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SHADOWS OF WAR

VIOLENCE, POWER, AND INTERNATIONAL PROFITEERING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

CAROLYN NORDSTROM

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
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PART ONE

INTRODUCTIONS

Wars and illicit economies make strange bedfellows. War's shadows cast widely; and in the areas of poor illumination lives and fortunes are forged and lost. As nations grow and crumble under the banners of progress and the weight of violence, each citizen tells or paints or dances or bleeds his or her story of survival. The sum total of these stories tells us the nature of war and the prospects for peace. Few reach the light of international recognition, most are lost in the shadows.

Ethnography is a discipline sophisticated in its simplicity: it travels with the anthropologist to the front lines and across lights and shadows to collect these stories; to illuminate strange bedfellows, and, if one were to put it bluntly, to care.

This book is dedicated to collecting stories of war, peace, and illicit economies across people's lives, and across zones of war and peace in different countries and on different continents. Neither the stories nor the ethnographies of the twenty-first century are bound to single locales: what patterns ripple across cultural landscapes, sovereign borders, and theoretical domains? As an arms merchant steps on an airplane to fly from one warzone to another, he or she hears a gunshot, a victim falls, a story unfolds. As the merchant steps off the plane a continent away, he or she notices another gunshot. What patterns of politics, of economics, and of personal heroism and tragedy define our world in the intersections of power, profit, survival, and humanity – in the shot of a gun? What experiences from the front lines of wars and the back lines of profiteering bring these understandings to life?

TITUS THE MAGICIAN, AT THE TIME OF THE 1983 RIOTS IN SRI LANKA.
"I AM," TITUS SAID. "ALL POLITICS AND FREE OF ALL POLITICS."

CHAPTER 3

MAKING THINGS ~~INVISIBLE~~

The Mozambican soldier leaned back again the tree trunk, lit a cigarette, and opened a warm beer smuggled in from Malawi. It was 1990, the war in Mozambique was at its height, and we were talking in an embattled zone in the center of the country.

> Shape-shifters; people who walk among us we can't see—people say only we Africans practice such things. But don't believe it, there are plenty of shape-shifters in your country, throughout the world. The Europeans say this is witchcraft, but what nonsense. It is power, pure and simple.
>
> You know, some call me hero, and I've been recognized for my bravery in battles. But I suppose some call me a scoundrel. Yeah, I do some deals, I do some "business." But you know how this is possible? While I'm out here in the middle of the shooting, the big guys are doing even bigger business. Look at the South African Defense Force walking in talking war and walking out clutching bags of gems. And those guys who fly in those cargo planes from all over the world trading out everything from guns to laptops in the name of supporting us, or them, or someone. Yeah, I do some deals, but it's possible only because the world has set up a bazaar at my campsite. Now tell me these people aren't shape-shifters: these guys travel around from all over the world, working the night. And they say only Africans believe in this ability to turn invisible.

WARS AND INVISIBILITIES

There are layers and layers of invisibility surrounding war, and surrounding the extra-legal. How are these complex relationships of truth, untruth, and silencing produced — and perhaps more importantly, why?

The soldier quoted above may be right; webs of invisibility permeate many aspects of war economies and transnational profits. But the lives of the people populating the front lines, from the impoverished to the powerful, are equally subject to erasure — deleted because the truths of war little match the myths that sustain war. Before returning to the soldier's story of front-line "business," this section will explore the political acts of erasure, of "editing out" significant aspects of violence. To begin, I return to the 1983 riots in Sri Lanka.

"The world's gone crazy," my friend said, visibly shaken. It was one of the first conversations I had after the rioting began, and I remember well this man's words as they painted a strong image of the riots. It was only over days that I realized everyone had a different experience, a different set of images, defining the violence and devastation.

> I was trying to get across the street on Galle Road, the violence, you know, it was everywhere. These kids, they were young teenagers, they started beating this old lady right in front of me. She fell down and they kept on kicking her, shouting some goddamned thing or another, none of it made any sense. But they thought it did. It was ugly, them beating her like that, like they had this right. All over town, it's just crazy like this.

