



Figure 1 *Safe from Harm*, 2012, digital c-print. Dimensions variable. © Richard Mosse.
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

RICHARD MOSSE'S *ENCLAVE*

Dream of the Celt

Deborah Frizzell

Abstract The Irish artist Richard Mosse's *The Enclave* (2013), a six-screen video, photography, and sound installation made over several years in and around Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, was featured in the Pavilion of Ireland at the Fifty-fifth Venice Biennale and at Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Shot with infrared Kodak Aerochrome film, Mosse's *Enclave* became a locus for debates about contemporary aesthetic strategies, especially within photography, and the ethics of deploying the shock of the sublime to elicit both empathy and questioning, exposing the viewer/participant to the tensions of attraction and aversion that oscillate within the sublime. I argue that Mosse's visual/aural strategies, by running counter to those programmed within the image supply chain dominated by mass-produced culture, set in motion jarring ambiguities that an uneasy audience must struggle with or at least decode. Mosse engages the critical points at which given sign systems break down, become porous or malleable, and where glitches and short circuits upset our blasé habits and routines of consumption. His installations pose questions about how we read meaning in the texts and images that structure our experience and our understanding of cultural representation. Thus Mosse's work highlights the limitations of photojournalism and photography by mixing the contingent and abstract, the symbolic and political, evoking the precariousness of life as experienced in the continuing cycles of war, armed conflicts, and systematic tactics of violence that mark our era.

Keywords Richard Mosse, documentary photography, Democratic Republic of Congo, video, war

I am beginning to perceive this vicious loop of subject and object. The camera provokes an involuntary unraveling, a mutual hijack of authorship and autonomy.

—Richard Mosse, “Richard Mosse: *The Enclave* at Venice Art Biennale 2013”

Did he want to photograph dreams?

—Italo Calvino, “The Adventure of a Photographer”

You may be seduced, you may be outraged. Therein lay the unspeakable trappings of our visual codes.

—Kara Walker, “Debunking the Myths of Kara Walker’s Sugar Sphinx”

The Irish artist Richard Mosse is best known for his powerful large-scale photographs of war-torn villages, uprooted villagers, combatants and temporary conquerors, and the deceptively luxuriant landscapes that emerge in the aftermath of destruction.¹ Mosse has carried his large-format camera to Iraq, Iran, Gaza, the former Yugoslavia, Pakistan, and since 2010 eastern Congo. But while Mosse transcribes searing visions of warscape ruins and those who suffer and endure in them, he is not a photojournalist, and his work is not reportage. Rather, Mosse is an artist whose work highlights the limitations of photojournalism, photography, and aesthetics/ethics debates. Shades of fuchsia and bubblegum pink dominate Mosse’s immense landscape scenes of lush foliage, waterfalls, winding rivers, and cultivated valleys surging in textures and patterns. The gorgeous palette is a fiction, a result of his deployment of the false-color reversal film, Kodak Aerochrome, which renders greens into hot pinks and magentas.²

Used for vegetation surveys and earth resources, not to mention the psychedelic album covers for Jimi Hendrix and the Grateful Dead, Aerochrome was

developed as an infrared surveillance film by the Allied forces during World War II to identify camouflaged enemy soldiers in vegetated landscapes. By incorporating Aerochrome film as a medium, Mosse deliberately seeks the pressure points at the limits of the visible, opening his terrain to the imagination rather than to empirical certitude. As viewers, we are forced to ask ourselves just what we are looking at and what meanings accrue to these images, especially in a digital world shaped by new methods of editing, morphing, and remixing. By deploying photography and collaborative media to create spaces that run counter to those programmed by the camera and the image supply chain, Mosse reveals phenomenological doubts about the transparency of images and data. His installations and publications pose questions about how we read meaning in the texts and images that structure our experience and our understanding of cultural representation. He teases out the points at which these given sign systems break down and become porous or malleable and where glitches and short circuits upset our blasé habits and routines of consumption.

The deception of otherworldly beauty was embedded in Mosse’s photographs at the Fifty-fifth Venice Biennale. The photographs hung in the Irish Pavilion’s entryway and extended to the threshold of a black curtain, the portal to an altogether discomfiting, jarring experience: his film and sound installation *The Enclave* (2013). The artist’s newest foray into multimedia hybrids, *The Enclave* engages the intersections of video, sound, photography, photojournalism, and installation. Curated by Anna O’Sullivan and installed in the Irish Pavilion at Fondaco Marcello in San Marco, the installation was received as a critical success, a highlight of the director of the

Venice Biennale Massimiliano Gioni's sprawling *Encyclopedic Palace*.³ Mosse has since installed *The Enclave* at the Jack Shainman Gallery on West Twentieth Street in New York City and at several venues internationally.⁴

Mosse's images seduce. I was particularly taken by the hot pink. And then of course the alizarin crimson, amaranth, scarlet, vermillion, Tyrian purple, Persian Gulf red, dragon's blood, madder, and lac. What remained true to life were the skin tones, the water, the sky, the plumes of smoke, a corpse's white sheet, and the dried bones by the roadside.

