorded for future reference. African subjection and exclusion from the world of the living is codified in a vocabulary captured by an 'impartial' Westerner, the 'Same', if this picture is simply judged on its artistic merits like the Pulitzer award-winning picture by the photojournalist Kevin Carter of a Sudanese child dying of hunger and seemingly waiting to be mauled by vultures (cf. Marinovich & Silva, 2000: 115). How different is the context or the text when young victims are further victimised by a so-called 'objective' camera lens? The silence of the dead and dying has never been so loud as in this picture. In imperialist imagination and imaging, the 'Other' is represented through/by silence and absence. Discourse in textual and material communicative means power is as it is a "violence which we do to things" (Foucault, 1981: 67). The 'Other' is there to be pitied even in death.

Kaoma District Hospital, Kaoma, 1999

(see Appendix C)

This photograph can be interpreted as depicting a patient under a routine medical/gynaecological examination. It may also elaborate on a unique relationship between black female patient and white male doctor. The level of signification in this photograph is, on the other hand, loaded with meaning, symbolic and political. Yet, simply taken, this is the most controversial image from the standpoint of gender and race. Difference of the 'Other' is codified to reveal a body, defined by its physical nature. The black, female 'Other' is textualised in the frame by her biology. In her reification as a timeless figure, she is 'normalised' in terms of what she represents to the white male doctor and the white male photographer. Her dissection, as an 'Other', is no more private than in this picture. It is not an erotic picture at all. Neither is it tasteful in terms of aesthetics simply because her 'Othering', exposure, vulnerability and weakness is all there to 'see'.

Socio-political implications are evident. Patriarchy is implied here as well. Racism is directly signified. The white, male doctor 'gazing' at the black female patients genitals is potent in its meaning. As Motlhabani points out: "This picture has never failed to touch me" (Motlhabani in interview, 2001). Although a moot point, this picture would not have been taken if the patient had been a white patient in a European hospital. A crucial argument to make here is that pictures do not simply present what is 'out there', a physical world or the emotions of its subjects; they also surround subjects with a world of meanings, interpretations, discourses and understandings. Unfortunately, the history of colonial representation and gaze has not always,

if ever, presented the 'Same' with a positive imagery and outlook. This points to the power of photography and construction of meaning via the reading process as well. More ominously though, it directs attention to the limits of commodity fetishism as a tool for shock-value, as much as, arguably, mere representation of what is 'out there'. "Images of 'others' do not circulate because of their truthfulness but because they reflect the concerns of the image-producers and -consumers" (Pieterse, 1992: 233). As Dalrymple states about most of these pictures: The target market seems to be directed at a Western gaze. Where does the attention of the gaze, male in this instance, begin and patriarchal domination through observing the most private female anatomy, end?

As this reflection confirms, representation is a loaded social and political practice. In Van Kesteren's photographic depiction, there is an uncomfortable balance with issues related to the power of representation for the following reason: There is, arguably, a certain sense of depicted violence in the controversial photographs. On the one hand, this could be explained by its shock-value (see 'Discourses of Othering') and, on the other hand, by the more complex, anthropological history: the story and narrative of traditional, Eurocentric representation of 'Others', as told in Section Two. In this respect, it could be argued that processes which produced such representation and identification, were violent in themselves as much as historical actions, associated with them. Said, for example, insists that

representation, or more particularly the *act* of representing (and hence reducing) others, almost always involves violence of some sort to the *subject* of the representation, as well as a contrast between the violence of the act of representing something and the calm exterior of the representation itself, the image – verbal, visual, or otherwise – of the subject (1985: 4).

In a way, decontextualized subjects, 'Others', seem to add to this violent politics of differentiation by giving their consent to be represented. What readers ultimately 'consume' out of a framed imagery of cultural 'Others', are historical processes of 'Othering' (see second part of this section, 'Discourses of Othering'), economics of confinement and psychoanalytical confirmation of the Western 'Same's' privileged superiority - in this case over diseased and dying Others. The after effect: a 'normalisation' of sorts, resulting from the representation of 'Others' simply as diseased, poor, lazy, and sexually-virile people (see for example, the whole range of Van Kesteren's photographs, in Van Kesteren and Van Amerongen, 2000).

This 'normalisation' hegemony further takes shape and place directly (in forms of policy) and indirectly in terms of public awareness-influence. As Said states: "Out of that context, I couldn't help but come to understand representation as a discursive system involving political choices and political force, authority in one form or another" (1985: 5). As will become evident in the second part of this section, Said's words are comparable to comments which emerge out of the South African objector's ideological stance, in particular Motlhabani's, in reaction to Van Kesteren's photographs.

Moreover, these processes are further strengthened, since the represented subjects do not easily have methods and tools for representing themselves, like media photographs, or even methods of counteracting dominant Western representations. In any case, an argument supporting the lack of speech of 'Others', their silence, may subconsciously counterattack by arguing that they are silent, because they are rural AIDS sufferers (the wretched). This works into systems of domination and authority. "We [i.e. Others] have not yet devised the means to deal with a television or film or even a script image...the response to this growing media dominance...are so primitive and crude that they don't stand a chance of dealing with the challenge" (Said, 1985: 6).

The three sample photographs were chosen for discussion, since the objectors pointed them out as the most controversial ones. Nonetheless, Dalrymple also mentioned that the background under which this whole controversy emerged is key. This was revealed by the evaluation of face-to-face, unstructured interviews conducted with Lynn Dalrymple (interview with Dalrymple, 2000 and 2001), the Director of DramAidE, and Beverley Motlhabani (interview with Motlhabani, 2001), who was in charge of the Community Programme of the AIDS conference. Putting her initial involvement in the controversy and strong reaction to the photographs into perspective, Dalrymple mainly refers in her later critique to the wider context of dominant media representations and their power to reinforce stereotypes about the so-called 'Third World' from a 'First World' perspective and to turn their subjects into victims.

At the same time, Dalrymple takes Van Kesteren's entire set of photographs, published after the conference (Van Kesteren and Van Amerongen, 2001), into account - as opposed to the sample of pictures that she was first presented with by the organisers at the time of the conference - and declares that "when you look at the whole exhibition ... there's some lovely



positive images ... it's not all shocking at all. There is a sense of people surviving, of making the most of their circumstances, there is that sense in the whole exhibition." Thus, on second thought and presented with the whole picture, Dalrymple approaches the photographs and the controversy in a more detailed and, arguably, more reflective way. What this reveals is that discourse is always shifting in that it is never stable. Viewed as a whole, the selected 'controversial' pictures presented in the text-book, prove reflective of this changing nature.

While agreeing with Dalrymple on the pervasive, hegemonic context of dominant Western media representation, Motlhabani takes a much more sceptical, critical and, at the same time, essentialist (see also 'Discourses of Othering' and 'Contesting claims of authority') stance on the photographs. There is no hypodermic needle effect to media representation. Pictures, such as these, do not draw out a reaction on their own. Their textuality is not in action alone to arouse a particular reaction on their audience or viewers. As will be argued in 'Contesting claims of authority', the view of Motlhabani has been constituted by her own 'race consciousness' as a 'woman of colour' in present day, post-apartheid South Africa. She takes the photographs as a cause to speculate on and project her ideas about the production process, the background of the photographer and the culturally determined conduct of the subject-communities in terms of what she believes to be their reaction to the presence of the photographer: For example, Motlhabani argues that the photographer's presence during certain rituals must have led to a change in behavioural patterns amongst the portrayed – norms that are culturally required during those ceremonies - and, thus, "cost the communities a high price". According to her, the presence of the photographer resulted in the subjects' having to either repeat the ritual or to conduct another one, in order to 'appease the spirits' after the departure of the photographer.<sup>22</sup> However, what Motlhabani fails to appreciate is that culture is not constant and a 'fixed identity'. People are always 'becoming', they can never 'be' (cf. Hall, 2000).