For him, the violence of the youth and the helplessness of the old woman stood out. We all carried different images of shock. I have several. I think the first for me was finding a bullock cart set aflame in the middle of Galle Road south of Colombo city. All over the major thoroughfares, buses and cars had been stopped, and the drivers and passengers were either hauled out and variously let loose, beaten, or killed, or they were forced to remain inside and burn as the vehicle was set aflame. These were scenes beyond horror. But somehow that burned bullock cart — a poor man's simple wooden cart, the goods he was taking to market blazing, the man dead, and the bullock struggling to free itself from the ropes that tied it to certain death — symbolized the extremes of violence to me.

The second strong image for me was watching the mob coalesce that killed seven Tamils in the Colombo train station. The rioters were the denizens of downtown: men in sarongs; youths in trousers; women in skirts, saris, or traditional wraps; bureaucrats in office clothes; some white-haired elders. I remember being surprised at how quickly the mob formed, and with how little verbal communication. The mob was fueled by a nebulous rallying cry that "terrorists were entering into the city by train" and that "everyone's life was in danger unless they were stopped."

I noticed the eclectic nature of the mob, that they came from all walks of life, and that they emerged to join the group from stores and shops and sites along the road — but I didn't find this unusual until in the months following the riots the violence was attributed to "organized men with voter lists systematically attacking Tamils."

> A neighbor of mine, a teenage male, saw a different riot. He came over to my house in agitated excitement:
>
> "We got one," he said.
>
> "One what?" I asked.
>
> "A Tamil. A guy from our school. Me and my friends, about five of us, and this guy, we were walking along the road toward home talking. When we got to this place with a bunch of trees and no houses, we started shouting at him about how Tamils are ruining our country, about how they want to take over, that they want to see the Sinhalese finished. We began to beat him up. Then one of the lads stabbed him with this knife he had. And we pulled him into the bushes and trees and left him there."
>
> "But he was a school friend," I said, feeling sick, "a boy you know had nothing to do with politics or violence; you know he's no threat."
>
> "Yeah, but he's Tamil, and now there's one less to try and take over Sri Lanka."

In the days and months that followed the riots, I was taken aback at how inaccurate the reports were on what had taken place. The youth, the women, the elders, the children disappeared from accounts, to be replaced by various explanations that focused on adult men. The government harped on the "unseen hand"; the intellectuals focused on "men in trousers with voter lists identifying Tamils versus Sinhalese households"; those critical of the role of the government decried the participation of troops and government officials' "private armies of hired thugs." None of these explanations is wrong (with the exception of the "unseen hand"), but they are partial at best. "The Sinhalese rioted against the Tamils," headlines shouted. The impression given was that all Sinhalese participated. My experiences paint a far different picture.

In avoiding several mobs in Colombo city one day, I had walked quite a distance from where I was staying. The brutal groups had passed for the moment, a few firemen were battling blazes, and I was trying to wend my way home when I saw a three-wheeler drive by and signal that he was open for business. It reminded me of a Fellini movie. Grateful for the ride, I jumped in the cab and asked the man why on earth he was out plying his trade amid the burning husks of cars that had lost in their encounters with politics gone bad.

"Aren't you scared?" I asked.

"Naw," he said. "Life is risky business always, and besides, my kids got to eat. What do the bigwigs think, that we poor folk got money put aside for riot days? I don't work, my family doesn't eat."

When he dropped me off, I asked him how much money I owed him, wondering about hazard pay in riots. He waved his hand, saying he didn't want any money. I reminded him about feeding his kids.

"I got out here," he waved at the burned-out buildings and broken cityscape, "and found a whole lot of people worse off than me. People who have lost everything, who maybe don't even have family members to find food for anymore. I decided to do what I could to help."

I looked at the man: by every stereotype a rough-looking "street tough," the kind of face the media uses to represent aggressive thugs; the kind of clothes that signal a man not overly concerned with fastidiousness. "The Sinhalese are rioting against the Tamils," proclaimed the radios. Not all of them, not even most of them, I thought. I had to reach over and put some money in the man's shirt pocket as he drove off.

The 1983 communal violence in Sri Lanka stands as a graphic example not only of the way many of the front-line actors and actions are deleted from formal narratives and "official accounts," but also of the way daily realities of life under extreme violence are erased in "accepted" war stories. About five days into the rioting, I was walking along a major street in Colombo and stopped at a corner to rest and to try and grapple with what I was seeing. In a short space of time, I was in several conversations, which I repeat here. These, to me, represent a real core of people's experiences of violence—multiplied across all the street corners in all the towns in Sri Lanka.

