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Finding my voice

Abstract:
I spent much of 2018 crafting a story; the premise, setting, characters and scenes were clearly defined before I started. I was careful to choose my words, tossing around synonyms to try and find the perfect fit, paying particular attention to sentence structure and mulling over the form of the conversations that would be included. I tried to get a sense of my imaginary reader and whether my descriptions would enable them to visualise the scenarios depicted. Yet, the story was not mine, it was somebody else's; I rewrote it, in English. There is an adage which says "translation is no substitute for the original". That is not correct. Translations have always been substitutes for originals (Bellos, 2011, p. 37), and in the case of literary translation, the best ones are performed by writers. In this paper I discuss my evolution from translator to writer.

Biographical note:
Dr Valentina Maniacco is an Adjunct Fellow with Griffith University, Queensland, Australia. Her PhD, in the form of a memoir, reflected on the serendipity of discovering her uncle and how she transitioned from translator to writer as she wrote about him and the process of translating one of his memoirs from Italian into English. Her translation, *Mestri di mont: Memories of a Mountain Teacher* was published in 2020. She has also translated a short story by Wu Ming titled *American Parmigiano*, which has been published on the author's website. She is currently teaching Italian and cannot wait to return to Italy again soon.

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Translation, pathway to creative writing

There is an adage which says "translation is no substitute for the original". That adage is incorrect. Translations have always been substitutes for originals, because unless one has the ability to read an original work in its original language then the translation one can read is indeed substituting for the original (Bassnett, 1998, p. 25; Bellos, 2011, pp. 37–39). Bellos (2011) suggests that without clues to indicate one is reading a translation, one cannot distinguish a translation from an original text. In his book, *Is that a Fish in Your Ear?*, he provides many examples of authors who have disguised originals as translations and vice versa (pp. 39–41). While this premise may be debated by some translation scholars, Parks (2014) argues that when it comes to literature his experience shows that picking the original from the translation is extremely difficult (pp. 10–11). Therefore, if a reader cannot distinguish an original from a translation – and we can agree that to compose an original story requires one to call on their creative writing skills – it must follow that creative writing skills are also a requisite for literary translation. Yet, what does it take to recognise those skills within oneself?

I spent much of 2018 translating the memoir *Mestri di mont* (Maniacco, 2007) from Italian into English; it was an instrumental component of my PhD dissertation, and a short note on the author is warranted. Tito Maniacco (1932–2010) was a novelist, poet, essayist, historian, social critic and visual artist who lived and worked his whole life in Friuli, part of Friuli-Venezia Giulia (FVG), the most north-easterly region of Italy. His written work occupies several pages of the municipal library of Udine's catalogue. For me, the translation journey was extremely personal because Maniacco was an uncle that I had never met and discovering both him and his work helped me reconnect to my familial roots. The process of translating his story – followed by writing about the challenges, the genre and its author; and wrapping all of this in my own story – helped me to recognise the voice that was developing: my voice. Using my own experience as a foundation, in this article I explore how translating impacts the translator's writing and, specifically, how translating Tito Maniacco made me recognise that I had transitioned from budding translator to writer.

The distinction between translating and "original" writing has not always existed as it does now. Writers like "Chaucer engag[ed] in a variety of literary activities which included original composition, translation, rewriting, pseudotranslation and imitation without there being an apparent hierarchy of textual practice" (Bassnett, 2007, p. 173). Many of France's "first great poets, like Chrétien de Troyes, Marie de France, Rutebeuf and Jean de Meung, were essentially translators, writing at a time when translation, imitation and creation were inextricably bound" (Delisle & Woodsworth, 2012, p. 32). History is littered with examples of writers who used translation as a tool for perfecting their craft. Pattison (2007) provides many examples of writers espousing the virtues of translation as a method of improving their writing, starting from the Roman orator

Quintilian in the 1st century, through to many French writers who "honed their skills" by translating (p. 85). Pattison adds that "translation had a stimulating effect on writers … playing a key role in the future development of European literature" (p. 85). Hendrick (2001) suggests that Montaigne's reason for translating Sebond's *Theologia Naturalis* in 1569 was because of his literary ambitions: "it is undoubtedly true that translation was viewed at the time as one of the best pathways for the aspiring writer to follow, that it provided an opportunity for developing and refining skills that were required for creative writing" (p. 176).