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<sup>22</sup> Motlhabani's analysis of a photograph depicting a traditional healer's exorcism of the AIDS demon *Mwendanjangula* (Van Kesteren & Van Amerongen, 2000: 94-95) is an illustrative case in point. She concludes that the women witnessing the ceremony took off their shawls as a reaction to the presence of the photographer, although a ceremony of this kind, according to her, asks for shawls to be worn. The result, according to Motlhabani, was a need for repeating the ritual at a later stage for the spirits to be appeased (Motlhabani, 2001). While a fascinating claim (that is essentialist as well, since Motlhabani does not share the same cultural background with the women portrayed in the photograph) as such, this research has chosen not to problematise speculations over the subjects' possible behavioural patterns and other projections made, since there is, simply, no way to verify them. Thus, this analysis of the objectors argumentation will rather concentrate on the more general socio-documentary encounter between Van Kesteren and his subjects, as far as it could be re-established through the interviews conducted with all parties involved in the controversy. Representation takes place at a particular time and space. Subsequent viewer interpretations are simply that, representations, and not necessarily 'factual' documentation of 'truth'.

## Discourses of ‘Othering’

This research argues that meaning in media is produced through representation. Interpretation of representational practices and examples are attained through an interpreter’s location and background. Meaning is culturally, socially and politically specific. History of discourses contains contesting/contestable power relationships. Therefore, representation is a site of contested terrain.

Throughout their analysis of the controversy, the objectors distinguish strongly between the photographer’s ‘Western world’ and their own perception of Zambian or rather South African reality<sup>23</sup> (interviews with Dalrymple, 2000 and 2001; and interview with Motlhabani, 2001). In a way, they binary oppose - an action which in itself has been proven problematic<sup>24</sup> and, in other instances, simplistic - ‘him’ versus ‘us’ and, thus, without actually labelling it semantically for example, apply notions of ‘Otherness’ to their reading of his photographs. Theoretically then, the objections to Van Kesteren’s photographs have to be seen in the light of discourses of ‘Othering’ and the longstanding Western tradition of representing and constructing cultural ‘Otherness’ – a tradition, which has defined the ‘Other’ mainly in terms of difference (cf. Said, 1978; Pels & Nencel, 1991; and Tomaselli, 1996; see also Section Two) and distance in time and space (cf. Fabian, 1983 and 1985; and Harris, 1991) on the one hand and idealization (cf. Harris, 1991), on the other. Anthropology’s early study of non-Europeans from a First World perspective has reinforced popular stereotypes and has tended to trivialize and exoticize the cultural ‘Other’ in written and visual accounts.

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<sup>23</sup> In fact, they distinguish mainly between the Western, understood as Euro-American, on the one side, and their own ‘African’ reality. In a way, then, they fail to account for the possible differences between Zambian and South African reality, which, in turn, renders their analysis essentialist.

<sup>24</sup> According to Ferguson (1998), structuralist thinkers perceived the recognition of difference as essential for the creation of meaning and thus established the notion of *difference* through binary oppositions. “Binary oppositions were [...] part of a complex methodology for research or theory of meaning and signification, and they have somehow returned to haunt many theorists of the media concerned with issues of ‘race’. A structural overview of a wide range of media representations which is based upon binary oppositions, however sophisticatedly they are re-packaged, is more likely to facilitate the mechanical application of pre-existing conceptual categories than the exercise of critical thought. In this sense, structural analyses act somewhat as analytical templates which are somehow imposed on a wide variety of texts. When considering media representations of ‘race’, there is then a tendency to derive explanatory force from the degree of ‘fit’ which any particular representation offers” (Ferguson, 1998: 67). Arguing that the question of binary oppositions is also problematic both theoretically and methodologically because it cannot cope with contradiction, Ferguson (1998) further states: “The evolution of classificatory systems certainly helps us to recognize patterns and order where they exist, but they may also lead us to impose order where there is none. Conceptualising culture (or issues of ‘race’) as a system of classifications is more suited to explaining how a culture remains as it is than considering the question of change. If any tensions do arise in classificatory systems, they tend to be around what to do if something comes along which does not fit into prescribed categories. These issues bear heavily upon debates and research in relation to representations of ‘race’” (Ferguson, 1998: 68).

An imperial tradition that, according to the objectors' first 'reaction of shock' (interview with Dalrymple, 2001) to Van Kesteren's sample pictures and the resulting non-selection for display at the conference, has influenced his contemporary photographic construction of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zambia (2000) and rendered it stereotypical. As Motlhabani states: "I have learnt that, in Zambia, they are all dying" (interview with Motlhabani, 2001). In retrospect, Dalrymple emphasises the value and importance for her, as a South African 'competing' in the 'global village', to counteract the reinforcement of negative stereotypes about Africa: "to build up a sense of Africa as a place of hope and a place with some kind of future and a place where tourists can come" – "sort of going along with Thabo Mbeki's idea" (interview with Dalrymple, 2001) of the African Renaissance which aims to revive African hope.

Relating this to Van Kesteren's photographs she fears that the message which potential viewers of international media networks might receive is:

You might feel sorry for the Zambians after seeing that, but then I think: 'Well, you know, I won't go to Zambia as a tourist, it would be a bit unhealthy to be there. It's not my problem. I might send some money. I might send a few dollars or whatever to some fund to try and help. I certainly am not going to invest my money in Zambia. It looks as though everybody's dying there.' So, when those images are repeated and they go over in all sorts of different ways, it doesn't help Africans to pick themselves up and become part of the global village as a place. Those are the key things we need: tourists and we need investment (Interview with Dalrymple, 2001).

Dalrymple's quote emphasizes two issues of relevance for this discussion: Firstly, Dalrymple implies that, when presented with the photographs, the Western viewer will 'other' Zambian life and 'reality'; in terms of it being unhealthy, literally as well as symbolically - as opposed, it could be argued, to the 'safe' and familiar Euro-American background of the viewer. Secondly, the quote highlights the underlying editorial process, that serves to avoid this kind of 'Othering' and its negative effects on the economy: Dalrymple wishes to create a positive picture of Africa in the West in order to attract foreign investment and tourists.

In addition to economical concerns, Dalrymple raises more general, human concerns regarding for example, the respect of people living with HIV/AIDS. Her status as a 'South African AIDS activist' (Dalrymple in interview, 2001) seems to lend these concerns additional credibility: In her view, the conference's motto 'Breaking the Silence' translates into the creation of an atmosphere of hope and understanding of people living with HIV/AIDS

– a sort of ‘quiet approach/diplomacy’ - in order to overcome stigmatisation and taboos. This understanding, which might explain aspects of her reading of Van Kesteren’s photographic representation as controversial, can thus be interpreted as an additional editorial process on her behalf.

Dalrymple did not approve of the exhibition in the context of the Community Programme with the theme ‘Living Positively’, and especially in conjunction with the Memorial Quilt, which stood for ‘the memories of the happy times that loved people spent with loved ones’ (Dalrymple in interview, 2001). Hence, it could be argued that Dalrymple feared that an exhibition of Van Kesteren’s photographs in this context would be unsuitable, insensitive and counterproductive to finding a ‘way of coping’ and to ‘develop spirituality’ (Dalrymple in interview, 2001) on behalf of the affected parties. The interview with Motlhabani also highlights the editorial nature of the objector’s position towards the controversial photographs. She for example states: “We knew the results of HIV and AIDS – the catastrophes, the deaths, the pain. But we also know that there’s life after HIV: you contract and you live before you die life” (Motlhabani in interview, 2001). Hence, the objectors prefer a more empowered imagery and representation of people living with HIV/AIDS, symbolising the subjects agency over their own lives. Thus, the quote emphasises, once more, the editorial process, which the objectors applied concerning their part in the negotiation of the controversy at stake.