A long line of people stretched down the block, all queued up at a shop door that was closed and barred. Most of them were women. They ran the gamut of ages and backgrounds, but virtually all seemed to share the same expression: a powerful combination of fear, exhaustion, pain, resignation, yet some will to carry on. "What is it?" I asked.

We heard this shop might open today, and that it still has some food left. We've all been scouring the city, looking for food. There's just nothing around. A lot of shops have been burned out. Not a stick of food left. Many more have been gutted by looting. People have been looting shops down to the last grain of rice. The shop owners whose shops have not been hit yet have locked and barred them, not daring to open for fear of another mob attack or a band of looters. The markets are bare. Who in their right mind would take goods to sell in the market today?

No one is eating, our children are hungry, we can't see a solution. It's not just the shops; the warehouses have been burned, storage containers broken into and emptied. No flights are coming in with food to the airport, the trucks that haven't been burned out are parked and hidden, no one is driving supplies to town, and even if they were, crops have been burned out and gardens stripped bare.

As we were talking, a man with a bloody leg stumbled in the street. Several of us went over to assist him. He began to wipe tears from his face: "My child is sick, so sick, I have to find a pharmacy that is open, that still has medicines to fill this prescription for my child. Nothing is open, nothing is available, no one is working."

One of the women from the line commiserated:

It's not just the food. There are no medicines to be found. The pharmacies are all burned up or looted out or shut and barred. My little girl has been wounded. We took her to the hospital, but no one was available—hardly any medical staff were there, and those that were had hundreds vying for their attention. There were no supplies at the hospital, anyway. We went to another hospital south of town, and it was filled to bursting with people seeking refuge. There was no medical attention, but hundreds of people who had been attacked, who had lost their homes, or who had been threatened with death gathered there in some hope of finding safety. So we returned home again, and my husband is out now walking all over town trying to find anyone that is selling medicines, while I look for food.

At this point a youth came up and stopped at the street corner, and, standing in one place, began a repetitive series of actions: lifting one foot, starting to walk, sagging down, stopping, reaching up, and repeating the gestures again.

Poor child, *one of the women said.* I've seen him before. He lost his family in the attacks. He somehow escaped and got away with his life, but it broke his mind. We see him wandering the streets day and night, just like this now; unaware of the violence around him. If you try and talk to him, he just says, "I can't find my home."

Before I was caught in these riots, media and literary accounts had taught me to think of communal violence as consisting only of "rioters" and "victims," and of riots as being explosive one-day events. These accounts did not convey the fact that there is no escaping the riots—for anyone. It never occurred to me before this time that riots involved looking for nonexistent food and medicines long since burned and looted; that people "of the rioters' side" risked their lives to protect

people "on the other side"; that young children were caught in the violence, standing with eyes open too wide, wondering what to do and what was happening to their world — and that all these experiences were as much the meat of political violence as the rioters attacking the victims.

There are some 15 million people in Sri Lanka, and there were 15 million stories of political violence, all equally central. Most were never heard. Some were actively silenced. The reporting on the riots in Sri Lanka improved little over time, and the stereotypes continued: rioters (adult males) and victims (variously, terrorists or entire innocent families identified as mass casualties, generally nameless) — "the Sinhalese rioting against the Tamils." Worse, attitudes and policies were formed on this misinformation that tended to foment ongoing cycles of violence. I first thought that the erroneous views commonly propagated were a result of a lack of information: how many impartial researchers conduct viable research in the midst of a firefight? During the time I was in the midst of this communal violence that took thousands of lives, few people were taking notes and most people were taking sides. Many "official" political versions of the riots were based on vested interests. Most researchers who wrote on the violence did so by flying in and conducting interviews after the aggression had abated and relative order was restored. It is a cliché to note that people involved in aggression clean up their stories of violence after the fact. Few admit they firebombed a neighbor's house or stabbed an unarmed person. The victims themselves often hide the truth for fear of retaliation.