The Enclave is a collaboration with the minimalist electronic composer-musician Ben Frost, the cinematographer Trevor Tweeten, and the writer John Holten. It is projected onto six transparent screens arranged asymmetrically in a darkened room. Four of the screens create a disjointed rectangular area flanked on either side by two more obliquely angled screens, each showing different segments of the work. It is impossible to see all six screens simultaneously, so the viewer must decide how to navigate the labyrinth-like space of flickering light and syncopated blackness.

Because *The Enclave*'s narrative has no beginning, middle, or end, the disoriented visitor wanders amid displays of interconnected but separate scenarios accompanied by Frost's eleven-point soundscape. Haunting and visceral, emanating from multiple directions, Frost's recordings were gathered on-site in North and South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo. The combination of unpredictable images and sounds stages a sensory assault, alternating from staccato jolts to rhythmic waves. Visually arresting in its Aerochrome strangeness and temporal ambiguity, Mosse's mixed brew penetrates

the psyche: there is sublimity as well as horror. The screens' arrangement limits movement, accentuating the feeling of entrapment. The pace of the film's alternating action, stillness, and caesuras is irregular, not constructed with "artful" cuts and collage. Long uncut shots are interspersed with rapid, crisp movements, close-up then distant, from above and below. The viewer casts a shadow that becomes part of the overall image as it is imprinted in memory⁵ and is instantaneously implicated as a participant in this scenario. The effects are a mixture of the physical and the emotional, a compression of history rebooted as sensual experience.⁶

I found myself challenged in many ways, not least because I had no knowledge of moving through this difficult land, and no experience of using this type of film. I was dealing with the unknown, negotiating my own ignorance. Since infrared light is invisible to the human eye, you could say that I was literally photographing blind. As soon as I arrived in Congo I had crossed a threshold into fiction, into my own symbolic order. Yet I was trying to represent something that is tragically real—an entrenched and endless conflict fought in a jungle by nomadic rebels of constantly shifting allegiances. . . . I began to find ways to interpret what I encountered on my journey through this conceptual, logistical, and technical precariousness. Over time, these [early initial] failures became synthesized into a kind of epiphany. I had privately reached a kind of messianic state where I could no longer perceive the absurdity of my task. So the research and theory adhere to, and become ramified by, an initial driving intuition. (Mosse quoted in Schuman 2011)

To create the vertigo-like sensation of gliding from above in certain scenes, Tweeten developed long tracking shots



Downloaded from <http://dhp.silverchair.com/cultural-political-science/pdf/112116967027/110116967027.pdf> on April 2, 2016

Figure 2 *Suspicious Minds*, 2012, digital c-print. Dimensions variable. © Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



using infrared film with an Arriflex 16 mm camera mounted on a Steadicam platform that was several feet taller than the average height. A line of soldiers carrying machine guns whose camouflage uniforms are a mix of crimson and pink, coordinated with the tall elephant grass of the same coloration, conjures surreal images from the film *Apocalypse Now* (1979), where color abstraction penetrates scenes of war as a tactic of spectacle. A vertigo-inducing physical reaction seemed to overtake many visitors in both Venice and New York. Most remained in *The Enclave* well past the thirty-nine-minute, twenty-five-second loop, walking around and through the maze, standing in one spot or sitting on the floor along one of the four walls.

Infrared Kodak Aerochrome film seems to visually sever the connection between intent and effect, setting in motion a series of ambiguities that the uneasy viewer must decode or at least consider. The oscillating allegiances of the war zone are emphasized by the confusing array of combatants from the major rebel groups—the Rwandan Hutu Forces Democratiques de Liberation du Rwanda (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda), the Rwanda- and Uganda-backed M23, and various local armed “Mai Mai” groups—and the Congolese army. While Mosse’s photographic books *Infra* (2012) and *Richard Mosse: The Enclave* (2013) contain detailed information describing the recent Congolese wars and the nineteenth-century roots in Belgium’s brutal colonialism, many visitors would be unable to identify the current warring groups.⁷ Mosse echoes this density and layering of the conflict through the dynamics and rhythms of his scenes on multiple screens. The confusion is amplified by Frost’s soundscape of buzzing insects, electric whirring, and walkie-talkie static, at first

barely audible but soon ramped-up to an eerie, high-pitched din. A cacophony of shouts becomes a chorus in a tragedy. Close-ups of soldiers play to the camera, staring it down in a face-off or seeming to ignore it while practicing war games. A cudgel, a spear, and a machine gun are aimed at a wattle scarecrow set up in a clearing, a staged construct for male and female recruits and the cameraperson. In search and destroy games, fake killings and playing dead, psychodramas and rituals in preparation for the real thing, protagonists are cast in a story that will turn into a reality. Laid bare is a metamorphosis, the sinister turning of young people into vessels of obedience. Paradoxically, these fictional scenes render *The Enclave* hyperrealist, dense with multiple combatant groups and refugees caught in a hellish Ouroboros.