However, Dalrymple acknowledges that “positive images are not realistic the way these [Van Kesteren’s] are.” Calling Van Kesteren’s photographic representation ‘realistic’, however, seems to imply a contradiction in her argumentation: especially, since she, in other instances, applies a critical understanding of the notion of ‘reality’ (see Section Two), emphasising the constructed nature of it. According to her, for example,

it seems as though when you look at a photograph - and that is the danger of photographs – there is reality before you. And, if you haven’t been trained to understand that this is a particular perspective, this is a viewpoint, this is somebody’s gaze, this is somebody else with a camera looking and choosing something to photograph - if you haven’t been taught to understand that, it is very difficult to see it at first. I think the way that culture is portrayed photographically, ... cultural meanings are something you learn (Dalrymple in interview, 2001).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Motlhabani agrees with Dalrymple on the constructed nature of visual representations. In her words, “when you put together anything [an exhibition], there is a particular message that you want to put across. It’s not always the true and real message.” And Janet Wolff (1991) points out that ethnographers “work with cultural

Applied to photography: The photographer chooses a certain element of what is perceived as 'real', depicts and constructs his subjects. Regarding Dalrymple's former, seemingly contradictory statement, it could be argued, though, that it confuses on a semantic level. A strength of semiotics is its emphasis on how meaning is constructed, produced using diverse codes or languages of re-presentation of 'reality'. Codes and signs have to be understood for what they stand for, in this instance. What she might have meant was: The photographs are 'real' in terms of the portrayal of the suffering that is related to the final living stages with HIV/AIDS. And this harsh 'reality', of course, also constitutes one aspect and facet – an extremely uncomfortable and unsettling one, though - of the complex reality and stages of the disease. Photographs by Van Kesteren, from a semiotic viewpoint not only stand in for something, in this case Zambian 'reality', but also codify other, additional meanings on 'Others' as a whole, whether this is done positively or negatively.

Dalrymple (in interview, 2001; see also Dalrymple in *Mail & Guardian*, July 21-27: 35) further argues that the photographs, which she categorises in terms of mainstream Western media representations of 'Africa and AIDS', might have alienated the South African audience due to their sensationalist nature. In this respect, her concern is mainly for the groups of school children from disadvantaged communities, which in effect constituted one of the target audiences of the Community Programme (rather than international visitors). It is important to note, in this context, that representation, such as highlighted by these photographs have a material reality and tangible repercussions beyond a textual world. But, as Dalrymple points out, to her

these photographs are targeted at ... the European, the Western gaze - saying 'Look, here is Africa, here is Africa suffering. In spite of all the hardships that the people experience, look at how they are continuing.' It was that kind a message, which maybe would be appropriate for a West audience. Maybe the underlying idea was to get people to come and help. It is presenting Africans in a sense as victims of their circumstances, but nevertheless kind of brave and courageous and carrying on. To me, that is the kind of underlying theme of this photographic exhibition ... But, when you take some of these photographs out of their context and you show them alongside the quilts ... you know, as at the back of the book calls it 'blood curdling', which was obviously to arouse feelings of sympathy and fear and shock - not fear - shock. They are shocking (interview with Dalrymple, 2001).

I argue that, in fact, the photographer's interpretation of the conference's theme 'Breaking the Silence' aimed at shock value. In the first place, for example, Van Kesteren presented a

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constructs of the societies they study" (Wolff, 1991: 167); thus, they invent them, rather than simply describing or presenting.

choice of those photographs of his exhibition, which can be categorised as the more sensational ones (e.g. photographs depicting scenes at funerals, the mortuary, an AIDS Hospice and at a rural, under-equipped hospital). Most of these photographs had been previously published in *Newsweek* (January 17, 2000) and, thus, arguably proven successful in 'shocking' the West into some kind of 'awareness' of the (or rather 'state of noticing' that there exists a) human face to the tragedy of 'AIDS in Africa' (a place, as could be argued, conveniently far away from - and 'other' than - Western 'reality'). As Van Kesteren points out (personal communication, June 14, 2002): "The ignorance for the colonial past and the ignorance for the poor in the world by our rich Western society upset[s] me most."<sup>26</sup> The photographs' indexical importance is that they draw Western attention and gaze to a world seldom seen in mainstream media.

This editorial process symbolises a contradiction on behalf of the photographer's argumentation: On the one hand, Van Kesteren aims at capturing the 'whole', probably meaning complex, 'reality' of his subject matter (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001), emphasizing, for example, his respect and admiration for the Zambians, "who are positive in spite of their shit lives" (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001). On the other hand, however, he wishes to 'break the silence' about "the tragedy, the huge problem" of HIV/AIDS through sensationalism and shock tactics; or, in his own words, to wake up the world and "those African countries which themselves are ignoring it" (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001)<sup>27</sup>,

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<sup>26</sup> Van Kesteren (personal communication, June 14, 2002) further states: "When I visited this young woman, called Lenah Mweemda, she was so bad, so bad, she lived in a hut and had nothing, she was left by her husband, she was dying of AIDS, she suffered so much. And all the nurse could give her were 4 aspirins and the promise that they would come back in 2 weeks time. That was reality in that part of the world. And to me that is what the project is about. To change her and many others situation."

<sup>27</sup> Regarding Van Kesteren's intention to raise awareness in general and among 'those African countries' affected by HIV/AIDS, Motlhabani (2001) states: "Let's just go back a little bit and be philosophical about it. What does he mean there is denial? Denial about what? Denial of what? Non-acceptance of what? Wake up call to whom? For what reason? To meet which objectives? To improve what? Where in the world is it not taboo to talk about sex, not even sexuality, to talk about sex? Define awareness. What is awareness? Once you have defined it, give me a context because it can't just be a definition. It must be a definition that can be placed within a context. Who should be aware of what in what context? [...] You are assuming that there is awareness. You just want to raise it. How do you measure that? Who measures it? How aware are you that you are now moving in to raise awareness? So when a person comes and says: 'wake up call', who are you? Who is sleeping? Are they sleeping? Define sleep. So you are awakening them to what? What is the reality? For them what is the reality? [...] I am sounding deliberately cynical about it because once again you have a whole cluster of terms and you define them: You then give a context and then you are able to say my hypothesis is 'we need to wake people up' and then place your work within that. It's all very easy to throw around challenges. Please, the question is how are you contributing? Your reality is yours. It may be mine. We may be sitting in the same room, but your reality does not have to be mine. Neither does mine have to be yours. It doesn't." However, Van Kesteren (personal communication, June 14, 2002) emphasizes: "It is my sincere opinion (eurocentric or not) that breaking the taboo's is most important. As you look at Zambia, people are NOT using condoms, the politicians (I know for sure until the book was published) did NOT take any actions. So, millions of people are dying. And we all stood watching, as for those who wanted to watch."

arguably using the “fantastic Zambians ... who got me from the first moment” (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001) to achieve this sake and purpose, and taking it a step further, turning them into media events. A likely eventuality of this process is that it reduces people presented in a framed picture to an iconic sign, removed from reality. These people, thus, end up being removed from their material context of power, ideology and dependence. In addition, this raises ethical concerns. Thus, there seems to occur a discrepancy between Van Kesteren’s theoretical approach to his photography, for example in terms of being ethical and respectful towards his subjects who he established a personal relationship with, and its manifestation in practice.<sup>28</sup>

Other than the photographer, Dalrymple does not approve of an approach that shocks in order to further HIV/AIDS awareness (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001):

I think ... shock tactics do in a sense, alienate people. I mean, there is a lot of debate about whether we shouldn’t just shock people. So that they seem to be waking up and understanding clearly, but the general feeling with most AIDS activists in South Africa is that trying to shock people is just going to distance them, whereas this one has definitely tried to shock people into awareness. Wake people up, say look this is what is happening, look and see what’s happening. ... but the debate is around, whether or not that would work within the African community itself. It might most certainly work in Europe or in America - people would be really shocked. What they are going to do about it is another matter... So look, I think within a particular context this approach is quite justifiable (Dalrymple in interview, 2001).

