

Eva Colombo, *Three portraits of the Teacher*, first chapter: *The fortune – teller*

I walk trampling the black and cold ground of the Venetian plain in January, along the horizon pink clouds seem to hug the ground for warming it. No, I'm not waiting for anyone. Yes, I've got a lot of things to do but now I stop to look at the clouds...It seems to you so strange, so...mad? I'm madly in love with this black and cold ground, my ground: the Venetian hinterland, the Venetian plain. But why have I always to justify myself, to explain? If I stop to look at the pink clouds that hug the ground to warm it, it doesn't mean that I am unaware of the cold concreteness of the ground under my feet. I love this ground but I don't feel at home here...I couldn't be at home in a place where who is used to stop for day – dreaming looking at the clouds is considered an air – made individual so to speak, a nothing – made individual. Let's try to stay for once without air... actually. You cannot live without air. Clouds, fantasy, air are real, are concrete: they keep me alive as much as my blood does, they make me able to stand in front of you. I would warm myself at the pinkness of those clouds instead of talking to you that keep on asking what the devil I'm doing here alone at sunset. I'm only looking at the clouds and I would do it in silence instead of justifying myself, instead of explaining...And yet I know that even this time will be useless. Verba volant: my words too are air – made, nothing – made according to you.

“It ain't easy, livin' like a gypsy / Tell ya honey how I feel / I've been dreaming / Floatin' down stream and / Losin' touch with all that is real / Whole earth lover, / keepin' under cover / Never knowin' where ya been / You've been fadin', always out paradin' / Keepin' touch with Mama Kin”

I have got the sensation that who has been named Mama Kin by the Aerosmith in the Venetian hinterland should have the features of the fortune – teller portrayed by Giovanni Battista Piazzetta in 1740: don't you know that enigmatical painting displayed at Accademia's Galleries, in

Venice? I have got the sensation that even in this very moment her bare feet are warming the black and cold ground of the Venetian plain. Yes, she should be around somewhere nearby. Yes, now she is smiling at me...I'm sure of this. Without the warmth of her smile I would by now be frozen to death. It is the smile of whom that knows and explanations, justifications are unnecessary...She looks at me and smiles at me: even if I am that kind of person who is used to stop for looking at the clouds, even if I am that kind of person who is said to be made of air – made of nothing - to her I exist, to her I am real. She knows that the air exists, she knows that the clouds are real. She who is so similar to these pink clouds that hug the ground to warm it, she who has no fear of leaning her bare feet on the black and cold ground. She tells me that as her I shouldn't be afraid of the cold concreteness of the ground because as her I am similar to these pink clouds that love the ground. She tells me that I am able to float like a dream without losing touch with all that is real, like a pink cloud that hold herself tightly to the ground. Stop for a while beside me, she tells me, and look at me. Now you can really and truly feel how much it is concrete the cold of this Venetian ground and how much is real the warmth of this smile of mine. Lean against my knee: how concrete your weight is, how real my strength is! We exist: we are concrete and real as the pink clouds at sunset, as the fantasy that leads the hands of the artist who is moulding the clay of an art's work.

“Keepin’ touch with Mama Kin / Tell her where you’ve gone and been / Livin’ out your fantasy”

She tells me: lean against me, talk to me. I can understand you, your blood is the same of mine: a blood which is red when it feeds our bodies and pink as the clouds that warm the ground when it feeds our souls. Look at the doggy that I carry into my arm: its coat is white as the clouds and black as the ground. Look at the hens that are scratching about at my feet: they are black as the ground and winged as the clouds. Plunge your head as you wish into the clouds of your fantasy but don't forget to keep

your feet into the footprints that I am imprinting on the ground. Stand up now, you have to continue on your way. Don't be afraid: when you will look at the pink clouds at sunset you will feel the warmth of my smile.