These war game scenes practiced for the camera are reminiscent of those in Peter Weir’s film *Gallipoli* (1981) or Joshua Oppenheimer’s horrifying, otherworldly documentary *The Act of Killing* (2013). In the former young recruits mock playing dead only to succumb to slaughter in the trenches of World War I. The latter shows the genocide in Indonesia in the 1960s, crimes that went unacknowledged for forty-seven years. In Oppenheimer’s film death squad leaders, some celebrated as heroes, reenact their real-life mass killings, at first informally for the camera and then in the chillingly meticulous style of their favorite American gangster movies. The frightful, alienating power of what lies under the skin of history is brought to the surface through fictionalization.⁸

Mosse’s work is shot through with literary references, and the resonance is worth noting. In *The Enclave* suddenly one or more of the screens goes black. Morning light and fog lifting. A breathtaking



Downloaded from <http://dup.silverchair.com/cultural-politics/article-pdf/11/2/163/67627/0/110162.pdf> by guest on 19 April 2024

Figure 3 *Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams*, 2012, digital c-print. Dimensions variable. © Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

view: the shores of a lake in North Kivu. Water laps on the blue surface. The sweet sound of a young girl singing to herself as she pounds her white washing on the rocks by the lake's edge, wrings it out tightly, and spreads it out to dry. The scene conjures James Joyce's (1999: 213) washerwomen in *Finnegans Wake* doing laundry by the river Liffey in the death dreams of old Finn as he lies beside the river watching the history of the world pass by: "Will we spread them here now? Ay, we will. Flip! Spread on your bank and I'll spread mine on mine. Flep! It's what I'm doing. Spread!"

Mosse has stressed in his interviews his sense that "photography is cut through with other disciplines and a wider understanding of the world. Photography is an engagement with the world of things, and it has given me a genuine pretext to travel widely and experience what James Joyce called 'good warm life'" (Schuman 2011). But the young girl by the lake in North Kivu is not chatting with friends or singing a tender folk song, as Mosse and Frost learned. "When I had the song translated it turns out she's singing the lyrics, 'If you look at the bushes you will see piles of bodies. Some of them were killed with knives; some of them were killed with bullets.' This was a six year old girl, she might even be younger" (Harvey and Storey 2014). The scene is memorable in part because it is beautiful, a poetic scene that resonates. But it strikes at the heart in an achingly poignant way as the camera pulls back to reveal soldiers on guard stealthily moving through the landscape and armored trucks moving along a dirt path. Mosse makes it clear through his composition that the scene is "saturated with trauma and human rights violations" (Harvey and Storey 2014). Deploying the sublime to elicit

both empathy and questioning, he brings the context into the light, disclosing conditions and clues and leaving the viewer to struggle with and complete the picture.

Many memorable scenes in Mosse's *Enclave* link birth and death, the longing for a home thwarted by constant displacement. A delivery by C-section, the baby shaken until he or she breathes his or her first breath and then wrapped in a blanket. A refugee camp first seen from afar in an aerial descent; alighting on a dirt road, lined with people looking at the cameraman, leading to the camp of wattle huts covered with tarps; children escorting us to a seated man holding a baby. Shouts and voices as grieving women collapse in mourning, the dead covered in white cloth and placed in simple coffins with wooden crosses. A group of men and women carrying a small wooden house on their shoulders down a street in Goma. An abandoned town in ruins with people searching for survivors and carrying away goods on their backs while children use iPhones to take pictures of the dead for identification. A man by a lake, a machine gun strapped over his shoulder, slowly walks into the lake until he and his gun are totally submerged as the sun sets on the horizon.⁹ As the writer Aweek Sen (2012) has noted, "To break out of its documentary cage, photography must risk a kind of intellectual and existential promiscuity, an all-absorbing hunger that is at once outwardly directed and inwardly trained."¹⁰

That visitors can enter Mosse's unfurling visual-audio epic at any point during its looped progression is reminiscent of the all-enveloping, nonlinear time-space conjunctions in Nancy Spero's signature large-scale scroll works, such as *Torture of Women* (1976) or *Notes on*

Time on Women (1979). It also recalls Nalini Malani's multimedia installations and her recent project *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012), an evocation of the cataclysmic events and long-lasting legacies of the Partition of India. Spero's scrolls wrap completely around walls, sometimes in dense rows, and consist of painting, collage, photography, and printing techniques; they scramble time frames and topographies despite the fact that they are not time-based mediums. Malani's installations consist of overlays of six-channel video projections and several painted Mylar cylinders that rotate while projecting images, some of them photographic, in interlocking skeins. She blends shifting imagery from multiple cultures with light, sound, and text. Spero and Malani create nonlinear visual flows in which there is no specific plot narrative and no beginning, middle, or climactic end. As in Mosse's work, the boundaries marking these flows are porous.