While Dalrymple, thus, acknowledges the value of Van Kesteren’s representation of the Zambian HIV/AIDS pandemic for a certain context, namely the Western, she nevertheless is

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<sup>28</sup> Two issues have to be acknowledged, though: Firstly, a photographer, trying to make a living from his profession, is faced with numerous limiting dynamics within the global media business and organisations, such as editorial processes attributable to general, political ideologies or the assumed effects of sensationalist tactics in terms of an increase of the quotas. Secondly, this might present the photographer with a ‘catch-22-kind’ of methodological problem, if he/she wants to reach publication: it seems difficult to convince editors of the sale’s and content value of a more balanced and respectful portrayal of a subject matter, such as a positive, thus non-sensational imagery of people living with HIV/AIDS; such photographs might simply not get published in the competitive media business. The saying ‘if it bleeds, it leads’ proves very true, in this respect.

Of course, it could also be argued that a Western editor from the so-called global centre is more likely to approve of - what has been perceived of as a disrespectful and, thus, racist portrayal by the objectors when the photographic subjects belong to another, traditionally believed inferior race. Since all these thoughts constitute contestable assumptions, it would be very useful, among other things, to establish how the portrayed Zambians themselves feel about the photographs. According to Van Kesteren (in interview, 2001), none of the photographs were taken without the consent of the subjects. He, moreover, states that in some instances it was neither allowed nor morally justifiable for him to take a photograph. Often, so he claims, the methodology used was participant observation. For example: “Every photograph of this book has been made with the help of Zambian people, of black Zambians” (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001), who introduced the photographer to different photographic sites and the people portrayed in the pictures. The Zambian AIDS activist Clement Mufuzi, for example, played a vital role in this respect by serving as Van Kesteren’s informant (interview with Van Kesteren, 2001). An attempt to contact Mufuzi for interviewing has been made. However, he could not be reached.

opposed to its stereotypical character, pointing out its potential effects on certain sectors of the South African audience, which, in her view, is likely to identify with the portrayed subjects in the pictures due to their race. In a letter to the editor, Dalrymple attempts “to offer some context into the kind of issues that might have influenced the organisers’ decision (or lack thereof)” to turn down Van Kesteren’s photographs for exhibition:

Among some of the influences I speculated about was the simple historical fact that South African audiences come from a variety of backgrounds in which an appreciation of images of misery and disease has been subject to severe political, religious and cultural censorship over a period of generations. This ultimately does ... translate ... into a lack of information into issues beyond the image itself (Dalrymple in *Mail & Guardian*, July 21-27: 35).

It follows that Dalrymple’s agenda includes raising contextual awareness. However, it might be argued that a decision to have the photographs exhibited, accompanied by an appropriate contextualisation of the representational concerns, could have been a way of raising awareness as well. Of course, a project like this would have to involve the right exhibition space, taking the potential audience, their needs and informational status into account. A Community Programme with under-aged school children might have been problematic. Generally, though, an exhibition might have been valuable for stimulating a public debate on the issues generated. It could have provided the South African public with an opportunity to discuss crucial issues of concern, for example such as the ones raised by the objectors regarding the imaging of HIV/AIDS (the conventional Western depiction of the African ‘Other’ living with HIV/AIDS in terms of stereotyping, victimisation and racism) as well as its possible implications and effects on the diverse sectors of the South African audience and the ‘public sphere’ in general.

Being strongly opposed to the reinforcement of stereotypes through photography, Motlhabani agrees with Dalrymple (interviews with Dalrymple, 2000 and 2001) on the need for raising awareness and the negative or distorted message of the ‘Other’ that a stereotypical portrayal of Africa might transmit:

The likelihood is that a person from another country is gonna go “O-oh o-o-oh the poor people in Africa.” No-one is gonna say, “But you know what, there are all these people in Morocco, in Sudan, all these oil Sheiks who have got all this money, and they actually live like kings and princesses. Well, during the conference, and before the conference, we have phone calls of people saying ‘where are we going to stay?’. We have people literally forcing us to send pictures of the 5 star hotels we claim to be had in South Africa ... We actually had to show pictures of the beaches, of the hotels, of the tarred roads in South



Africa in order for them to believe. We had questions like “Are you sure I am not going to be mauled by lions and tigers”. I promise you, I swear on my honour, we got questions like that (Motlhabani in interview, 2001).

These incidents seem to confirm the tradition of intellectually constructing the ‘Other’ from a First World perspective, which has developed in ways that reflect the relation between the depicted societies under observation and those from which the observers originated. Motlhabani’s statement echoes Fabian’s point that “the Other is never simply given, never just found or encountered, but *made*. To me, investigations into ‘othering’ are investigations into the production of anthropology’s object” (1990: 208; see also Fiske, 1993: 150). Academically dominant ways of describing ‘Others’, for example, discredited or suppressed the way these ‘Others’ preferred to describe themselves (Tomaselli, 1996).

Taken out of its academic context, it could be argued that this statement is, in the opinion of the objectors, applicable to the case in question: Van Kesteren’s way of visually describing the Zambian HIV/AIDS pandemic contradicts, discredits and suppresses – in the view of Dalrymple and Motlhabani – the way the portrayed subjects and the South African audience would prefer to describe themselves. Speaking for themselves, the objectors are opposed to what they call the stereotypical portrayal of black Africans in Van Kesteren’s photographs. Referring to Van Amerongen’s and Van Kesteren’s (2000) promise to provide the reader with a “blood-curdling reportage about love and death, hope and despair, and the daily life that, despite everything, continues” (Van Kesteren & Van Amerongen, 2000: reverse cover), Dalrymple for example questions the message that a person living outside South Africa or Africa would get: “Hey, that’s how people live in South Africa, that’s very interesting. Yeah, that’s the sort of thing they do” (Dalrymple in interview, 2001); as well as the possible response of the portrayed subjects or other black Africans to such stereotypical portrayal:

But, when it’s Africans reading it, I think they think rather differently and they wonder: Why are we being portrayed in this particular way? ... Why are we being portrayed sitting on a bed, bare-breasted? ... So, that’s part of our daily life, which it is not, of course ... It’s a serious, typical view, in a sense, of Africa, isn’t it? Presenting Africans as victims; as people, who go around bare-breasted; as people, whose babies are always dying; ... there are plenty of coffins, and all these sorts of religious pictures as well; people, who rely on religions of different kinds - Christian, and traditional religions (Dalrymple in interview, 2001).

Stressing that HIV/AIDS affects communities across the racial divide in South Africa, Motlhabani emphasises that HIV/AIDS “is everyone’s problem.” She essentially assumes the

same about the *Zambian situation*<sup>29</sup> and, thus, identifies herself with Van Kesteren's photographic subjects (without acknowledging the differences in cultural backgrounds, though):

I'm seeing black people, so the first thing I assume is: They are people from my village. Remember, I am a rural person ... How could they have allowed a picture like that to be taken? That's the first thing I think and so I feel insulted. It's gonna take a lot for you to debrief me and to tell me otherwise (Motlhabani in interview, 2001).

Besides emphasizing the objectors' thesis that the depicted Zambians would have preferred to visually describe themselves differently, this quote also points to the fact that Van Kesteren's pictures are neither situated spatially and time-wise nor do they provide any socio-historical context; instead they seem 'frozen in time and space' - a common feature of anthropology's construction of the 'Other' - in two ways: Firstly, there is no distinction visible between Zambia and other parts of black Africa in Van Kesteren's photographs. And, indirectly the quote implies a difference in (temporal) development between Zambia or any black African country (because of the lack of spatial situation) and Euro-American states. According to Fabian (1983), concepts of time seem to be one of the most powerful metaphors of 'Otherness', placing the 'Other' at an earlier point on a linear time-scale than the 'Self' and its society of origin. This does not only differentiate, but also distance the non-European 'Other' from the European 'Self', while at the same time reinforcing the notion of the formers 'backwardness'.

