



## *Countravāl l'aigo / Against the Current*

*by Daniela Boccassini*

...your solitude will be a support and a home for you, even in the midst of very unfamiliar circumstances, and from it you will find all your paths. (R. M. Rilke)

We don't need ordinary professors, priests, psychologists, industrialists, or managers. What we are lacking today are the artists, the mystics, the poets, the creators and discoverers. People who see beyond the curtain of habits, and disregard the comfort of appearances. These are today's heirs to our elders, and to the cosmic visions of our shamans of old. (An Inuit from Baffin Island to Jean Malaurie)

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Dearest Max,

time goes by, or flies at supersonic speed, or melts away like a thawing glacier, or goes up in smoke like one of our few remaining forests in a world obviously ailing with global warming ... choose the image you like best — in these days of environmental catastrophes our lives and the life of the planet we forgot was our only home reconnect in unpredictable ways, and a spark of awareness, of dimmed memory seems to be flickering at last in a small, yet growing, number of us. Our days roll on on the brink of catastrophe, and we are forced to witness one foreseen disasters after another on such a scale of magnitude that just a handful of generations ago our forebears would not have hesitated to recognize in them the obvious signs of an apocalypse.<sup>1</sup> In the unfolding of this distressing, bewildered becoming of our times, our common motto — yours and mine: *contreval l'iaue* — has accompanied me, like a numinous presence, every step of the way. As you know, these three words of old came to us, almost by chance, one day of last fall; since then not only have they stayed with me, but they have become a *symbolon*, an initiatory gift: carrying with them a revelation of sorts. But because nothing ever happens by chance, I know that before making their sudden appearance the way they did, these three little words traveled at length, secretly shuttling between your island and my finisterrae so as to pave their way within us for their final outward manifestation.

To begin, I must tell you that when our motto entered my heart, the first thing I did was to translate it, from the medieval French in which you had passed it along to me, into the Provençal idiom of my ancestry. *Contreval l'iaue* thus became for me *countravāl l'aigo*. Thanks to this slight phonetic shift, the shimmering waters secretly stored in these words miraculously started flowing again through and around me, harmonious like a song: like a creek at the edge of the woods, on a full moon night — like the brook that sang at the back of our home in the summer, when I was a child and loved to keep the window open so as to better hear to the brook's hum, so as to better envision how the stars that I saw twinkle in the sky glittered in its clear singing waters. *Countravāl l'aigo*: since I began whispering these words, like a mantra that has surfaced into awareness from almost unreachable depths, this mysterious *aigo*, this enchanted stream that spills stories of times long gone, mine and yet not mine only, hasn't stopped murmuring, nor I listening. Please allow me to share with you something of this reciprocal enchantment; something of the luminous and shadowed forms that the stream in its utterings, and I, in my hearkening, have conjured, together.

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First of all, why did I feel the urge to barter the sounds of the medieval language of *oïl* for those of *langued'oc*? why did I need to summon the image of going against the current in an idiom that my ancestral memory instinctively recognizes — flickering, happy? The language of *oïl* is certainly not alien to me: as you know French was my mother tongue just as Italian was my father tongue.

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<sup>1</sup> «The apocalypse is not something which is coming. The apocalypse has arrived in major portions of the planet and it's only because we live in a bubble of incredible privilege and social insulation that we still have the luxury of anticipating the apocalypse.» (Terence McKenna, quoted in *Sacred Hoop* 94 (2016), Editorial by Nicholas Breeze Wood, written at the time of the Standing Rock protest).

And so? so, the brook whispered, it's a matter of reaching farther, farther than our parental idiom, so as to retrieve the memory of a speech closer than the parental one to our native way of being water and air, earth and sky. In doing so, I gropingly recovered the memory of a way of addressing, and of responding to, life, that in my childhood was deemed devoid of any dignity: hounded as it was by the widening spread, in those alpine canyons where my childhood is rooted, of modernity and along with it of the urban languages, of the national tongues — French or Italian depending on the side of the watershed that those valleys happen to demarcate.