It was this difficulty of studying violence firsthand that I initially assumed underlay the misinformation that I saw published on the events I had witnessed. I further assumed that the policies based on this erroneous information — policies doomed to fail because they were based on fictions and not facts — would change to embrace more accurate information should it become available. But the first time I publicly presented my research on the political violence I had seen, I began to form another view. People from the audience stood up, incensed, to challenge my data. "How can you say that priests were involved in violence?" For others, I was being offensive by saying some youths participated in the violence, or that trusted members of the community harmed children. "Women don't join mobs, they are only assaulted by them!" And for still others I violated sensibilities by saying troops condoned, even assisted, massacres of civilians. The list of offenses went on. It did not matter that I had witnessed these events personally, talked to the people involved. *The offense was speaking of these things.*

Most people spoke, not from a position of knowledge, but from positions of privilege and passion. Militaries didn't want to be tainted with the accusations of killing civilians. The religious didn't want to face the fact that some priests fomented communal aggression. Professionals far removed from the political conflicts didn't want to believe that others like them, perhaps they themselves at some future time, could target the innocent and become pawns in ugly political power struggles. For many, the sheer barbarity of the violence was unsettling, and needed to be bracketed in comfortable myths. People did not want to hear stories like that of my young neighbor, who along with his schoolmates killed another schoolmate because he was Tamil. Senseless violence is generally associated with rioting: Freud's mob theory of the eternal child — humans reduced to their lowest common denominator, willing to do anything, however irrational, for a father-like figure — is widely accepted in general society. The problem with the story of my neighbor is that reasonable, economically comfortable, schooled people are not supposed to give in to these primal emotions: it is the poor and uneducated, the marginal, and the criminal who are blamed for irrational violence. It is the poor three-wheeler driver street tough who is supposed to fuel the flames of mob violence, not the nice schoolboy or the respected doctor.

Amid all this, another set of dirty secrets was kept. Under cover of the "truth" shouted from media headlines that "the Sinhalese were rioting against the Tamils," businesspeople burned out competitors' stores, neighbors set fire to the house of a person against whom they held a grudge, and countless thousands of people looted goods anywhere they found the chance. These were acts of acquisition and antipathy that had little, if anything, to do with ethnicity. Old scores were revisited and settled, and considerable fortunes were lost and made under cover of rioting.

By the time everyone had their say, I began to understand the images of war conveyed in the media and literature. They were variously devoid of priests and women, children and rogue troops, low-class altruists and high-class profiteers. Political violence is corralled as the province of rational militaries and mostly rational soldiers controlling the dangerous elements and explosive fissures inherent in human society. A comfortable picture, but a mythological one. As the chapters of this book will illustrate, this same pattern of deleting significant aspects of political violence from public accounts occurs from riots to full-scale wars, from Asia through Europe and the Americas to Africa. Most of the people I meet at the epicenters of wars, and most of the events I see take place, are never represented in public accounts of political violence. Serious and repre-

sentative stories of front-line realities do circulate in the media and literature worldwide. But in all too many, the central actors and the central victims fall out of the telling.

Why is so much invested in erasing the truths of war?

I have no simple answers. On the one hand, I am forced to ask whether we, the general public, simply don't want to know the full extent of the suffering in people's lives. In writing on the war in Yugoslavia, Mattijs van de Port asks: "Isn't it utter nonsense to suppose that you may bridge the gap between the world of the academy and war?"[1] He then challenges the academy's most cherished claim to the pursuit of knowledge in noting that he is forced to wonder whether we truly

> *want* to understand how "the beast in man" is mysteriously connected with the urges and motives that derive from social reality, whether such research does not run up against strongest inhibitions in its path. Are we prepared to give up our neat picture of the world? (I am only too aware of my own reluctance to do so.) Do we really want an academic text that is disturbing? (I have read very few myself).[2]

This is a question van de Port returns to time and again in his ethnography of war in former Yugoslavia, deciding, in the course of his explorations, that "experiences obtained in the terrible reality of the war, in which these confrontations with the most brutal violations of the integrity of the human body — violations of what is perhaps the ultimate story we have to tell about ourselves: the story that says that we are more than just skin, bones, blood and brains — seem to bring about an utter alienation."[3]

This is a theme taken up as well by Arthur Redding in *Raids on Human Consciousness: Writing, Anarchism, and Violence:* "Violence bespeaks a perpetually elusive, abstract, yet paradoxically germane horror, a shifting gravitational field tugging at the tides of our collective dread."[4] And he concludes that "violence will always be situated as extratextual."[5]

This certainly fits my observation in discussing the riots in Sri Lanka: the offense rests not in the realities of violence, but in *speaking* of them. In fact, violence is often rendered as "unspeakable." But *why* should we be trained to believe that the horrors of war are too horrible to speak, indeed to contemplate — that hearing the story we tell ourselves about ourselves, in Geertzian terms, is too awful to tell? Why do we omit the telling and in so doing allow the acts behind the telling to continue?