Van Kesteren himself for example, points out the importance of his photograph 'Traditional healer Dr. Syungi treating two Aids patients, Kaoma, 1999' (see Appendix D) depicting the exorcism of the 'AIDS demon', which he calls the 'best shot in the book' (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001). His surprise and non-understanding for the portrayed's belief in traditional healing in the context of a disease as HIV/AIDS - a disease that has so far not been curable even within the scientific context - in a way signify that he applies a notion of 'backwardness' in his interpretation of the cultural belief system of his *Zambian 'Other'*. Linking the nature of personal identity to time concepts, Olivia Harris states:

Positing the existence of different times evokes the possibility of racial differences between social groups both in their understanding of the person and human agency, and in their experience of the world. And this in turn leads to comparison with our own time concepts; if our time is different from the time of others, and if our time is scientifically based, then by extension the time of others is not (Harris, 1991: 148).

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<sup>29</sup> The photographer, however, explains that, apart from one white Dutch doctor, he only met black Zambians in relation to his research on HIV/AIDS (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001).

Thus, there is a clash between Van Kesteren's European, positivist perspective, influenced by the progress of science and technology, and the so-called traditional approach of the rural Zambians regarding the potential cure for HIV/AIDS in this particular photograph. The dualistic concepts of time and space in terms of the 'Same' and the 'Other' are, hence, not neutral, but incorporate a notion of judgement according to the seemingly different stages of development. The danger of such a portrayal: essentialism. As Motlhabani points out:

I do not like what I am calling the insinuation that what is true for Zambia is true for the rest of Africa, because I don't find text that clearly insists ... 'please remember, dear reader, this is true for Zambia'. And the socio-economic of Zambia are not the same as those of Ghana and Tanzania, and [South] Africa and Zimbabwe. Make that clear, because not even the climate is the same (Motlhabani in interview, 2001).

While acknowledging the pluralism of African states and their peoples in this statement on one hand, Motlhabani however is prone to a similar essentialism on the other hand - by identifying herself racially with the portrayed (see also 'Contesting claims of authority'). As for Van Kesteren's photographs, captions would have at least in parts counteracted an essentialist reading of them. Motlhabani would prefer the photographer to depict the issue of HIV/AIDS differently in order to avoid stereotyping of black Africans:

I would feel so much happier as a person if some of the pictures in here showed other races, and how they too are battling. Do not just show black beggars and black sex workers; show the sophisticated or so-called sophisticated white sex workers and the white beggars and the white AIDS orphans, because they are there. I feel much better with that. I also feel much better if you showed the bit of the rural white culture, because it is there (Motlhabani in interview, 2001).<sup>30</sup>

Jan Nederveen Pieterse identifies the question of the representation of 'Otherness' as "part of the general question of representation and stereotyping in human cognition, perception, memory and communication" (1992: 225). Hence, representations of 'Otherness' are a special instance of the general problem of stereotyping.<sup>31</sup> "Otherness, or alterity, is constituted on the one hand by *identity* – boundaries of inclusion and exclusion for the individual or group - and on the other by *hierarchy*, for the *difference* between identity and alterity, or self and others, is not neutral but charged with meaning and value" (Pieterse, 1992: 225-226). For example, anthropology has differentiated between the 'Other' and the Western 'Same', defining

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<sup>30</sup> In a personal communication (June 14, 2002), Van Kesteren however, emphasizes that Zambia and South Africa are not the same. According to him, there do not exist white beggars in Zambia. His perception thus supports the thesis of Motlhabani's essentialism.

<sup>31</sup> Pieterse (1992) defines the concept of stereotypes as "oversimplified mental images" (225).

'savage man' as its object, and regarding the 'same' as the subject.<sup>32</sup> This has reinforced many of the Western myths of Africa's darkness:<sup>33</sup> e.g. stereotypical images of Africans, such as primitivism, cannibalism, gluttony, fetishism, sexual promiscuity, and heathenism – a notion that even remains today (cf. Tomaselli, 1996) and, arguably, informs mainstream Western representations of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

According to Treichler (1999), discourse about AIDS seems often based on

the premise that any infectious disease is a knowable biological phenomenon whose strange and seemingly contradictory aspects are ultimately illusory: decoded by experts, its mysteries will one by one become controllable material realities. Discourse about AIDS in the Third World shares but exaggerates this premise, first equating the Third World (especially Africa, "the dark continent") with the savage, the alien, or the incomprehensible, then asserting the importance and achievability of reason and control. Although these two features may seem to be in conflict, they exist in fact in a relation of discursive symbiosis: the metaphors of mystery and otherness produce the desire for control, which is in turn fulfilled and justified by the metaphors of otherness and mystery (Treichler, 1999: 100-101).

Metaphors surrounding the utter hopelessness of being infected with HIV/AIDS - the dead-end road, created by the powerful, visual depiction of the dying and ravaged, may contribute to an increase in further processes of 'Othering' and mystification among certain sectors of society. Given the worrying and steadily rising rate of people infected with HIV/AIDS in South Africa, constructed myths about the virus and its effects might have important implications and consequences for the functioning and emotional well-being of the society at large.

Relating to Van Kesteren's photographic depiction of the dying - in other words, the portrayal of absolute hopelessness as a result of an infection with the disease - Motlhabani points to the danger of spreading myths about HIV/AIDS in current day South African society and, thus, the urgent need to counteract them. According to her, the continuation of 'the same destructive message' leads to the belief that: "Don't worry about life. If you have HIV, you are dead." For her, the logical consequence is a link-up with other forms of myths prevalent

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<sup>32</sup> For an explanation of the roots of the myth of African savagery, see, for example, Tomaselli (1996: 92).

<sup>33</sup> Often, paradigms such as Africa's darkness serve the dominant political and economic interests in the social scientist's society of origin and of ruling classes in general, which seek to require knowledge about the dominated object (Tomaselli, 1996: 93). "Academia has, in many instances, become the myth-making process where factories called universities shape scientific explanations and descriptions in terms of dominant scientific 'paradigms'. These paradigms, as social and public texts, are really Western forms of myth" (Tomaselli, 1996: 94). Myths that are also mirrored in many conventional Western media representations of Africa (cf. *New African*, July 2000), in general, and 'Africa and AIDS', in particular.

among certain sectors of South African society, namely that: “If you sleep with virgins, ... then you’ll be cleansed. You must rape a woman, and you’ll be cleansed; rape six-month old babies, you’ll be cleansed” (Motlhabani in interview, 2001). Such myths might lead to stereotypical beliefs among, for example, the European sector of South African society, on the other hand, emphasising the ‘primitivism’, animalism and fetishism of its African ‘Other’. This reinforcement of longstanding stereotypical beliefs about the cultural ‘Other’, in turn, does certainly not contribute to a furthering of intercultural understanding and tolerance in South Africa, but rather to more separation and intolerance.

According to Pieterse (1992: 230), the negative stereotypes of non-Europeans by Europeans, such as savagery, bestiality, cannibalism and incest, were initially true of Europeans themselves. Westerners, then, were not very different from what anthropology considers the ‘Other’ and it has been argued that anthropology seeks to discover the collective and cultural unconscious of its own societies<sup>34</sup> (Tomaselli, 1996: 17). It follows that the study of the non-European ‘Other’ equals Western anthropologists studying their own societies. In Johannes Fabian’s (1990) words: “Our ways of making the Other are ways of making Ourselves. The need to go *there* (to exotic places, be they far away or around the corner) is really our desire to be *here* (to find or defend our position in the world)” (Fabian, 1990: 756).

Van Kesteren’s motivation for working on assignments abroad is a case in point. He defines his ‘need to go’ to Zambia and other foreign locations in relation to his own country, his Dutch identity and ‘desire’ to defend his position in the world:

There is no news in Holland that matters to me. I mean, this is the most beautiful and perfect country created so far. It is open, it is liberal, it has the biggest democracy. You can have a very free life, and I do not see any reasons to put so much efforts to my talents here in Holland. I think, there is a much bigger, bigger world, and I consider it also as a responsibility that we have as a very rich, democratic country to other countries to do so. We should take care also and think about other cultures and other countries, which are in a much worse situation than we are. We have a good situation (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001).