You too may remember those programs of alphabetization that in our childhood we used to watch, spell-bound, on the screens of our first croaking TVs: schoolmaster Manzi was more of a teacher to me than my primary school teacher ever was. With the help of just a charcoal and some sheets of paper he knew how to call forth the soul of things, ahead of the words that evoked them. He taught a whole generation of Italy's illiterate peasants and workers how to read and write in Italian. But above all, he seemed instinctively to know the most hidden recesses of those illiterate people and of the named "things": he understood the dialect of their soul; he plumbed the predicament of a country poised between the no longer and the not yet, an in-between where I too, as a child, unknowingly knew I was standing. Others, who came after him on the TV screens and in the classrooms, determined to convince us of the value of that unifying, national language, had no qualms engendering in their audience — us all, young and old alike — a feeling of rejection mixed with shame for the myriads of local idioms that our elders still deemed theirs to inherit, cherish and pass on: idioms accused of being uncultured, distrustful of writing, recalcitrant to literature, and above all adverse to modernity. Idioms considered wayward and incapable of self-transcendence, and therefore in need of removal, in the same way that a forest gets clear-cutted so as proudly to make room for the new that moves forward: a cluster of apartment blocks in poor cement, the ragtag onset of yet another urban, and inhuman, conglomerate.

Image in image out, without even realizing it I found myself following the downward current of that large river the Italy of the post-war period first, and then of the economic miracle, had turned into, a current where we all ended up converging, and which by gravity drew us, almost always unaware, into the unifying eddies of a common estuary, exiting which we then dispersed in the great sea of transcultural globalism where we now find ourselves swimming, engulfed as we are by the rubbish our collective insatiable hunger for modernity keeps dumping into it. And by looking back from the depths of the oceans unto the alpine creeks that in these increasingly murky waters keep flowing, I suddenly saw and apprehended, with my mind's eye that our motto seems to have activated, something I never really quite comprehended until now. I came to realize that the wild idiom into which I was born was deemed uncouth and therefore despicable because it perfectly mirrored the intrinsically earthy demeanour of those human beings who knew that their lives were from time immemorial in natural, intimate communion with those particular pinewoods, those streams, those pastures and low-ceiling cabins they belonged to. Witness, as in a body language that perfectly dovetails the voiced one, my ancestors' controlled movements, their way of softly placing on the trail one foot in front of the other, the calm depth of their breathing, their few muted words, interspersed with long silences. And even though I was forbidden to use that idiom — which I perfectly understood in its musical shading, as water and stone sing upon meeting — it

was nonetheless to that specific dialectal declension of our way of being human that I knew I belonged. Today as back then, this particular awareness, and memory, of being alive seems to be inscribed within me as a soul tattoo. And I know I share this tattoo, this embodied speech with all those who partake of that awareness and memory in a human and more than human, endless generational chain: because we all have unknowingly been nourished by the earth and the air, the fruits and the animals that in that awareness and memory share.

Despite this wild love, this inborn rootedness, I was carried, or rather swept, away by the current that was washing me downstream, and I felt torn from my ancestral land, a land so harsh, and yet so tender. They explained to me that this was necessary in order for us youngsters to "work our way" into the world. And what a long way didn't we work out — as we traveled labyrinthine suburban bypasses, as we pulled into a tangle of multiple existential crossroads, as we immersed ourselves in the anonymity of those long subway tunnels where everyone seems to be rushing toward an invisible goal, as if haunted by undecipherable dreams that others have been dreaming in their stead, and for their own sake. Trapped in that collective illusion, little by little we lost all memory of a possible return to the springs of existence, ours and life's own; we allowed the marine currents to take us farther and farther into the open sea, and those among us who did not believe in the illusion of us having to "work our way" into the world, abandoned themselves to the currents, like boats without a rudder, so as finally to meet their destiny — a destiny you know keeps looking after you tenderly from behind, caring for you like that guardian angel whose nonexistence, they assured you, is a scientifically proven fact. I myself, as you know, have been swept by the currents way beyond Hercules' columns, till I reached, overseas, new lands, unknown estuaries, different rivers, foreign slopes.

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This is how, my dear Max, those three little words of ours reached me, in this faraway land where I now live. And through their persistent, soft inner echoing they succeeded in ripping open the dense fabric of my overseas everyday life, the rainbow-like medley of unfamiliar experiences that for the last thirty years has enveloped, like a new skin, or shroud, the flesh of my older existential memories. These three simple words have somehow managed to show me how vivid and embodied those memories of bygone times still are: they live in me, I in them. Yet at the same time, with their continuous inner murmuring, they have also compelled me to look and listen, or rather feel, *beyond* those memories, beyond the alpine roots of my existence and of my ancestors' dialect so as to plunge me in the depths, no longer sea-borne but rather fluvial, of a mystery that up until now I had intuited more than really explored: the mystery that these long years of life lived on the Pacific Coast of the Northamerican continent have been weaving within me, without me even realizing it, between these lands and those of my birth, between this wildness and the one from which I was one day torn away.

