

Eva Colombo, *A tale that can't be told*, third chapter: *Candlemas rain*

She opened the door because she needed to feel the rain, to smell the rain. She was thirsty. She stretched her hand into the pelt, she grazed her lips with her wet fingers. It was an hot rain, not a thirst – quenching rain at all. And yet it was winter, a February evening: the second day of February, Candlemas. She was disguised as *The Lady with an Ermine*: it was Carnival too. The pelt suddenly turned into a soft, almost sweet, murmur: the rain greeted her with a smile. She leaned against the door jamb reciprocating the smile: everything was so fine. The Renaissance costume suited her so well, the weasel that she hold in her arms was so lovely. Yes, she was a domesticated weasel, one of those that become white during the winter: she could pass easily as an ermine. Faithful to her name's etymology, that weasel was truly a fastidious "young lady": she surely wouldn't allow anyone to hold her. But the woman could peacefully hold her, stroke her: the weasel felt that the woman's hands were pure, the weasel knew that she has always been faithful to her love. Her love was the love for the artists: she has always loved them, them only: she has never been unfaithful to them. She loved them as the moon loves the sun that makes her shine, as the air loves the instruments that change her into music: she was worthy of holding a white weasel. That evening she looked really like the *Lady with an Ermine* portrayed by Leonardo da Vinci: the same huge dark eyes that open as an unexpected passage – way which who knows where it leads, the same oxymoron of an angular but oval face – a chaste courtesan's face. Framed by the door she felt as if she were on a Led Zeppelin's album...as if she were framed by one of those windows of *Physical Graffiti* cover, beside Rossetti's *Proserpine*. She loved that costume too: the water – rippled dress and the pomegranate matched perfectly with her eyes. Even if her eyes weren't blue they were nevertheless flooded with the dark water of melancholy. But that evening was Candlemas, the Purification: the pure *Lady with an Ermine* was surely more suitable. She closed her eyes to see better her

face superimposed over the face of the *Lady with an Ermine* on *Physical Graffiti* cover and she smiled tasting her fancy...The weasel winced: as quick as lightening she freed herself from woman's hands, as quick as lightening she ran in the rain to vanish into the thicket. The woman opened her eyes, she went out to follow her. But the lightening of the weasel seemed to have wounded rain's sweetness. No, now the rain didn't smile any more: it poured roughly over her, offended. She couldn't advance. She stopped, she gazed at the thicket. She didn't see anything, only the eyes of the night that gazed at her with curiosity from each drop of rain.

“What will happen in the evening in the forest with the weasel / With the teeth that bite so sharp when you're not looking in the evening”

Nick Drake's words for Hazy Jane reached her as the echo of the sea into a shell dashed on the shore by a storm. The woman trembled thinking of the lovely domesticated weasel that in the dark of the thicket was changing herself into a ferocious wild animal, she trembled thinking of the wild weasel unsheathing her cruel teeth...Still in the rain, on the threshold of the thicket, the woman thought of weasel's teeth and Nick Drake. She even dreamed of him, once. He was on the top of a fabulous wooden tower, sat on a prosaic bench. He seemed far – away minded but he told her that he was well. Who knows if it was true, that he was well.

“Do you like what you're doing / would you do it some more / or will you stop and wonder / what you're doing it for”

Nick Drake's words for Hazy Jane glittered as the mother – of – pearl of a shell shattered by the storm. Yes, she liked the life she was leading. Yes, she wouldn't put an end to it. And yet she knew that soon for her a new life would begin. In this new life she would have been alone, all alone. In this new life she should have unsheathed her teeth to survive, like the weasel in the dark of the thicket...The woman turned her head to the door: it was still open. In a moment she would go back into the house,

she would drink from the glasses of the artists and she would rest on their carpets.

“Do you hope to find new ways of quenching your thirst / Do you hope to find new ways / of doing better than your worst”

Nick Drake’s words for Hazey Jane cut as a fragment of a shell too long forgotten at the bottom of a bag. No, at this point she hoped no more to find new ways of quenching her thirst: the rain of that evening was an hot rain, not a thirst – quenching rain at all. At this point she couldn’t change the road she was on, only the glasses of the artists would quench her thirst. And yet the weasel escaped from her hands: it means that her hands weren’t truly pure. It was true, she has always been faithful to her love, the love for the artists...But she has been unfaithful to herself, her hands were unfaithful to their nature. She was an artist too: her hands were made to create her own works of art. And yet she preferred to be the first matter of the artists, she preferred to allow them of manipulating her soul in order to create their works of art. She didn’t have the bravery of manipulating her own soul, she didn’t have the bravery of pugging the clay of her soul with the dark water of her melancholy. She let them do that, the artists she loved. She let them dirty their hands with her soul while she stroked the immaculate mantle of the weasel.

“The more I leave the door unlatched / The sooner love is gone, / For love is but a skein unwound / Between the dark and dawn.”

She looked at the open door and she listened to the words of the Yeats’s Crazy Jane that rained over her with a soft, almost sweet, murmur. Someone switched on the light, he was descending the stairs: surely an artist, one of her lovers, that was looking for her. In front of the lit door, the rain glittered as gold. Everything glittered as gold, everything was so fine. And yet she knew that soon for her everything would change. The love that bound her to the artists wouldn’t be any longer a soft skein upon which comfortably leaning her head during sleepless nights...it

would change itself into the black pearls necklace, the necklace of the *Lady with an Ermine*, that she wore that evening. She couldn't lean her nape upon those cold and black pearls, upon those drops of melancholy. She would be forced to pass her sleepless nights bent over her works of art: the eyes of the night only would look at her, the pearls of her necklace only would stroke her. Her beautiful tapering hands would be reddened and cracked because the heat of the soul burns and the cold of the melancholy cuts. But when a work of art would come completed from her hands the black pearls of her necklace would glitter and she would smile, and her life would start to flow again.

The artist took her by the hand, he led her gently to the house. She didn't say a word but on the threshold she turned her head to the thicket, looking for the eyes of the night: they glittered as gold.