In addition, Spero and Malani tackle, in layered and complex ways, horrific violent histories, which they bring to the foreground in an enveloping space. Grounded in feminist philosophy, Malani and Spero eschew the traditional binary thinking habits of exclusive, oppositional either/or categories, including those of nature/culture, private/public, and body/mind. Their installations integrate cinematic qualities and employ photographic means, and they are aesthetically gripping and politically trenchant. Malani recently echoed these points of conjunction: "I really believe in the sense of beauty to seduce the viewer. . . . You begin to think of what it is telling you. . . . But that beauty sometimes requires some decoding" (quoted in Mallonee 2013).¹¹ Mosse articulates a similar approach:

The realist forms [of photojournalism] that were so powerful throughout the twentieth century may now be obsolescent. I struggle with the challenge of representing abstract or contingent phenomena. The camera's dumb optic is intensely literal, yet the world is far from being simple or transparent. . . . But the real is central to my interests, as it's something that eludes conventional genres, particularly Realism. The real is at the heart of contemporary global anxiety; proximity to the real is endured by us all. But I feel that the real is only effectively communicated through shocks to the imagination, precipitated by the Sublime. (quoted in Schuman 2011)

Artists—painters and sculptors of the past and present—have engaged the sublime of Edmund Burke ([1757] 1998), a separate category of experience beyond beauty and beyond all possibility of calculation or measurement that is at once terrifying, compelling, and often destructive,¹² whereas photography, whose chemical trace illuminates and captures the "real," has been allied with truth telling. But are Roger Fenton's or Timothy O'Sullivan's photographs of war more real or truthful than paintings by artists who deployed the double edge of the sublime in times of war, such as Francisco De Goya, Théodore Géricault, and Eugène Delacroix; or other nineteenth-century history painters; or artists creating panoramas, dioramas, or 3-D spectroscopic views?

The most heated debates on the ethics of aesthetics in photography during the 1990s focused on Sebastião Salgado's photographs of workers, their displacement, and their migration, especially the exploitation of workers in gold mines in Serra Pelada, Brazil. Ingrid Sischy (1991), writing in the *New Yorker*, accused the photojournalist of aestheticizing suffering,





Figures 4–6 Installation views, *The Enclave*, 2012–13. 16 mm infrared film transferred to HD video. 39 minutes, 25 seconds. Produced in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Director and producer, Richard Mosse; cinematographer and editor, Trevor Tweeten; composer and sound designer, Ben Frost. Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

which she claimed blunted critiques or political action.¹³ However, Salgado's mesmerizing, beautiful photographs embody and frame his subjects in recognition of shared humanity, with respect, not pity or guilt. They are accompanied by texts that provide the historical context that Salgado came to know well during his first career as an economist. Salgado established rhetorical grounds for an ethical empathy with his subjects in relation to their dire, often abject circumstances, warranting a political response in the viewer.¹⁴

But the question remains: Is Mosse running too great a risk of eliding content with his seductive color palette? The critical theorist A. B. Huber argues:

Mosse's Congo photographs [*Infra*] also expose something of the instability and contingency of our perception. And yes, in this way Mosse keeps faith with a kind of queer critique, the hallmark of which is the impulse to make the power of objective claims visible: What is real, and who decides? The stakes are high when we are dealing with histories of violence, where one never knows if the devil of disbelief might outshout the devil of indifference. . . . Mosse makes vivid how cruelty can be sublime and violence can ravage or remake a landscape in ways we may politically detest but also find visually arresting, even beautiful. (Blackburn and Huber 2011)

The Enclave exposes viewers to a tension: the attraction and aversion that oscillates within the sublime. What if a viewer's response is neither disinterest nor distraction but satisfaction? The art writers Nicola Harvey and Rachel Storey (2014) criticize *The Enclave* for revealing these open-ended ambiguities: "We see Richard Mosse's moral compass spinning. He tells us that he wants his work to get people to pay attention to the situation in DR Congo, yet the aesthetic choices he has made puts (intentionally or not) the debate over the ethics of documentary photography in the foreground."

Mosse's aesthetics disorient us and heighten our awareness of these instabilities so that we *pause* to question our perceptions about media representations of conflicts. *The Enclave* does indeed provoke disturbing questions about ethics and aesthetics, the sublime and the real, operating in the public space of the polis and in the private inner world of the individual viewer. As an artist, Mosse (2013: 5) purposefully emphasizes "a dialectics of conscience and consciousness, art and activism. It is the problem at the heart of my practice."