This is how I came to realize, more than I could initially perceive, that the time has come to leave not just the oceanic depths where our adult existence unfolded, but equally so the borderlands I became used to call home on these shores, so as to travel upstream along the waterways that on these shores come to meet their end. And so I found myself, mentally even

more than physically, by way of a mindset that over the years has slowly become attuned to these lands, traveling along these valleys so different from my own, which nevertheless now own me. Walking against the current, I set in search of the springs that here gush forth, sheltered by cedars and arbutus tress, hidden under mosses and ferns, so as to approach in this bewitching manner the mystery of origins — mine and everyone else's. In the course of this long, slow and exhausting trudge I have come to realize that if every brook generates its own ecodynamics, each of these unique ecosystems shares in turn something specific with all others. Symbolically, we could call this something "lack of salinity". But even more accurately, I should perhaps speak of "sweetness": because ever since Dante's times, all that brings us home from exile is, indeed, viewed as sweet. Wave after wave, rock after rock, in the course of this upstream journey I came to see how these three little worlds of ours could never have become a motto, a symbol, had life not forced me to reach these lands so remote from the valleys I used to call my home, had I not, day after day during many years, been exposed to these lands' own secret, so that little by little, by breathing it and being nurtured by it, that secret became my very abode. As indigenous wisdom knows only too well, we are, and we become, not just what we eat, but what we breathe also: my maternal ancestors knew this, as they clung to the alpine slopes along with their goats to the point of blending into the land; and so did my paternal ancestors, who had learned to garner both their food and their identity from the rocks rising from the marine depths.

Once you become attuned to these lands it soon becomes obvious that this is salmon's territory, and that everything here gets its nourishment from it: bears and eagles, of course, as Piero Angela's documentaries have repeatedly shown in Italy too, but not just them. When I say everything I really mean everything and everyone, including the Pacific's majestic cedars and the bushes of salal, the black-blue ravens, the blue jays and the tiny hummingbirds, the deer, the raccoons and the restless chipmunks. Just watching a documentary is not enough to begin to understand: understand from within, I mean, understand truly; one needs to become a partaker of the nourishment this land is imbued with, along with everything that expresses and informs it. Salmon's generosity far surpasses the diminutive evidence that our cameras, our eyes and minds can garner. Vast and complex, the fabric woven by the salmon's offering of themselves is boundless: it embraces, feeds and sustains everyone of the organisms that lives in the waters and on the lands that are imbued with their presence. Everything here is a mesh in the one vital net that the yearly return of the salmon casts as far as the eye can see, like an endless ecological embrace.

Settlers have long wished to assume, and make everyone else believe, that this is a land of conquest and opportunity, and as such rightfully theirs — but which right, exactly, do they invoke? Such an obdurate and obtuse prejudice notwithstanding, this is salmon's land — and of those who conceive of themselves as salmon's progeny. This is the inner knowing that has fashioned the mindset indigenous to this land, proper to the human dwellers who for millennia have managed to live in sacred partnership with salmon. When salmon shall return no more, human beings too, along with everything else pertaining to this particular biosphere, will be extinguished or will become, in some perverted way, inhuman. Because it is increasingly manifest that the rampant inhumanity that is creeping into us has been spreading like oil on water, just like that oil spill you

can't say exactly when it will befall us, but whose befalling you inwardly know is bound to mark the end of a world, the end of this world.

But, you might counter with the healthy scepticism of someone who listens and tries to understand from a place whose few surviving dialects are steeped in sounds and accents so different from the ones spoken here, is it really possible fully to empathize with that way of seeing the world which, from the pinnacle of our multi-secular superiority of civilized conquerors, we are used to call "primitive", or at best, generously, "archaic"? I cannot gauge fully the extent to which it may be possible to relate to this worldview without understanding all the subtleties of its ancestral idioms. But I do know from experience that it is possible to resonate empathically with the land, with its living universe and with the invisible currents, of air and spirit, that animate it. And this is something that you too, dear Max, know just as well, you who from Marsala behold the island of Marettimo and recognize in it the profile of one of antiquity's sacred mountains, the still visible tip of a continent almost wholly submerged: Europe's long-bygone indigeneity. The decisive factor, it seems to me, is the way in which we relate both to the land that hosts us and to its inhabitants, human and more-than-human: if, as newcomers, we humbly accept the gift we are offered rather than wishing to appropriate it, if we listen intently to silence's voices rather than haughtily cover them with the hollow echo of our raging engines and deceiving words, we too, little by little, may come to be granted the same meal, so that perhaps one day we will come to see, and understand, that what we have been fed all along is nothing but the initiation to the mysteries of the land that has welcomed us, the land whose step-children we have ever so slowly ended up becoming.

