

Elegy To My Trapped City

Dia Al-Azzawi

Your face has been the blossom of all sunny mornings, your eyes lined by the Tigris water and fragranced with the scent of your lemon and orange groves. You were so graceful when greeting those who smiled upon you. This is how you were, coyly hiding the history of your many lovers, away from those who crossed your path.

You were never a city like others! Your Abbasid glow had nothing but a message of seduction. So often did your children try to imitate you? And how they liked to carry with them some of your charm and magic when they travelled far from you. They were confident that you would never belong to anyone but your people; and when anxiety crawled into their hearts they returned reluctantly, forgetting that they left their places open for heartache.

Despite all the wars, your universal name elicits a deep fascination. We became accustomed to it with all that came of hardship and a forged history written on coloured banners, and the wasted ruins of the clans and the tribes that came from a bygone era. You remain etched in our souls, we who are far from you in the diaspora, despite repeated predictions that your land will be pierced by the spears of foreigners and occupied by bandits of duplicitous politicians, by men who have built alpine walls of hatred to rob and kill as they wish, by anonymous attack or malicious gossip.

Peace be upon the shrines of saints scattered around you. Peace be upon your children who were assassinated in cold blood. Peace be

upon those among them who were forced to join the convoys of the diaspora, spread throughout God's limitless land.

Your image now truly corresponds with the premonition of your poet Al-Bayati who is buried away from you in the cemetery of strangers:

*I saw in her eyes:
The shabbiness of the leaders, thieves and pawns.*

*I saw in her eyes:
All men
Glued like stamps
on everything.*

I saw in her eyes:

*The orphan childhood
I saw in her eyes:
The orphan childhood
Wandering, searching in the garbage dumps
For a bone*

*I saw in her sad eyes:
The gardens of ashes
Drowned in shadow and stillness.*

If this is all that remains of your charm, then how can we endure the pain of grief?

London
October 2011



Elegy To My Trapped City, 2011 Acrylic on canvas, 240 x 800cm.



courtesy of the artist presented in public copy to www.ibrahimicollection.com for publishing on the site



Elegy To My Trapped City Nr.1, 2011 China ink on paper mounted on canvas, 122 x 153cm.



Elegy To My Trapped City Nr.2, 2011 China ink on paper mounted on canvas, 122 x 153cm.

www.ibrahimicollection for publishing on the site



Elegy To My Trapped City Nr.3, 2011 China ink on paper mounted on canvas, 122 x 153cm.



Elegy To My Trapped City Nr.4, 2011 China ink on paper mounted on canvas, 122 x 153cm.



Elegy To My Trapped City Nr.5, 2011 China ink on paper mounted on canvas, 122 x 153cm.