In a way then, Van Kesteren applies not only an understanding of foreign cultures as the ‘Other’, through which, it could be argued, he attempts to establish, define and understand his European ‘Self’, but also a notion of distance in time and space (cf. Fabian, 1983; and Harris, 1991) in relation to the developmental stage of the non-European countries that he explores.

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<sup>34</sup> Tomaselli (1996) identifies Rouch’s use of the anti-logic of surrealism in his films as perhaps the only sustained attempt of “twentieth century academia to address this problem” (17).

In Fabian's (1990) words, Van Kesteren's "urge to write ethnography is about making the *then* into a *now*. In this move from then to now, the making of knowledge out of experience occurs. Both movements, from here to there and from then to now, converge in what I called presence. This is the way I would define the process of othering" (Fabian, 1990: 756).

Moreover, it could be argued that Van Kesteren's visit to Zambia, the location of the 'Other', provides relief from the "alienation and fragmentation of ... modern [life]" (Garland & Gordon, 1999: 272) in the Netherlands and that, through "contact with those perceived to be ... symbolic opposites", he gains reassurance that he is – in Elizabeth Garlands and Robert J. Gordon's words - himself worthy and whole: "Through exposure to the authentic Other, the Self shores up a sense of its own authenticity" (Garland & Gordon, 1999: 272). Therefore, it might be the quality of difference that is most attractive in the drive for self-discovery. According to Garland and Gordon (1999: 274), a central paradox in this spatial and metaphysical journey is that it requires the tribe to be simultaneously lost and found. The 'lost' tribe emerges not from distant and inaccessible terrain, but from the "(alienated) bourgeois imagination of tourists" (Garland and Gordon, 1999: 274). Western nostalgia and search for authenticity are in fact "components of the conquering spirit of modernity – the grounds of its unifying consciousness" (MacCannell, 1976, 1989: 3).

According to Ferguson (1998), in many debates about representations of 'race', the concept of the 'Other' is used as a means of imposing meaning rather than negotiating meaning through dialogue, with the result "that the concept of the Other has become an ideological signifier of considerable discursive power. Once the *negotiation* of meaning has been relegated in importance, the category of otherness becomes something against which I can measure myself, usually as a representative of the normal" (Ferguson, 1998: 68). In Van Kesteren's European perspective, the Zambians living with HIV/AIDS - and, therefore, in need of help - seem to have become the Other, his 'binary companion[s]' (Ferguson, 1998: 68) to his 'normality'. Van Kesteren and his photographic subjects are not, however, equal discursive partners, and it seems that, for Dalrymple and Motlhabani, it was "only a small step, analytically, to argue that [his] Eurocentric thinking was likely to be racist thinking" (Ferguson, 1998: 69).

## Contesting claims of authority

The analysis of the controversy, so far, has shown that both the photographer and the objectors come in from different, ideological perspectives, which translate into and manifest themselves in two varying editorial processes. This research suggests that these processes are explainable by their individual parties' socio-historical background, as well as their race, gender and class. Defining himself as a 'political activist', who uses his camera as a means to give his photographic subjects a 'voice' - a notion that has been widely contested<sup>35</sup> - in their fight/struggle for dignity, equality and access to resources, Van Kesteren seems strongly influenced by his European socialisation in terms of his positivist approach (see Section Two) concerning his professionalism: For example, he is of the 'conventional' opinion that his photographs reflect an existing, outer reality of 'truth' and that he, therefore, serves as and uses his talents (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001) for being its messenger. This is reminiscent of longstanding, Western anthropological traditions of exploring the world and its cultures for the home audience. It also implies a lack of self-reflexivity (see Section Two).

Both Dalrymple's (a South African academic and AIDS activist) and Motlhabani's ideological stance and background differ hugely from the one of the photographer. They live in the 'new' South African society, which has to deal with the legacy of apartheid and has been undergoing a process and discourse of 'transformation', which according to Steenveld (2002: 3) dates back to the first democratic elections in 1994 (cf. also Marais, 1998). This means, for example, rethinking the state and civil society, understanding the political structures, reconciling the past and constituting not only a new national identity based on the principles of "non-racialism and non-sexism" (Constitution of RSA, 1996: 3, in Steenveld, 2002: 3), but arguably also one's own. Steenveld calls this "the privileged discourse of the new nation" (2002: 3-4) and further states:

It is thus in this way that the discourse of transformation has been framed in terms of addressing issues of 'racial' and gender inequalities, as opposed to, for example, questions concerning class inequalities. The importance of communication in relation to citizenship, is that it is one of the means by which citizenship is developed and secured. Communications are necessary for making citizens aware of their rights; they provide access to the variety of information citizens need to make informed political decisions; and they provide the means through which citizens "recognize themselves and their aspirations in the range of representations" which confirm and construct their

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<sup>35</sup> The notion of voice in this context has been contested: For a discussion, see for example Spivak (1988), who asks: 'Can the subaltern speak?' See also, Barnett (1997).

personhood, and their identity as citizens ... the media are judged by the extent to which they facilitate and promote the various dimensions of citizenship (Steenveld, 2002: 4).

Dalrymple's and Motlhabani's discursive objections have to be seen in this light, and this research suggests that there is no way that they could have put forward their objections and stand somehow outside ideology and the ideological, as is equally the case with the photographer. However, it seems important "to recognise that theories of ideology and the ideological do not lead to a single or a necessarily fixed position for the reader or researcher" (Ferguson, 1998: 10). This is evident in the fact that Dalrymple tries to reconcile her view with the photographer's Euro-centric approach by arguing that, given the right context, his photographs 'have got their own right' (Dalrymple in interview, 2001)<sup>36</sup>, while Motlhabani seems to be ideologically positioned at the opposite end of the spectrum in relation to Van Kesteren.

Being a 'woman of colour' (Brush, 2001: 171), Motlhabani's view seems determined by her own 'race consciousness': Relating to de Lauretis (1986), Brush points out that "race consciousness denotes a politicised, oppositional consciousness of race and racism. Race consciousness means knowing *that* and *how* the personal is political, that and how the possibilities of one's existence are enmeshed with social conditions" (2001: 171). As Motlhabani emphasises:

This country is still reeling from racism and my personal views have to come in, because I cannot just see any person, black or white, just wanting to insist on any issue without me thinking issues of race, issues of gender. I am a woman. He is a man. Issues of class. I have to think like that. I have been exposed to those issues. ... The effects and the impact of racism, as based on the skin colour of a person, the sores and the scars are still very raw. And, then, a picture or pictures of death and dying and sadness and mortality, which are ... taken by a white person, get easier translated into: it's a racist picture (Motlhabani in interview, 2001).

Having grown up in the 'old', apartheid South Africa, a society structured on a profound distortion of power and based on the philosophical foundation of racialism (Steenveld, 2002) – meaning "the premise that 'race' is a possible means of categorizing human beings" (Appiah in Steenveld, 2002: 3) - as a member of a class and race that was officially considered and treated as unequal to the privileged white population or, to be more precise,

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<sup>36</sup> Dalrymple (in interview, 2001) further states that "it is unfair, in a way, to look at bits of an exhibition. It would be like taking a little bit out of a play and just analyzing that without looking at it within its whole context". However, the photographer himself has chosen a particular set of photographs for presentation in the



institutionally oppressed due to the ideology of racism, Motlhabani thus seems fully aware that “race is understood as a central constituent of identity, that race is, or becomes, recognized as a basis of domination or privilege” (Brush, 2001: 171). Thus, her stance on the controversial photographs can be understood as a point of resistance (cf. Brush, 2001; and Friedman, 1995) to former and existing power relations.