What is it that we are not supposed to know? Several considerations come to mind:

In the wars of the world today most casualties are civilian. This fact has become fairly obvious in recent years, though it has become no less palatable, and perhaps for this reason it is often overpowered by the myth that war equals soldier equals male. Despite the fact that some 90 percent of all casualties today are civilians, that more children die in war than soldiers, and that the front lines run through average citizens' homes and livelihoods, texts on war, museums, military novels, art, and statues all help reinforce the idea and the ideal that war is about male soldiering.

People who are harmed and killed in war often die unnecessarily gruesome deaths, often at the hands of those in uniforms. This plays hell with the notions of integrity and honor that underscore the key justifications of militaries worldwide. At the same time, many soldiers and civilians act honorably in the midst of violence, but when the realities of the front lines are deleted, these acts too become invisible. There is a second layer to this: perhaps in recognizing that civilians die because they are in the wrong place at the wrong time, and not because they do anything to violate the rules of war, people face the unsettling proposition that no matter how they live their lives, they too may fall victim to violence. Chaos — the unpredictable and uncontrollable — is deeply disturbing to most. The myth of an orderly war is more bearable.

No matter who shoots whom, certain power elites make a profit. There is more to this than meets the eye. The man who was burned to death in his bullock cart — nameless and long forgotten for most in a roster of war dead that in Sri Lanka alone totals thousands, and in the world totals hundreds of millions in the last century alone — seems a long way from explaining war and its erasures. But this man lies within a web of connections that, followed out to their global connections, is a story that is as indicative of war, and as nameless, as he is. Upcoming chapters will consider where exactly we look for war, and what acts define the "everyday" of war. These acts take us through soldiers and civilians alike who run arms and run orphanages, who sell drugs or take them to forget the horrors of war, who black-market antibiotics and textbooks in acts that are simultaneously profiteering and altruistic.

Somewhere, in all of this, the lines between war and peace break down. Not only in the midst of people's lives, but in the trillions of dollars a year that war industries generate for people working in peacetime

locales; for people shipping goods across various lines of political alliance and antipathy; and for people who walk the front lines more interested in making a buck than in making an enemy. These systems of trade and profit are far larger than any one warzone, and are in fact larger than any single era of war. To put this in perspective: in the mid-1990s governments spent 700 billion *legal* dollars on their militaries. This doesn't include the vast sums spent along extra-state, gray, and black-market channels. The illicit weapons trade alone is estimated at half a trillion dollars a year.[6] I have spoken so far only of weapons profits. Add in all the vehicles and gasoline, uniforms and food, medicines and tools, engineering equipment, communications systems, and computers, ad infinitum, necessary to war. From the legal arms sales through the negotiated oil futures to the illegal diamond trade, war is good for business in the cosmopolitan production centers of the world. The diamonds, oil, timber, seafood, and human labor that come from warzones from Angola to Burma, and the weapons, supplies, and services these valuable resources buy from cosmopolitan industries add up to considerable perquisites. As Karl Meier observes: "The international community is not in the mood to finance the Angolan peace process any longer than need be, in contrast with its eagerness to finance and profit from the civil war."[7]

In considering the staggering profits that accrue to war, I suggest that the "politics of invisibility" is not an accident: it is created, and it is created for a reason.[8] The casualties of war would find a tragic truth in Charles Tilly's characterization of "war making and state making as organized crime."[9] The modern state is as dependent on warzone profits as it is on keeping these dependencies invisible to formal reckoning. Part of its power rests on the optics of deception: focusing attention on the need for violence while drawing attention away from both the war-economy foundations of sovereign power and the price in human life this economy of power entails. This is the magician's trick: the production of invisible visibility.

