

# INTRODUCTION

An issue of TCR dedicated to new writing and art from six large metropolitan centres is timely. For, as Mike Davis informs us in *Planet of Slums*, an alarming new study of global urbanization, the year 2005 may well mark an important juncture when “for the first time the urban population of the earth will outnumber the rural. Indeed, given the imprecisions of Third World censuses, this epochal transition may already have occurred.”

The city locates one of the most disturbing paradoxes of our time: at the very moment when human civilization has taken a decisively urban turn, many of civilization’s oldest urban centres are being destroyed and “reconstructed,” while longstanding rural and urban populations are being uprooted, all in accordance with the accelerated logic of “progress” that spawned the growth of the city in the first place. In short, “the city” is a sign for a global urbanization characterized by rapid investment and divestment, construction and demolition, decomposition and recomposition.

Given this scenario, readers should not expect to find in the work collected here either a Romantic indictment or an absorptive, modernist celebration of the city. For if Vaneigem is correct that “the ideal [of] urbanism is the conflict-free projection in space of the social hierarchy,” in order to “lubricate the gears of subjection [and] render it lovable,” then under our current conditions, it seems that contemporary poetry more often than not will choose to disavow its role as a conduit for the projection of a smooth, conflict-free urban space.

To initiate this collaboratively-edited issue, I contacted the writers/editors of the various cities — many of whom I already knew or whose work I admired — and asked them to gather twenty pages of writing, including some of their own work. In this call, I asked them not for “a best-of selection from each city, but rather a collection of work which in some way engages with some of the antagonisms and aspirations of the area, however direct or oblique such engage-

ment may be.” The idea was to pause each city at a given moment in its cultural production, and to place these sites in contradistinction to one another. To be sure, other cities and other writers could and should have been included: in particular, I regret not having included Honolulu, Montreal, and New Orleans. My ignorance of the writing milieus in these cities, along with the usual constraints of space, were factors. I hope someone else picks up where this issue leaves off.

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— Roger Farr