The flow of empirical data as evidence or of measurement that offers quantitative information does not necessarily lead to any qualitative change in the world. Perhaps the failure of the imagination when tied to aesthetics and empathy is the most consequential of moral defects. Mosse situates his artistic practice on that fulcrum. He states: "My work is very different to that of journalists. They are bound by procedures of fact checking—what Werner Herzog has called the accountant's truth—while I am bound only by my imagination, and the world that pushes it into form. I don't know whose task is

easier, but I struggle enormously with uncertainty—there is no prescribed story, no particular narrative to describe, and the potential field of elaboration is infinitely wider" (quoted in Schuman 2011). Read by many photographers, Italo Calvino's short story "The Adventure of a Photographer" ([1958] 1984) encapsulates photography's problematic double bind: an obsession with capturing the real while transgressing the limits of the visible. Written two decades before Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* (1980) and Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (1977), Calvino's story presages the technological imaginaries offered by the digital virtual world. Sen has discussed the ontological and epistemological questions raised by Calvino's story as especially relevant for contemporary artists and photographers. Sen (2013a) paraphrases and quotes the protagonist Antonino, who echoes Mosse's dilemma stated above with uncanny accuracy:

One path beckons outward, toward the doomed and impossible desire to document everything that exists and happens before it is lost forever. The camera must record *all* reality, all history; only then would it begin making some sort of crazy sense. The other one leads inexorably within, into the labyrinths from which the eyes, windows of the soul, look at the world outside . . . the two roads, inner and outer, seem to cross again "in the glass rectangle." It is "like a dream."

Mosse is an admirer of Herzog's films, which is reflected in his use of the sublime to access layers of the invisible in *The Enclave*. Rather than the truth-value and rote reality of data that "reside in the telephone book," Herzog (2010: 7, 9) writes, "in the fine arts, in music, literature, and



Figure 7 *Protection*, 2012, digital c-print. Dimensions variable. © Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



Figure 8 *Untitled Transient*, 2012, digital c-print. Dimensions variable. © Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



Downloaded from <http://ahp.sagepub.com>

at <http://ahp.sagepub.com>

cinema, it is possible to reach a deeper stratum of truth—a poetic, ecstatic truth, which is mysterious and can only be grasped with effort; one attains it through vision, style, and craft . . . ecstatic experience of inner, deeper truth.”¹⁵ Herzog’s conjuring of the sublime in film and the other arts as a catalyst for epiphanic experience owes much to phenomenology and Martin Heidegger’s use of the Greek term *alêtheia* “to define truth as an act of disclosure—a gesture related to the cinema, where an object is set into the light and then a latent, not yet visible image is conjured onto celluloid, where it first must be developed, then disclosed.” While not wanting to revisit arguments in the Martin Heidegger–Meyer Schapiro–Jacques Derrida deconstruction of *Van Gogh’s “Shoes”* as interpreted in Heidegger’s *The Origin of the Work of Art* ([1935] 2009), it is possible to generalize that Heidegger’s radical notions of truth as disclosure aim to criticize philosophies that advocate that the locus of truth lies exclusively in the accumulation of facts in correspondence to the state of the world. Heidegger contends that, although correspondence and accumulation of data are ways of accessing truth, they are not the only ways.¹⁶ The crux of these double bind issues is particularly relevant where aesthetic choices are aligned with digital technologies and ever-evolving methods of morphing and remixing in video, gaming, TV, smartphone applications, animation, and film.¹⁷

Another complication for Mosse is the expectation that an Irishman might presume to “represent” a nation or a group by making a film about warfare in eastern Congo while remaining a newcomer to local visual and linguistic codes and regional history and culture. Either by emphasizing an “Otherness”

in African conflicts or by succumbing to anodyne “Family of Man” universality, Mosse would have assumed the position of the outsider drifting as a tourist through the stage set of the Congo.¹⁸ In examining Mosse’s *Infra* photographs, the literary scholar Neelika Jayawardane (2011) addresses “Orientalist” concerns: “Like more illustrious scholars like Chinua Achebe, I have also made it my business to critique the ‘preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind,’ wherein Africa is used ‘as setting and backdrop . . . as a meta-physical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril . . . [thusly] eliminate[ing] the African as human factor.’”¹⁹ Jayawardane concludes that rather than attempting to resolve or smooth over European discomfort by removing the full and complex humanity and circumstances of the Congolese warring factions and civilians, Mosse’s artistic approach, cinematic strategies, and deployment of Kodak Aerochrome to open the surreal, seducing while simultaneously exposing deep anxieties in the viewer, merge to work at “shifting the gears of Orientalism.” Because Mosse’s immersive strategies and false-color reversal film precipitate “an involuntary unraveling, a mutual hijack of authorship and autonomy,” the traditional documentary codes are scrambled and upended, revealing a slippage of sign systems that upsets our blasé habits of image consumption (Mosse quoted in Chin 2013). Mosse adopts “intellectual and existential promiscuity” (Sen 2013a) by mixing the contingent and the abstract, the symbolic and the political, evoking the precariousness of life as experienced in war. Having admitted his own muteness in

the face of unspeakable horrors of war and deprivation, the blank page of Marlow's silence, Mosse confronted his own failures to communicate at first, his dumbness and the aphasia of trauma. He acknowledged the prelinguistic state of psychic stress and the dislocation of pain's consequences. To the victim of such pain, it is often the case that the contents of the world seem canceled out (Scarry 1985: 34). As Jayawardane (2011) concludes when writing about Mosse's work in relation to Joseph Conrad's Marlow:

Here, we have to live within the grey (or the pink) of simultaneously recognizing the impossibility/Otherness of this place, and actually seeing the human actions there, doing things in a very logical fashion. We begin by imagining that darkness to be in the external location of the geographical and psychosocial world that is Congo; but soon enough, as Conrad himself recognized on his famous fictional journey down the great river, that darkness is ours, rather than an external manifestation of horror.

