



FOR

THOSE WHO LIVE IN CITIES

For those of us who live in cities, as inhabitants, travellers or neo-inhabitants, they are all we have. We imagine them, we experience them, we cannot run away from them. Life is not elsewhere. It is in the here and now. So we live it, live in our cities, and we think about how this is to be done.

How do we live the everyday; and how can we write about it? What can we say?

Being within the everyday of cities is to be in a state of constant movement between being *situated* and being *placeless*. Being within a world of the *familiar* becoming *unfamiliar*, a long continuum between *affinities* and *alterities*. Things that are, and are not, the same within and across cities. Within and across Beirut, Calcutta, Delhi, Lagos, London, Mexico City, Srinagar-Sarajevo – the cities that speak and are spoken to in this section.

The intensely subjective, everyday materiality of our expressions about the city are at all times in danger of being displaced by technocratic modes that articulate urban experience only to control it. These technocratic languages of control, of hygiene, of security, of scarcity, fall like shadows between us and our writing about our cities; they darken our forays into 'other cities'.

Cities leave us sleepless through violence. Our consciousness has to be attentive to the violence that cities bring in their wake. It is violence that forces us to look for signs of life in routines and textures of daily flows, and it is through violence that we consider the unfamiliar, and it is in the aftermath of violence that we awaken to our love for our spaces, and it is in the face of violence that we are constantly posed with the thought of other shared futures.

What can be the ethics of/for these times, and these places?

The act of writing all our cities works with this question by proposing an ethics of addressing our situatedness and placelessness.

For those of us who live in cities, the knowledge that orients us to them is not static or 'objective' but lived and practised through affirmations of the everyday. To write the city is to register these affirmations.

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