

## Dreams & Stones~ Magdalena Tulli

Only the inhabitants of a city built according to the design of the Star are never faced with the necessity of choice. They are obliged to move around in straight lines, yet in a certain sense all straight lines there are parallel. In every place only one appropriate road meets the eye. And so the calm pedestrians look directly ahead, which gives them an expression of infinite patience. The main streets there lead radially to the most important point, which marks the true center. In it is situated the heart of the city. From here the whole city is clearly visible; in the twinkling of an eye one can see right through it along with all its interiors... It contains within itself a lasting record of the order of the world to which it belongs and an invaluable ready outline of the values that will be assigned to the things it contains. The gravitational force of objects placed in the scales will depend not only on their mass but above all on their estimated worth...

...On clean drafting paper it is easiest to draw rectangles. Thanks to the mechanical properties of draftsmen's instruments, they multiply on its surface of their own accord, leaving no room for other shapes. Stars, on the other hand, originate in the mind. There, far from the earth...they glitter all at once, and their irrepressible rays slice through the darkness... Though it remains a supposition it is not hard to interpret. It proclaims that- it is set in motion by motors, gears, and cogs, devices that keep the sun and stars rotating, pull the clouds across the horizon and drive water along the bed of the river. The clarity and simplicity of this notion may prove salutary. They will make it possible to dismantle, repair and reinstall every broken component- so long as the world is composed only of separate removable parts and any process can be corrected independently of all others without worrying that the whole will become imbalanced. Put another way, cities based on stars and cities based on right angles are superior to cities based on meanders, so long as the world is a machine...

...If the world is a machine then the separation of object from counter object must begin with the sealing up of the casing. And from the construction of the vault that will rest on solid ground. By this means the upper and lower waters will be parted and from that moment it will be obvious what is the top and what is the bottom, what is order and permanence and what is chaos and change. And only then will it be possible to distinguish night from day...

...The city spread out on the draftsman's blueprint had something festive about it. It had been designed with the thought of sunny days and no one even knew what it would look like in rainy weather...Care was taken that the sun should shine both on the bricklayers and on the kindergarten although – it goes without saying- it shone most handsomely of all on the trumpets...

...At that time the machinery of the world worked smoothly, without grinding noises or surprises, like machinery of a stage that enables practiced hands to move the sky along with the stars and the sun and to turn the earth, flat as a plate, with the aid of a

special crank. In this time of the world's infancy, with the necessary effort the impossible also turned out to be achievable.

*The city of changes was created by memory in search of needles in haystacks. It is literally dependent on recollections, those castles in the sand washed away by tideswaters. Harried by waves of oblivion, it requires inhabitants that bear within thoughts, questions and desires in which city landscapes are embedded- so that the city might remember itself...*

The true indicators of urban solutions are the utterly unknown rules of joining sentences and creating stories, the principles of linking ideas with other ideas and assigning weight to questions and answers...placed in the air, far from any sources of rot and decay.

Whose will and whose views are imprinted in the framework of the city? Those who ask must seek an answer on their own...one possible answer declares that attempts were indeed made to put the foundations in the air, but that the inertia proved an obstacle and the fact for its part did nothing to support order. The stubborn passivity is responsible for the fact that the city could not realize the hopes placed on it.

The greater harmony beneath the sealed dome of the sky- the greater the confusion in the far side... There in the blue depths it still finds its way into the ground waters and by this route returns...it is never clear which thought was the source of things that happened, or how it managed to move the mechanical components of the world to set the event in motion.

Some blame everything on the fine palace that stands in the center of the city. They say it is too tall and that its needle made the first scratch on the sky... They want to allow everything that for years with the greatest effort was removed beyond the dome of the sky to mingle with the substance of the city. They assert that if the desire for perfection is only abandoned, the permeability will cease forever to threaten us.

Yet torment too cannot last forever: it always moves toward the breaking point...The uproar from which the ear loses all ability to distinguish sounds will be transformed into the mild silence of waking life, the same silence that endures inside stones. The crushing pressure of thoughts that make the head throb with pain will in the end reveal a light, transparent void.

May that void unfold inside every brick and permeate everything in the world: buildings, sun and stars, clouds in the sky, air in the lungs and lungs themselves. Only then will the palm begin to fit the handle of the tool, the hat fit the head and the rib cage cease to separate the heart from the rest of the world. Then it will be easier to accept the obvious truth that the burden oppressing us weighs nothing at all: ...a steadfast endurance free of any name.