Year after year along these shores your organism gets nourished by a meat that is not one, and learns how to respond to its ancestral, secret call: by falling in love with its texture, by getting dizzy with its smell, by rejoicing in its pure, intense colors. As you find yourself identifying almost inadvertently with its totemic omnipresence, you too, day in day out, little by little, become, or return to be, salmon: because it's the memory of salmon's way of being that seeps into you; and it's in the fibers of your being that salmon's way of remembering returns to life. It does not matter whether you are vegetarian and do not eat salmon: all along, since before the advent of humanity, salmon espoused its life to the life of these lands. Everything that grows here, grows bearing the imprint of the gift of itself salmon makes.

Among us humans who live here there are those who still remember: those who despite the unrelenting urbanization still see and know. And there are those who, because of the urbanizing process, ignore and underrate: either because they forgot, or because they belittle. And then there is a flock, a herd, a school of "in-betweens": beings called to cross over from one way of living, and of knowing in this land, to the other; and this crossing over is like an inner conversion, it takes place by way of a slow, exhausting return upstream — *cuntravāi l'aigo*, precisely. I wish I could say I embraced this conversion as soon as I arrived here, deliberately. I wish I could say that everyone of the migrants who through the centuries came to settle these lands could partake, with slightly different words, of this very same story. I don't need to tell you that such is not the case. I don't need to remind you that a journey upstream happens gradually, and always as a struggle: it's already so with regard to our everyday diet, both bodily and spiritual, let alone when it's a matter of approaching the mythical and symbolic aspects of the food we are offered. At the outset

the meaning, the implications and the narratives inscribed in this nourishment completely escape us — they come across not only as alien, but as indigestible: unheard-of and unhearable, like a language we don't understand, like the dialect we have forgotten. And in fact, the great majority of the settlers who reached these lands, for generations now rather than learn to understand this particular idiom, and its inborn wildness, keep imposing their own language of conquerors, a civilized way of looking at salmon and their people: by ignoring its millennial ecosystem, they have put in place a more advanced, more functional ego-system of subjection, so as to get their hands on the land and everything else along with it.

We have so quickly grown used to buying our food by pulling it out of the retailers' gigantic fridges, laying stiff on a styrofoam tray and wrapped in a thin, transparent shroud of plastic film, that one has to jump over this huge commercial damn, in order to even begin to relate to these water ways and the beings that every year travel them upstream by responding to an inner calling that to this day our science remains unable to explain. Notwithstanding everything that our technological might has been able to interpose between the salmon and the fresh waters they need to reach in order to spawn and die, to this day the whole ecosystem of these lands revolves around salmon and its disregarded sacredness. Despite the barriers, material and mental, that our presence has erected between salmon and its rivers, the soil and the air, the whole living world — plants, animals and humans — of this region depend on the salmons' prospects of return. And year after year return they do: awaited, courted, celebrated, even though in ways that are more and more dubious; profane and profaning in their commercialized ways. Because food industry, pollution of the waterways, the damming of rivers, human overpopulation and hatchery-rearing of genetically modified salmon species are leading the few surviving wild varieties to their foreseeable and foretold, foregone doom. And this without even mentioning the proposed dramatic increase of tanker transportation of crude oil in the already too busy waters of the Salish Sea, where all of the region's rivers flow. More and more of the people living in this area are slowly awakening to the realization of this approaching catastrophe, now that the fast declining number of starving killer whales shows us, as if in a mirror, not just the fate that is consuming them, but the fate that obviously awaits us too, if only we cared to gaze long enough in that magic mirror. Were we willing to do so, what we would see painted on the wall would be not the fairest of them all, but rather the Jolly Roger: the faithful portrait of the end we are in the process of fixing for ourselves, unrepentant pirates that we are, unyielding hordes of heinous warlords.