Artists of Mosse's generation engage in wide-ranging cultural discourses while addressing sociopolitical realities locally or transnationally; they examine the experience of "being of" and "being between" cultures, peoples, and geographies. Artists often straddle differing sign systems, idioms, cultural codes, and notions of perception. Their personal experiences, sometimes diasporic, are transformed into broader languages of art, myth, and popular culture articulated in individual artistic practices. Mosse recalled the British filmmaker Steve McQueen's remarkable experiential film about the struggles in Northern Ireland, *Hunger* (2008), full of images that were both sublime and horrible. Mosse joked that McQueen had made "a film

about 'my' Irish troubles? Doesn't he know that only the Irish are allowed to represent the troubles?" (Jayawardane 2011). Visiting Northern Ireland in the 1980s as a child from rural Kilkenny, Ireland, Mosse remembered the heavily guarded military borders and the somber city of Belfast lined with surveillance cameras and black turrets with ubiquitous listening devices. He concluded: "It's easier to talk about yourself through other people's problems. . . . I've tried to make work in Ireland and it's impossible. It's too close to the heart" (Martyn-Hemphill 2013). Mosse reflected on the role of the outsider's perspective, which might offer insights that blind those caught in the midst of ongoing conflict: "I am not an Irish nationalist. But my sense of our own conflict in Northern Ireland, and its profound complexity, has allowed me to avoid the pitfalls of sentimental idealism when it comes to appreciating conflict situations, and their subtleties" (quoted in Horne 2013). Thus Mosse's *Enclave* reflects political and personal questions: What do political oppression, defeat, and physical suffering do? How are people broken?

Contemporary art's greatest strength is its potential to make visible what cannot be seen, pointing to the limits of experience and representation. Photography, meanwhile, is firmly rooted in the world of things as it carries a trace, an actual physical memory of the world at a specific time and place. Between these poles, then, I discern, photography's unique potential to represent human suffering which is, after all, something that cannot be represented. I cannot feel your pain. You cannot adequately express your pain. It is an essentially private affair, yet it is something experienced by all of us. Starting from these basic ideas, I'm hoping to find a better way to describe the catastrophe, which I

feel is something that defines our era. (Mosse quoted in Michaud 2009)²⁰

A growing number of contemporary artists are actively seeking new ways of coming to terms with the continuing cycles of wars, armed conflicts, and systematic tactics of violence that mark our era. Along with Mosse, other artists whose work engages aesthetic experimentation to manifest social and political realities include the Syrian video collective Abounaddara, Marwa Arsanios, Thomas Hirschhorn, Alfredo Jaar, Bouchra Khalili, Nalini Malani, Susan Meiselas, Walid Raad, Ai Wei Wei, and Akram Zaatari, to name just a few. Their work occupies the intersections of installation, social media, photography, video, and multimedia collaboration as they create spaces that run counter to those programmed in the image supply chain dominated by mass-produced culture.

Acknowledgments

I extend my gratitude and appreciation to Richard Mosse, the Jack Shainman Gallery, Anna O'Sullivan, Rebecca Mei, Deirdre Maher, Eran Segal, and Jacqueline Gourevitch.

Notes

1. The title is a riff on Mario Vargas Llosa's recent historical novel *The Dream of the Celt* (2012), which is based on the archives of Roger Casement, an Irishman who was a British consul in the nineteenth century. Casement became radicalized when he saw the reality of colonialism in operation in the Congo and in Peru. He led investigations into atrocities in the Congo and on South American rubber plantations, and he became an Irish nationalist and activist. Before the Easter Rising, he landed in Ireland with a plot to overthrow British rule during World War I with the aid of the Germans. The British arrested him for treason, and he was executed in 1916. In Vargas Llosa's historical novel Casement is a compelling, tragic personality whose gay sexual orientation is portrayed as yet another layer of complexity operating in his legacy. Casement's research and detailed reports from the Congo impacted public opinion when they were published. Casement knew and admired Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), and he and Conrad exchanged correspondence. See Mosse 2013a: 5.
2. Since 1998 the war in the Congo has left more than 5.4 million people dead both from violence and from the associated problems of disease and starvation. One million people have been displaced, and over 200,000 women have been raped.
3. Examples of positive reviews include Gibb 2014; Le Brun 2014; Martyn-Hemphill 2013; and Wei 2014.
4. Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin; Ormston House Gallery, Limerick, Ireland; University of New South Wales Galleries, Art and Design, Paddington, Australia; Foam, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Vinyl Factory and Edel Assanti, London; FotoMuseum Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium; Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Oregon.
5. The artists Kara Walker and William Kentridge have developed this strategy into a virtuosic form.
6. The Congo was at war from 1996 to 1997 and from 1998 to 2003, and the conflicts involved nine countries and more than forty rebel groups. The Rwandan genocide that began in 1994 spilled into the Congo by 1996, and the reverberations continue today. In addition, the Congolese army has committed many human rights abuses. All of these groups have attempted to seize control of natural resources to continue fighting. See Marks 2012.
7. Adam Hochschild wrote an essay for Mosse's *Infra* and contributed the essay "Rape of the Congo" (2009) to the *New York Review of Books*. He has also written for the *New Yorker*, *Harper's Magazine*, and the *Nation*. His books include *King Leopold's Ghost* (1998) and most recently *To End All Wars* (2011). Jason Stearns, an American researcher and author based in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, was coordinator of the United Nations Group of

