

Eva Colombo, *The blessing of the red wood*, fourth chapter: *The enchantment or The holy wood* (*L'incantation o Le bois sacré*, oil on canvas by Paul Sérusier, 1891)

Here I can stop. Yes, here I can stay and rest. I'm returned home. It is an home that nobody has built, that nobody will be able to demolish. It is an home that nobody has bought, that nobody will sell. I have found it again following tracks impressed on the ground. Human or animal tracks, I don't know. There were many tracks, too many, the ground was fully covered with them. But nevertheless I have been able to recognize the right ones: they were those that didn't disfigure but embellished the ground. When I bent down to the ground to look better at the tracks, I realized that making yourself humble doesn't mean humbling yourself. Approaching the ground, meekly following its indications: this is what it means. And I'm returned home, in the wood of the red trees. Now I am safe. I've run away from a strange world full of human beings that don't walk on the ground, that don't place their foots on the tracks that embellish the ground. They run, those strange human beings, they always run placing their foots into strange vehicles...who knows where everyone runs, who knows if it worth the ride. They claimed that I should explain to them how do I live and why I am in this way. They claimed that I should justify my existence doing something useful, something useful according to their parameters. Absurd parameters. For instance: sweeping away dead leaves from a street that no one runs along, where nothing could be clogged: this is useful. Pointing out to the passers – by how beautiful and precious the reflex of the moon on the water is: this is useless. Useless not because the passers – by usually realize this by themselves but because it is considered useless the reflex of the moon on the water itself. They claimed that I should pay the necessary for living and that I should earn the necessary money doing something useful according to the mentioned parameters. And quickly, because time is money. I've tried to explain to them that time is not all the same, it is not only which one

they know. Have you ever been in a church next to a railway station? For instance the Barefooted Carmelites church, in Venice. You would realize that there the time runs in an another way...there the time coils itself around the tortile columns like a snake...if you stop near these columns the space around you stops too and it coils itself like a tail – biting snake...you are still, yes, but you are alive...and you will be alive forever, because there the time doesn't run like a train but it coils itself endlessly in its coils...You are wasting time chattering, they said to me. These words of yours don't produce anything useful. But how can be useless – I answered – the reflex of the moon on the water? Have you ever noticed that the reflex of the full moon on the water is a silver coin which shatters without breaks, maintaining intact its value and its beauty? What coins are you chattering about? They said to me. You are unable to earn money because you are unable to make yourself useful. But how can be useless – I answered – the faculty of turning into human words the language of water and fire, of earth and air? Don't you see that all around us is struggling to communicate to us something important? Something important even to you, I mean. Few human beings are able to translate the language of water of fire of earth and of air into human language, but every human being can take advantage of the messages communicated by this language. How can you consider useless this faculty? Perhaps at the moment you don't understand me because my voice is trembling, it is trembling because I'm scared by you. But I shall write the words of water of fire of earth and of air so you will read them and you will understand...understand me. You are raving, they said to me. It is clear that you are suffering from a mental illness...in ancient times we would say that you are a mad woman or a witch. But nowadays we are more artful so we plainly say that you are suffering from a mental illness. In ancient times we would send you to a ship of fools or to the stake, but it is clear that for a woman as you the water or the fire is not the worst torment. For a woman of your kind the worst torment is to be forced of

leading a normal life – normal according to our parameters, those parameters that you consider absurd. Therefore we will write something: we will write that you are a sick person. Then we will oblige you to undergo our therapies: we will oblige you to swallow your useless words along with some medicines that will induce you to sleep at night instead of looking at the moon on the water. During the day we will oblige you to sweep away dead leaves from streets that no one runs along, thus you will make yourself useful and you will earn the money necessary to live...to live a normal life, a life similar to ours. I've run away, just in time. I ran, I don't know how long. Then I stopped to take breath and I bent down meekly to the ground. I recognized the tracks that embellish the ground and I followed them. I'm returned home, in the wood of the red trees. My sisters look at me and say nothing. They see the fear in my eyes and understand. They bend down to the ground and light a little flame on a rock. They pray and hope that their prayer will reach the sky along with the smoke of the flame. They pray so that I could forget that nightmare, so that in my eyes it could be only the reflex of the red trees and of the sky which shines through their branches.