Van Kesteren, on the other hand, adopts a rather defensive position concerning his race and gender: He, for example, states that the objectors “are just against my photographs, because I am male and white. And, I am not an academic. ... But, I have only seen black people in Zambia and what’s going on is insane” (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001). Thus, although Van Kesteren acknowledges his constant struggle with his ‘Eurocentric past and present’ in a personal communication (June 14, 2002), it could be argued that he nevertheless feels ‘othered’ and victimised by the objectors and hence fails to recognise and articulate the racial and gendered dimensions of his photography, the resulting encounter with the objectors and the issues generated in the controversy. Arguably, these dimensions might have translated unconsciously into his photography and become evident for a ‘race and gender conscious’ viewer, for example in his at times ‘sexist’ (Motlhabani in interview, 2001) portrayal of the female Zambians living with HIV/AIDS. The photograph at the rural hospital depicting the gynaecological examination of a young female patient, as discussed in the first section of this chapter, is a case in point.

Taking the point further, it could be argued that the objections to the photographs imply that Van Kesteren fails to examine his racial privileges and racist actions in relation to his photographic subjects.<sup>37</sup> His remark, “me racist? I am married to a black woman and I have coloured children. How could I be racist? I see it as my duty to fight against racism” (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001), indicates not only that Van Kesteren strongly believes in his capability and wish to represent his subjects in a morally and ethically correct manner, but also his helplessness stemming from the accusations of being racist. What might be at stake in this complex, intercultural conflict, is a form of ‘symbolic power’ (Bourdieu, 1991), rooted in and explainable by the photographer’s socialisation in a European society and culture: “Symbolic power is that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of

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first place. Moreover, he also chose not to provide the viewer with captions, which would have, if not (partially) avoided a misrepresentation, guided the viewer by pointing out the intended message.

<sup>37</sup> It has to be acknowledged, though, that Van Kesteren (2001) repeatedly points out in his interview that he feels very privileged in terms of his origins from a wealthy, democratic country, which allows him, for example freedom of expression and access to privileged resources, such as medical provision.

those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even themselves exercise it” (Bourdieu, 1991: 164). Although Bourdieu’s term ‘symbolic power’ does not refer to contemporary societies, in which power seems to be broken down/fragmented, there seems to exist a dominant culture in European societies that veils the prevalent power relations. Could it be argued then, that Van Kesteren exercises racism against his own will?<sup>38</sup>

Taking this argumentation further, this research suggests that a member from a Euro-American society which has a longstanding, historical tradition of depicting and constructing the ‘Other’ in terms of difference might never fully succeed in abandoning racist tendencies, unless he or she fulfils the “virtually impossible task of negating one’s very being” and ‘Self’: Exactly, “because one’s culture is what formed that being” (JanMohammed, 1985: 65; see also Kahn, 1995: 9). Abdul JanMohammed (1985: 65) has further suggested that: “Genuine and thorough comprehension of Otherness is possible only if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions, and ideology of his culture.” And, this applies not only for the photographer, but the objectors as well, since

by implication the authority of the postcolonial interpreter is [...] established by his/her cultural identity. Contrary to the view that postcolonialism is a genuinely pluralistic, that is non-power laden discourse, power is here once again reintroduced into postcolonial discourse: first, by establishing specific criteria – the ability to ‘bracket’ one’s own cultural values and/or the possession of a particular cultural identity – as prerequisites for the creators of interpretation, hence empowering some and not others as capable of authenticity; and, second, by introducing culture, as Said has reminded us a concept inevitably saturated with power, once again into the equation (this time the cultural identity of the author) (Kahn, 1995: 9).

Thus, in spite of the differences in terms of their ideological perspectives, the photographer and the objectors do have one important characteristic of the controversial encounter in common: Both conflicting parties claim authority for representation by ‘speaking on behalf’ (Barnett, 1997) of the Zambian subjects – an action which constitutes a form of essentialist power. While Van Kesteren claims to speak on behalf of the Zambians living with HIV/AIDS ‘in need of help’ (Van Kesteren in interview, 2001) by giving them a ‘voice’ with his camera, Dalrymple and Motlhabani, as Africans, claim to speak on behalf of African people in general (regardless of the pluralistic differences in cultural backgrounds between the objectors and the observed) and the Zambian population, foremost the females, in particular by raising political and ethical concerns about the encounter between the Western photographer (the ‘Same’) and

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<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Weiss (2001) who conducted research among ‘activists against racism’ in present day Germany, which showed that, in spite of their consciousness of racism and activism against it, proved prone to

the African subject (the 'Other'). Representation in this context is, thus, understood as 'speaking on behalf' of 'Others'. Claims of this kind are unavoidable and also affect this research, in that it takes part in the knowledge production on the controversy.

According to Linda Alcoff, the "practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as the one who correctly understands the truth about another's situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise" (1991: 29). Anyone "who speaks for others should only do so out of a concrete analysis of the particular power relations and discursive effects involved" (Alcoff, 1991: 24). Thus, it seems crucial for the photographer and the objectors not only to regard the nature of ethics and power in the relationships that develop between the observing 'Same' and observed 'Other', but also, in the case of the objectors and this research, to critically examine one's own social location and context and how this affects the discursive or representational practice in this controversy (see Alcoff, 1991: 25): in other words, to be self-reflexive. Neither the media professional, in this case the photographer, nor, as Elana Bregin (2000: 87) suggests, the academic (in this case, the objectors as well as the author of this dissertation) can ever be invisible from his/her own work. Thus, the "interpretative authority of the contemporary scholar must also be acknowledged as having its own limits" (Barnett, 1997: 139), when questioning the authority of the observing Western 'Same'.<sup>39</sup>

In other words, scholars seeking to analyse questions around representational processes of 'Othering' (regarding the encounter between the Western 'Same' and the African 'Other') must be aware of their own position within the 'Other/Same' duality - for the following reason: By questioning Van Kesteren's authority to represent the Zambian HIV/AIDS pandemic, they themselves assume the privileged status of authoring and ascribing meaning. Representation, understood in this context, has mainly been about the "struggle for the historical right to signify" (Bhabha, 1992: 49). Applied to the case under investigation, the following question arises: Who (Van Kesteren, Dalrymple, Motlhabani or the academic scholar) has the discursive power to 'speak' over those who are (seemingly) 'voiceless' (the portrayed Zambians)?

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this form of symbolic power.

<sup>39</sup> Relating to Jehlen (1993), Barnett (1997: 139) notes that "there is a dual temptation when analysing colonial discourses of appropriating the voice of the dispossessed in order to speak on their behalf, and simultaneously appropriating the omnipotent rhetoric of imperialist discourse itself in order to provide authoritative counternarratives."

According to Clive Barnett (1997), a variety of oppositional political discourses, such as 'First World Feminism' (see also Cheung, 1993), routinely feature the privileging of 'speech' or 'voice' as the signifiers of empowerment and the concomitant representation of oppression and disempowerment as 'silence' (Barnett, 1997: 139). He further states that

this rhetorical schema secretes a particular set of values and understandings of representation, which in turn informs particular determinations of 'politics'. In this respect, colonial discourse theory is of interest because in interrogating the practices of representation which were instrumental in the historical denial of the 'voice' of subjugated groups, it simultaneously opens up to questioning the metaphysics of 'speech' and 'silence' through which this epistemic violence is usually represented. (Barnett, 1997: 139)

Relating Barnett's theorisation of metaphors of 'speech' and 'silence' to the controversy under investigation, two sets, both constituting discursive forms of power in their own right, emerge. Firstly, what might be called the objector's model: Van Kesteren's 'speech' versus the portrayed subjects 'silence'. In this case, Van Kesteren's 'speech' (his photographic texts) is equated with the right, ability and power to construct and represent the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zambia. Thus, the photographer's "speech is equated with self-expression" (Barnett, 1997: 140) and, as a result, issues of race and gender. This metaphorical form of empowerment is juxtaposed with the - of what the objectors perceive of as an oppressive and disempowering - 'silence' of the portrayed Zambians. 'Silence' in this view is understood in negative terms as an absence, as passivity, exclusion, marginality (Barnett, 1997: 140) and lack of agency. The objectors, for example, implied that the subjects of the photographs had little or no agency in the processes of representation, dissemination and distribution. However, an analysis of this implication would involve "disputes over how far agency is possible when discursive formations are understood to construct subjectivities" (Barnett, 1997: 138) as well as the conduction of interviews with the portrayed subjects (which would exceed the limits of this dissertation and not be possible because of the nature of the case).<sup>40</sup> This first model of metaphors of 'speech' and 'silence' could be varied by including the objectors' 'speech', expressing their identification with and favour for the so-called 'silenced' Zambians.