And yet, even as they are being decimated, bewildered, hindered, the salmons faithfully follow their existential lead, and year after year they make their way back home. Their genetic recollection of something akin to our motto, *countravāl l'aigo*, keeps calling them to the springs where they once were born, so as to reseed life and concurrently end their existential journey in their native waters. A few days ago an indigenous fisherman told me how his ancestors could tell which of the local rivers and streams each of the returning salmon would be looking for: it was the different patterns on their backs that allowed people to recognize salmons by their ancestral identity, by their local *belonging*. That web of scales, black gray and silvery, that under the supermarket's fluorescent lights appears to us as utterly casual, is in fact salmons' own language, inscribed like a tattoo on their skin, inflected in a myriad of dialects: as numerous as the rivers and streams, as

the languages spoken by the indigenous people of this land. One of the causes for salmon's decline, that fisherman told me, is urban development: the great majority of the waterways that up to a few decades ago fashioned this territory and its ecosystems have now been buried under pavement and cement, so that those salmon's families, lineages, idioms no longer have a home — their own — to return to. Salmon's thus die in the ocean while vainly looking for their river, prevented as they are from undertaking their journey upstream that would allow them to spawn in the only place intended to that effect: that particular river bend where the language tattooed on their bodies resonates from beginningless time with the language inscribed in the land, sung by the waters, whispered by the wind, caught by the cedars' sinuous boughs.

We too — you and I, I mean — by embracing the need to journey *countravāi l'aigo* seem to be responding to a similar call; a call that speaks to us of a return to the source, that urges us to leave behind the saltiness of that sea water where we have been immersed for a whole lifetime, in order to regain the fresh waters of long-forgotten streams, where the memory of our archaic, primordial being may come to life again. But I can see equally well that we too, like salmon, are today drifting confused in murky waters, our sixth sense unable to descry the specific site of our ancestral belonging, that gushing of fresh water we know we ought to be able to identify, because it keeps beckoning to us with words whose meaning we are uniquely poised to understand. Which address do we carry tattooed in the deepest layers of our individual existence, unbeknown to our rational cognition? Will we succeed in finding our way home, or has our river mouth been cemented over by some merciless hand? Extinction is a threat that lays in wait for us all. There is no reason to believe we might be among the spared ones. Yet we can hope that this awakening, this call we have heard will not be in vain: that we will succeed in making the journey upstream we have been called to, in order to go die where dying means unheroically to give one's own life, so that the life that owns us may be renewed again.

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These, in a nutshell, are the reasons for my long silence, dear Max. A silence that has also meant for me a descent in the bone depths of our biological memory, the deepest layer of memory that our three little words do encompass, because it's in those depths that the true meaning of our motto lays ensconced, and only have I seen their meaning rise into the light of awareness. If we choose to heed only our skin memory, or even our flesh memory, journeying upstream may mean resisting the temptation to be swept along by the invisible currents that unbeknown to us underpin the illusion we keep feeding upon: the illusion that we may continue to ride, as far as the eye can see, the salty wave we preposterously name progress. Journeying upstream in this perspective may, or quite possibly ought to, mean for each one of us questing after the river of our personal storyline: a worthwhile endeavor in itself, for sure, and a revitalizing option at this time of collective memory loss. And yet, without wanting to deny the legitimacy of such an approach, salmon's example presses me to yearn for an even deeper layer of memory — a bone layer, so to speak, where the challenge lays in the necessity to abandon the saltwater we have lived in so far and become accustomed to, in order to switch back to the forgotten sweetness of fresh water. There is no question that such a return is going to be a deadly one, for both salmon



and ourselves, who have lost the ability to breathe in the sweetness of the archaic. Returning to the springs of life in order to seed them with new life means, literally, death by sweetness: because physiologically speaking we cannot possibly renounce the salty dimension of water our bodies, our gills, have grown used to, without simultaneously giving up life. From this perspective, every freshwater stream will be both home and grave to us; every water that gushes out of the earth's depths will be definitively, fatally hospitable to us.

If we consider the matter from the combined perspective of both salmon history and the story of humanity on this planet — a story of hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of years — it's as if at this time, at this very moment when *we* are the ones roaming these immemorial shores, our inner senses were groping for the memory of the estuary of that particular river in whose waters we humans once took both shape and life, that river whose language our souls still keep speaking regardless of all our denials. Plunged as we are in the salt waters of our urban consciousness, of our civilized existence, we are now sighting the time when this kind of life, in its all too long multigenerational chain whose latest link we happen to be, is drawing ever closer to its end. If we mindlessly stay on in the oceanic waters, we will certainly become extinguished in them. If we respond to the call that is now harrowing us, if we embark upon this journey *countravāl l'aigo* to the forgotten sources of our choral identity, of our cosmic interdependence, it's the work of a lifetime, and of all life in time, that will be thereby consecrated and sacrificed. Our own life, of course, but equally so the whole of life that teams right now in that fragile, mobile, thin surface which is our miraculous biosphere: life as a whole is at this time looking for that miraculous river mouth that might allow her to return to the origins of life itself so as to give new life to that life, a new spelling to that shadowed spell. According to indigenous knowledge, only two-three percent of salmon population makes its way every year to their native waters, and that percentage is today dangerously in decline.

