

Eva Colombo, *Flowers and Sea*, First chapter: *Chrysanthemums* (inspired by Evelyn De Morgan's painting *In memoriam*)

You used to say that you were unable to look at yourself in the mirror, you used to say that you were unable to look out of the window. I said to you handing you a mirror: look at your face, look at the sea and the earth and the sky behind your back. You are beautiful like the sun which is raising from the sea, like the earth warmed up by the rising sun. You used to say that as far as you were concerned the dawn didn't exist anymore, the earth and the sky didn't exist anymore. For you just the cold hardness of the marble upon which you sat actually still existed, the touching fragility of the chrysanthemums wreath that you held in your hand actually still existed. For you just the sound of the sea that was as the voice of what will never pass away still existed and a shadow on your eyes, the shadow of someone who is passed away. You used to say that you were petrified by the salt of your tears and you wouldn't be able to rise again, you wouldn't be able to turn your face towards the dawn light again. I said to you handing you a mirror: look at your chrysanthemums that are pale gold like the rising sun, look at your dress that is shot purple like the clouds which are dancing through the sun rays. You used to say that your eyes were withered by the salt of your tears, you used to say that you were unable to see anymore... you were able to see just shadows, and even them not very well. You couldn't distinguish a shadow from another, you couldn't distinguish the face of the person you wished to remember. With the mirror I conveyed the dawn light on your face and I said: light creates shadows, memory needs a lamp to lighten memories. Then you raised your face and you looked at me. And you asked me where you might find the oil to feed that lamp. Then I laid down the mirror and I took you by the hand and I said: come, let's go out. Memory is daughter of sky and earth, sky and earth will provide us with the oil to feed the lamp of memories and the balm to soothe your pain.