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<sup>40</sup> Barnett refers here to the discipline of colonial discourse, which views colonialist knowledge as projected onto colonised subjects which are essentially passive to its production. He relates to Said's *Orientalism* as a "mode of imaginative geography through which Western territorial expansion was discursively prefigured at the level of culture" (Barnett, 1997: 138). Barnett insists that "it is from this predominant understanding that the dilemmas of theorising agency in colonial discourse theory are derived" (Barnett, 1997: 139).

However, Barnett (relating to Cheung, 1993; and Miller, 1990) argues that equating speech and voice with agency is in need for reconsideration, since it “might not always be identical to an acquisition of power, as well as the ways in which the mobilisation of silence might be a means of articulating agency” (Barnett, 1997: 140). Thus, Barnett resists the tendency to view silencing negatively as being silent, and instead suggests the appreciation of “ways in which action and resistance can take forms other than those which are routinely represented by figures of full voice” (Barnett, 1997: 140). In other words, he chooses to interpret silence as a form of power. This makes for interesting reading, while at the same time proving valuable for the second possible interpretation of the controversy in terms of Barnett’s metaphors of ‘speech’ and ‘silence’.

Hence, this research, secondly, suggests a juxtaposition of Van Kesteren’s ‘speech’ (his photographic texts) versus Dalrymple and Motlhabani’s ‘silence’ (the non-selection of the photographs for display on the Cultural Programme of the conference). Silence, in this case, represents a form of power and is mobilised as a means to articulate agency in that it decides over the ‘invisibility’ of Van Kesteren’s photographs by choosing not to have them exhibited. In the same line of thought, Van Kesteren’s ‘speech’, in the first place, can be equated with ‘visibility’: If it was not for Van Kesteren’s photographs, the Zambians living with HIV/AIDS would not be ‘visible’ or, in other words, an object of discussion. This, of course, leads back to two central questions: To represent or not to represent (Gates, 1991)? And, who has the right to authoritatively speak about others or, to repeat Bhabha’s words (1992), to signify?

## Conclusion

The analysis of the controversy around Van Kesteren's photographic representation has served as a window to investigate issues of Western representation of the African 'Other'. It has revealed that Van Kesteren's photographs are social constructs which reflect and reveal relations of power and domination. Seen in an anthropological light, they mirror Western traditions of depicting the African 'Other', in terms of difference and distance in time and space (e.g. regarding the 'backward' approach to finding solutions to HIV/AIDS), on the one hand, and idealisation (regarding the observed's strengths and sense of survival), on the other hand. This is a good illustration of the paradox, which lies at the heart of anthropological knowledge: Anthropology combines "an Enlightenment passion for universal knowledge with a Romantic espousal of the relativity of cultures and disavowal of a single generalizable category of reason" (Harris, 1991: 154). It was argued that Van Kesteren's work might have been motivated by his urge to negotiate and question his own place in the world and identity via the construction of his 'Other'.

Both Van Kesteren's representational process as well as the objectors' stance on it constitute two differing editorial processes, concerning the conference's theme 'Breaking the Silence'. While the photographer aimed at shocking his potential audience into awareness by depicting the unsettling harsh side of the disease, the objector's aimed at creating an atmosphere of hope, understanding and support for people living with HIV/AIDS in order to overcome stigmatisation, taboos and myths about the disease. In short, the objectors are concerned with the portrayed subjects and the South African audience. Thus, their objections to the photographs are of an ideological rather than aesthetical nature and have raised ethical and political concerns about Van Kesteren's representational process.

As was shown, subjectivity influences both the construction and interpretation of representation. The different editorial processes, thus, have to be seen in the light of their author's institutional positionality; in terms of their socio-historical background, as well as their class, gender and race. Van Kesteren, a white middle-class male who believes in positivist notions of an externally existing 'truth', has been spatially and ideologically placed within a Western context and classical anthropological traditions of intellectually constructing the 'Other'. Despite his personal belief to the contrary, it has been argued that he might be prone to Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic power', which is - for a critical eye - reflected in his

'violent' representation. Van Kesteren can be placed outside the (mainly) academic context of the objectors, which emphasises the additional ethical and political responsibility that he carries: Through his photography and 'political activism', he has the power to reach and influence wide audiences. Thus, requiring the need for self-reflexivity.

The objectors, on the other hand, have been institutionally positioned in present day, post-apartheid South Africa, which explains their critical stance on the photographic representation and the issues generated by the controversy. Dalrymple's and Motlhabani's 'post-colonial' approach reminds of the critical anthropological perspective with its plea for reflexivity. Dalrymple adopts quite a reflective and reconciling stance on Van Kesteren's photographs, by acknowledging their value for a certain, Western context, while at the same time emphasising that her agenda was different. Motlhabani, however, objects entirely. For her, the pictures are racist reproductions of the colonial gaze, 'othering' their subjects via means of stereotyping and victimisation and thus, disempowering them. Both objectors have interpreted and constructed the context of Van Kesteren's photography as exemplary of a certain form of Western representation without any aesthetic judgement, but a strong emphasis on the political value – a highly instrumentalized understanding of aesthetics with a denial of the dualism between art and politics.

Representation of the African 'Other' in this case is thus a contested terrain (based on a simplistic dualism concerning the cultural 'Same' and the exotic 'Other') which can never be neutral or value free. The striking divergences in the way Van Kesteren, Dalrymple and Motlhabani refer to the culture of the 'Other' and their own culture and the values attached to it signify this. In the controversy, the same photographic texts are moved from Van Kesteren's context to Dalrymple and Motlhabani's. These contexts are characterized by alternative ideological and political imperatives, and the pictures are subjected to different and shifting political evaluations. Assuming that meaning in media is produced through representation, meaning is hence culturally, socially and politically specific.

By discussing notions of 'speaking on behalf' of 'Others' and the 'rhetorical representation of empowerment and disempowerment' (Barnett, 1997) through metaphors of 'speech' and 'silence', some of the limits of the representation of power relations have been revealed. Not only the photographs present a form of power, but also the objector's reading of them as well

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as this academic work: Choosing not to have the photographs exhibited ('silence') for example, also constitutes (counter-hegemonic) discursive power. As Barnett states:

The deconstruction of the conventional metaphors of speech and silence calls into view the irreducible textuality of the work of representation. This implies that questions about institutional positionality and academic authority be kept squarely in sight when discussing the problems of representing the struggles and agency of marginalised social groups (Barnett, 1997: 137).

The regime of representation is thus a system of knowledge production, implying issues of power and inequality. It has to be understood as a discursive site of power relationships, an arena for oppositional political discourses, of which adversary parties consider themselves responsible.

The fallacy seems to be the risk of reducing the encounter between the Western 'Same' and the African 'Other' to a simplistic, essentialist dualism between "good guys and bad guys" (Barnett, 1997: 141) or in terms of identity, 'black against white'. Rather than deploying essentialism when discussing issues of representation, shouldn't identity for example in the New South Africa be understood in a pluralistic manner, rather than through a reversion to the categories deployed by the apartheid state? As Ferguson points out:

Ideological analysis is about much more than identifying or spotting the *negative* in any media representation. It is also about recognising the semiotic and discursive contradictions and tensions within a representation or set of representations. At the core of these contradictions and tensions, there is the potential to challenge particular power relations and concepts of identity. In need of most urgent challenge are those media representations which foster either racism or hopelessness (Ferguson, 1998: 5-6).



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