Journeying *countravāl l'aigo* means surrendering to the maternal embrace of a fresh water that is certainly home to us, but even so may not prove especially welcoming toward that which we have become since we deserted her in our youth. This return shall require the greatest of efforts, a grappling with gravity, with our limitations and our exertion, with that very water that enfolds us in its embrace in order to repel us. This return will be an immense sacrifice, and will be deemed a useless massacre by the vast majority of us. Yet from time immemorial our motto aims at consecrating life in order to reaffirm and preserve life's essential value, and its meaning is especially relevant in times like those we live in now, when the saltiness that has become hardwired in us misleads us into believing that in order to assert and protect the value of our individual life it is permissible, or even praiseworthy, to endanger the life of the whole ecosystem to which we belong.

One day in times long past — a day that marked the beginning of a year, of an aion, that has lasted two millennia and is now on the wane — a fisher of men on the shores of the lake of Tiberias delivered a message to the peoples inhabiting those lands (our own) that perfectly dovetails salmon's message. Certainly that man, that god, never fed on salmon's flesh. But he himself became assimilated to fish, in his sacrificial offering of himself. And the Christian era has overlapped with that of Pisces, the aion that in its current coming to an end brings to its

conclusion the whole immeasurable, unthinkable cycle of the astrological year. There is no question that we have reached the junction of many currents, the place where life and death face and mirror one another, and their values are now called mysteriously to change their signs.

Today we no longer believe in the existence of that fisher of men. Few of us remember his words, and even supposing they do, one wonders whether the bitterness of the salt in which they have been preserved for so long hasn't prevailed over the memory of their primal sweetness. A day not too far from today, when wild salmon will no longer exist, we will cease to believe in the value of their example also, of which in fact most of us are already utterly unaware. At that moment we also will cease to exist: maybe not as a species, but certainly in the way in which *this* version of our species has prevailed until now.

Even so, the fact remains that among us, as among salmon, the call to swim upstream will persist to the very end. Something in our collective history is summoning us today to awaken to the call of this motto: that we elect to return to the place of origin — not just of our species but of the whole biosphere which is our home. Choosing to proceed not backwards but against the current demands a huge sacrifice, individually and collectively, in the hope of communing into the sole rite that may lead life to its end as a new beginning. Even more importantly, we should keep our eyes on that fact that this option, of working our way upstream, is in any case preferable to its alternative: to die in the ocean's salty waters having lost all hope of return, and what's more, having suffered the excision of the memory of traveling upstream as the sole way to rebirth.

*Countravā! l'aigo.* To swim against the current, so as finally to come home from the exile that has long ensnared us, seems to me to be an ecological imperative in today's world: the only vernacular we need to learn anew, the only river mouth worth looking for. In the hopes that tomorrow there will still be someone to say that life that seemed all but lost, was saved by being lost.

Merry Christmas, dearest friend of the freshwaters, and of mine.

Halfmoonbay, B.C., 23 December 2018



## REFERENCES

1. If you want to see for yourself what the return of salmon looked like on the Pacific Coast, and what it still meant for the people at the beginning of the 20th century, watch this : "A Salmon Story"  
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2. I owe the differentiation between bone memory, flesh memory and skin memory to Martin Shaw, who talks about it in many of his writings and videos; see for example  
<https://www.robhopskins.net/2017/05/04/martin-shaw-on-imagination-i-would-describe-it-as-ripe-for-invasion/>
3. The best essays on the salmon to my knowledge have been written by David Abram: «Reciprocity and the Salmon. Water-borne Reflections from the Northwest Coast» (<https://wildethics.org/essay/reciprocity-and-the-salmon/>) e Robin Wall Kimmerer: «Burning Cascade Head», in *Braiding Sweetgrass. Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013, 241-53.

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<https://lapoesiaelospirito.wordpress.com/2019/02/07/cuntraval-laigo/>

<https://lapoesiaelospirito.wordpress.com/2019/02/11/cuntraval-laigo-controcorrente-2/>