Experts on the Congo and has worked for more than ten years in the Congo. Stearns (2013) wrote the essay "A Haphazard Tragedy" for Mosse's *Enclave*.

8. Thanks to Eran Segal for bringing to my attention Oppenheimer's movie *The Act of Killing* and the discussion by the coproducers of the film, Werner Herzog and Errol Morris (2013).
9. See the detailed information about scenes and still shots in Mosse 2013b: 227–37.
10. See also Sen 2013b.
11. Frizzell discusses Speros's installations in Spero and Frizzell 2009.
12. See also the contemporary philosopher Mario Costa's (1991) definition of a new "technological sublime." The notion of a singular, absolute truth-value revealed by photography for the journalist-detective to unravel persists in Morris 2011.
13. David Levi Strauss's (2003) essays also articulate the Marxist debates of the 1930s–50s among Ernst Bloch, Georg Lukács, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor Adorno. See also the more recent Didi-Huberman 2008.
14. For a nuanced opposing view, see Kimmelman 2001. See also an update on these debates in Linfield 2010.
15. Originally delivered as a speech in Milan, Italy, in 1992. Thanks to Segal for forwarding this link.
16. See Thomson 2011.
17. See the artist Hasan Elahi's project *Tracking Transience* (2014) as a critique of the ominous implications of overwhelming networks of data streams.
18. Christopher Phillips (1982) analyzes Edward Steichen's work as curator of *The Family of Man* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (1955).
19. See Achebe 1988.
20. Mosse is a recipient of Yale University's Poynter Fellowship in Journalism (2014), the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize (2014), the B3 Award at the Frankfurt Biennale (2013), a European Cities of Advanced Sound (ECAS) commission (2013), a Guggenheim Fellowship (2011), and a Leonore Annenberg Fellowship (2008–10). *Foreign Policy* magazine listed Mosse as a Leading Global Thinker in 2013.

References

- Achebe, Chinua. 1988. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*." In *Heart of Darkness*, by Joseph Conrad, edited by Robert Kimbrough, 251–61. New York: Norton.
- Blackburn, Mary Walling, and A. B. Huber. 2011. "The Flash Made Flesh." *Triple Canopy*, no. 11, canopycanopycanopy.com/issues/11/contents/the_flash_made_flesh.
- Burke, Edmund. (1757) 1998. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Edited by Adam Phillips. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Calvino, Italo. (1958) 1984. "The Adventure of a Photographer." In *Difficult Loves*, translated by William Weaver, Archibald Colquhoun, and Peggy Wright, 220–35. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Chin, Andrea. 2013. "Richard Mosse: *The Enclave* at Venice Art Biennale 2013." Designboom, May 24, www.designboom.com/art/richard-mosse-the-enclave-at-venice-art-biennale-2013.
- Costa, Mario. 1991. "Technology, Artistic Production and the 'Aesthetics of Communication.'" *Leonardo* 24 (2): 123–25.
- Didi-Huberman, Georges. 2008. *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Elahi, Hasan. 2014. *Tracking Transience*, trackingtransience.net. Accessed June 14.
- Gibb, Susan. 2014. "An Ongoing State of Conflict: Richard Mosse's the 'Enclave.'" *Art Monthly Australia*, no. 269: 20–25.
- Harvey, Nicola, and Rachel Storey. 2014. "Richard Mosse: Making Visible an Invisible Conflict." *Arts*, April 1, www.abc.net.au/arts/blog/Video/Richard-Mosse-making-visible-an-invisible-conflict-140327/default.htm.
- Herzog, Werner. 2010. "On the Absolute, the Sublime, and Ecstatic Truth." Translated by Moira Weigel. *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 17 (3): 1–12, www.bu.edu/arion/on-the-absolute-the-sublime-and-ecstatic-truth.
- Herzog, Werner, and Errol Morris. 2013. "Werner Herzog and Errol Morris Talk about *The Act of Killing*." YouTube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLQxVY7R9qo.