SHADOWS AND INVISIBILITIES

The Mozambican soldier continued his conversation:

> Invisibility: it seems you all from the North are pretty good at it too. You ask how it runs so smoothly. It works because people share a goal: to some-

> how prosper. It works because doing business is human nature. It works because that's how we make it. People may call me a scoundrel for doing some deals, but in truth, I'd rather be doing deals that help people than killing some poor sod and leaving behind a widow and his children who may starve.
>
> You know those guys who take payment from families for getting back their loved ones who have been press-ganged into military service—the ones we call "jackals"? OK, they are profiting from people's suffering. But you know, they are the only way people have of getting family members back who might be killed. They give people hope who are desperate—often the only hope they have of getting their family back. People despise the jackals, having to sell off their goods to pay these guys to find their loved ones, but they like them, too. You should see the families' faces when their father or sister comes stumbling out of the bush looking like the living dead from their experiences, and finally realize they are home. Yeah, it's business. But would it be any better if that jackal were taking up arms, killing? How does this stack up against the guys flying in arms from all over the world? Even here, nothing is straightforward. Some say they are flying in food and Bibles and they are flying in arms, and some say they are flying in arms and they're bringing in food and Bibles. But a whole lot of them are flying in arms and flying out with war booty.
>
> You can buy anything out here if you know what you are doing: from the latest videos and the equipment to watch them, the generators to run them, and the petrol for the generators to a Mercedes Benz and the mechanic to fix it. Thing is, you can usually get *cadonga* [unregulated goods] easier than you can get things on the legal markets. African, European, American, Asian, everyone's in this business—they're all here.

Illegal. Informal. Illicit. Gray-market. Brown-market. Extra-state. Extra-legal. Underground. Unregulated. Subterranean. Clandestine. Shadows. These words tend to conjure up images apart from day-to-day life. We don't tend to juxtapose them with images of supermarket shopping, attending school, buying appliances, picking a stock, watching our congressperson speak on labor law, checking currency exchange rates, buying the latest DVD hit.

Just as there is a popular image of "war," so too is there an image of "the clandestine"; a young adult male dressed in dark colors and a leather jacket—someone *apart* from the normal workaday world, not someone who holds a regular nine-to-five job and wears a dress or a suit. One of the most pervasive of myths is that two things can't exist in one place at the same time. This myth confounds understandings of war, and it helps to keep the shadows invisible. There is the legal world, and then there is

the non-legal subworld. Two realms, distinct. A clean portrait, but inaccurate. The shadows exist in the midst of formal state society and the minutia of day-to-day living. The shadows are an integral part of everyday life and global politics, and they represent a power grid as substantial as that of many of the world's states.

Michel de Certeau captures the complex interactions of non/state and extra/legal that I will develop in this book. De Certeau asks that we give up a singular attachment to abstract domains of epistemology to explore substance in action:

> The wordless histories of walking, dress, housing, or cooking shape neighborhoods on behalf of absences; they trace out memories that no longer have a place. . . . They insinuate different spaces into cafes, offices, and buildings. To the visible city they add those "invisible cities" about which Calvino wrote. With the vocabulary of objects and well-known words, they create another dimension, in turn fantastical and delinquent, fearful and legitimating.[10]

If approximately half of the economies of countries like Italy, Peru, Kenya, and Russia run through the shadows, if half of all revenues for such diverse commodities as weapons, software, and cigarettes run through extra-legal channels, then even determining where the "extra" in extra-legal is may be empirically impossible. But the dividing line is not that which is normal life and that which is *apart*. Instead, like de Certeau's cities, the visible and the invisible intertwine throughout the walkways and cafes, the department stores and governing offices, the objects we love and the people we fear.

In making these inquiries, it helps to understand what Marc Augé calls "non-places." Augé is interested in supermodernity and the vast spheres of transit it generates: superhighways and communications systems, airports and fast-food chains — the nondiscriminate, indiscriminate spaces that define the cosmopolitan present. He doesn't deal with the illicit, but his theories apply well to these realms: "The world of supermodernity does not exactly match the one in which we believe we live, for we live in a world that we have not yet learned to look at."[11]

The world is most often presented, in academic text, popular media, and fiction, as a world of places. We are animate beings in a world of objects arranged in a locale. Our geographies have mountains and rivers and landmarks; our civilizations have capitals and governing offices and schools marked on maps; our businesses have buildings with addresses on named streets.

Place is not given, but made. People make place for various reasons:

of belonging; of politics; of power and control; of meaning. But people move, thoughts progress, goods flow: we live in a world of refined movement. In studying war, and especially in studying the shadows, I direct my research not at a set place, but at fluid targets. The shadows as I define them in this book are, at core, about movement, not merely place. They comprise, in Augé's words, non-places. This is part of the way in which they are rendered invisible. It is place that is given meaning and substance, it is locale that is populated, it is site that is "seen."