- Hochschild, Adam. 2009. "Rape of the Congo." *New York Review of Books*, August 13, www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/aug/13/rape-of-the-congo/.
- Horne, Rebecca. 2013. "Candy-Colored Congo Sees Waking Dreams Verge into Nightmares." *Wired*, July 2, www.wired.com/2013/07/mosse-infrared.
- Heidegger, Martin. (1935) 2009. "The Origin of the Work of Art." In *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Donald Preziosi, 284–95. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jayawardane, Neelika. 2011. "Queering the Congo." Africa Is a Country, November 21, africasacountry.com/queering-the-congo.
- Joyce, James. 1999. *Finnegans Wake*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Kimmelman, Michael. 2001. "Can Suffering Be Too Beautiful?" *New York Times*, July 13, www.nytimes.com/2001/07/13/arts/photography-review-can-suffering-be-too-beautiful.html.
- Le Brun, Lily. 2014. "Richard Mosse's 'The Enclave' on display in London." *Apollo Magazine*, April 12, www.apollo-magazine.com/richard-mosse-enclave-display-london/.
- Linfield, Susie. 2010. *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mallonee, Laura C. 2013. "In Search of Vanished Blood: Nalini Malani on Her Career, the Indian Art World, and Bringing Her Documenta 13 Piece to New York." *Observer*, October 23, observer.com/2013/10/in-search-of-vanished-blood-nalini-malani-on-her-career-the-indian-art-world-and-bringing-her-documenta-13-shadow-play/.
- Marks, Joshua. 2012. "Crisis in Eastern Congo: A Five-Minute Primer." Truman National Security Project, trumanproject.org/doctrine-blog/crisis-in-eastern-congo-a-five-minute-primer.
- Martyn-Hemphill, Amelia. 2013. "Seeing War Vividly: Richard Mosse Stars at the Venice Biennale." *Daily Beast*, June 3, www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/06/03/seeing-war-vividly-richard-mosse-stars-at-the-venice-biennale.html.
- Michaud, Hans. 2009. "In Conversation with Richard Mosse." *Whitehot Magazine*, December, whitehotmagazine.com/articles/in-conversation-with-richard-mosse/1981.
- Morris, Errol. 2011. *Believing Is Seeing: Observations on the Mysteries of Photography*. New York: Penguin.
- Mosse, Richard. 2013a. "Artist's Statement." In *Richard Mosse: The Enclave*, 5–7. New York: Aperture.
- Mosse, Richard. 2013b. *Richard Mosse: The Enclave*. New York: Aperture.
- Phillips, Christopher. 1982. "The Judgment Seat of Photography." *October*, no. 22: 27–63.
- Scarry, Elaine. 1985. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schuman, Aaron. 2011. "Sublime Proximity: In Conversation with Richard Mosse." *Aperture*, no. 203: 52–59, www.aaronschuman.com/richardmosse.html.
- Sen, Aveek. 2012. "Photography: A Promiscuous Life," *Fotomuseum*, February 29, blog.fotomuseum.ch/2012/02/1-photography-a-promiscuous-life-part-i.
- Sen, Aveek. 2013a. "Redux: Italo Calvino's 'The Adventure of a Photographer.'" *Aperture* (blog), www.aperture.org/blog/redux-italo-calvinos-the-adventure-of-a-photographer.
- Sen, Aveek. 2013b. "Roots in Air." Der Deutsche Pavillon, 55. Internationale Kunstausstellung: La Biennale di Venezia 2013, www.deutscher-pavillon.org/2013/en/aveek-sen-roots-in-air.
- Sischy, Ingrid. 1991. "Photography: Good Intentions." *New Yorker*, September 9, 89–95.
- Spero, Nancy, and Deborah Frizzell. 2009. "Nancy Spero's War: *Maypole/Take No Prisoners*." *Cultural Politics* 5 (1): 118–32.
- Stearns, Jason. 2013. "A Haphazard Tragedy." In *Richard Mosse: The Enclave*, by Richard Mosse, 226–37. New York: Aperture.
- Strauss, David Levi. 2003. "The Documentary Debate: Aesthetic or Anaesthetic?" In *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics*, 3–11. New York: Aperture.
- Thomson, Iain. 2011. *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Vargas Llosa, Mario. 2012. *The Dream of the Celt*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Wei, Lilly. 2014. "Critic's Pick: Richard Mosse." *Art News*, March, 112.

Deborah Frizzell, PhD, is adjunct assistant professor of art history at William Paterson University in New Jersey, where she teaches modern and contemporary art history and theory. Her books include *Humphrey Spender's Humanist Landscapes: Photo-Documents, 1932–1942* (1997), *Ann Chernow: Fictitious Icons* (1998), and *Mircea Suci: How Deep the Rabbit Hole Goes* (2008), and her exhibitions include *Fluidity, Layering, Veiling: South Asian/Middle Eastern Diaspora* (2011), *Whose World Is This? Jane Dickson and Charlie Ahearn* (2012), and *The Body Is Present: Women at Work* (2013). Frizzell writes regularly for *New York Arts Magazine*, *Woman's Art Journal*, and *Depart* (Dhaka, Bangladesh), among others. Frizzell is currently writing a manuscript on Nancy Spero (1926–2009) and the artist's influence on younger generations of artists.