> We can say of these universes, which are themselves broadly fictional, that they are essentially universes of recognition. The property of symbolic universes is that they constitute a means of recognition rather than knowledge, for those who have inherited them: closed universes where everything is a sign; collections of codes to which only some hold the key but whose existence everyone accepts; totalities which are partially fictional but effective; cosmologies one might think had been invented for the benefit of ethnologists.[12]

The recognition of place often hinges on the non-recognition of non-place.[13] Non-place is the *elsewhere* that is populated by shadowy figures in dark coats: the realms constructed in popular thought as the province of misery and danger . . . the homeless, the criminal, the illicit, the marginal. Battlefields are immortalized as short-term places/non-places, idealized as distinct from everyday life and the "safe" world. The illicit is banished to realms outside of known place, outside of locales on a map or sites we can survey.

Of use here is Stanley Cohen's studies on "states of denial," where he seeks to understand how people and states can elect to "not-know" about atrocities, suffering, and dangerous politics. Of course, Cohen writes, there are systems of denial that operate on both the personal and the official levels when governments seek to sustain the massive resources of the state. But in addition, there are systems of cultural denial, which are "neither wholly private nor officially organized by the state. Whole societies may slip into collective modes of denial not dependent on a fully-fledged Stalinist or Orwellian form of thought control. Without being told what to think about (or not to think about) and without being punished for 'knowing' the wrong things, societies arrive at unwritten agreements about what can be publicly remembered and acknowledged."[14]

Like Augé, Cohen draws a distinction between knowledge and acknowledgment. People can "know and not-know" simultaneously. Information can be available — stories of wartime atrocities, suffering, and the impact of extra-state markets in our lives all circulate in modern media,

myth, and conversation — but people may not fully acknowledge or act on them. Profound complexities mark this process: Cohen documents how Jewish people in World War II avoided "recognizing" the mortal danger they were in even though the facts of genocide were visible; they thus failed to escape to safety. Denial, then, isn't a simple process of disaffirming the problems of "others," but may well include denying those that threaten our own lives. Cohen discusses Primo Levi's explorations of why German Jews failed to see the dangers they were in despite so many warning signals, quoting the old German adage *Things whose existence is not morally possible cannot exist.*[15]

Linked with these beliefs that the morally dangerous or reprehensible should be — and therefore is — impossible is a concept Cohen calls denial magic: "The violation is prohibited by the government, so it could not have happened."[16] It links with denials that blame the victim for being politically partial, blame the reporter for being biased, and blame witnesses for having an agenda. "Magical realism" thus emerges as "a method to 'prove' that an allegation could not possibly be correct because the action is illegal."[17]

De Certeau's invisible cities are of course clearly, and visibly, situated in the midst of our everyday lives: deals made in coffee shops for both noble and ignoble ends; goods both legal and illegal moving innocuously down city streets; warehouses and stores doing layers of business along the un/regulated spectrum; illicit monies laundered through respectable practices.

In their 1994 book *Invisible Governance,* David Hecht and Maliqalim Simone describe the overlap between legality, illegality, and magic in a world where "place" is an especially shadowy notion:

> Although the bulk of this border economy is illegal, it is policed sporadically. . . . The murkiness and uncertainty of the border provides a text for magicians to decipher — is it a propitious time to buy, and if so, what items?
>
> Due to the important role these magicians play in the border economy, many people come to see them even though they have no intention of buying anything or going anywhere. Both sides of the border are often crowded with people who briefly step out of one nation with no intention of entering any other. People come to settle disputes, seek cures for fevers, put curses on villages, or regain lost virginity. With the acquired wealth, magicians frequently become traders, and many traders become magicians.
>
> Magicians foster disparate allegiances among the border police, often leaving national designations irrelevant. The resulting disarray is the only protection available to both buyer and seller. . . . Although both governments repeatedly try to bring order and normalcy to the border, they find it difficult to change a situation where everyone can win some of the time.[18]

The state and the extra-state, the legal and the illicit, the violent and the peaceful intertwine along the streets and the cafes, the offices and the shops, the politics and the profits shaping the world as it unfolds into the third millennium.