In late 18th century and early 19th century Russia:

> translation was generally considered equal in its creativity to original writing. Moreover, it was viewed as the perfect tool for perfecting a writer's style, and the most prominent poets and prose writers tried their hand at translation. As a consequence, translation was a highly visible and much-discussed practice… Collected works of a single author were typically titled *Sochineniia i perevody* [Works and Translations], with translations occupying a good portion of the collection, testimony to the central role played by translations and translating in the development of modern Russian literature. (Baer & Olshanskaya, 2014, pp. v–vi)

There were also those who did not see the merits of translating. In Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721), there is an exchange between two characters. One character is a translator who is excited to have finally, after 20 years, completed a translation of Horace. The other character belittles him, commenting "haven't you had a thought for twenty years? Do you speak for others while they think for you?" (Montesquieu, as cited in Pattison, 2007, p. 85) and in another of Montesquieu's letters, '[i]f you go on translating all the time nobody will ever translate you' (p. 85). Clearly, Montesquieu had a poor view of translation. Even though writing and translating went hand-in-hand, some thought "translation had a status inferior to that of writing" (p. 85). In England, things had changed by the end of the 17th century, and there was a pronounced distinction between writing and translating; no doubt the invention of the printing press, copyright law and the debates surrounding original authorship contributed to the idea that translating was somehow less creative than original writing (Bassnett, 2007, p. 173; Perteghella, 2013, pp. 200–201). Yet, the great 18th century poets continued to translate, and translation became a means of "discovering new ways of writing" (Bassnett, 2007, p. 174).

Smith (1983) asserts that to learn to become a writer one must read like a writer. He argues that you do not learn to write by writing, although practice and feedback can help; "to learn how to write for newspapers, you must read newspapers … for magazines, browse through magazines … to write poetry, read it" (p. 560). One can extrapolate, therefore, that to write fiction, you should read fiction; to write non-fiction, you should read non-fiction, and so on. Everything we need to learn about writing can "be found in what other people have written, in existing texts … it is [all] there for the reading" (p.

560). The notion that reading benefits creative writing is not new (see the discussion in Doloughan, 2012; McCaw, 2011, p. 26), and while Harper (2010) contends that reading should be considered in the broadest of terms and not be "a narrowly defined activity", he ponders "what kind of reading stimulates the urge to write creatively" (p. 26). He claims that creative writers draw on their own past work, in whatever form that might be, and also "things they have read, have discerned, interpreted, attempted to comprehend; that is: read, in the widest possible sense of what reading means" (p. 28). In other words, as the creative writer reads other authors' work, they absorb the "technique, style, structure and thematic possibilit[ies]" those authors present (Harris, 2009, p. 4). McCaw (2011) argues the contrary; close reading, in isolation, does not help one become a better writer, it only serves in "perfecting the art of pastiche or imitation" (p. 28). That may be the case – although I contend that imitation does help you become a better writer as it is a positive step toward improving your writing and hence finding your own writerly voice – and I will come back to this point a bit later. A "close reading", some would say a "privileged reading", is a hallmark of the translation process (Landers, 2001, p. 32; Loffredo & Perteghella, 2009, p. 14; Qvale, 2003, p. 59); it is the initial stage of understanding, because a translator must do more than transfer words, they must capture the original author's literary execution, which requires creative decisions of their own.

Bassnett (2007) posits, "translation, like imitation, can be a means of learning the craft of writing, for if writers can recognize and learn to speak in different voices it becomes more probable that they will identify a distinctive voice of their own" (p. 174). Translating *Mestri di mont*, along with the research I conducted in order to learn about its author, contributed to my evolution as a creative writer. Translating helped me identify the voice that all writers search for, one that is comfortable and can be recognised as one's own. The translation process, and my written reflections upon it, saw me become both admirer and critic of Maniacco's style. This, in turn, allowed me to recognise those aspects of his writing that I wanted to adopt in my own writing practice, some examples of which I will describe in this article.

Reflecting on the residual effect of translating the Argentinian poet Alejandra Pizarnik, Bassnett (2007) notes that her own writing was influenced in ways she finds difficult to explain (p. 180). After a long period of translating Pizarnik's poems and not writing her own, Bassnett found there was a moment when a flood of poetry poured from her. She realised she had not only stopped translating, but her "whole style of writing had changed" and she was writing "in a style that echoed [Pizarnik's]" (p. 181). She explains:

> When I started translating Pizarnik, I was a writer driven by a desire to write logically, clearly and accessibly. My academic writing can be said to be a form of translation too, since I have set out to "translate" complex ideas and theories into terms that students and educated general readers can understand. Surrealism had no place in my personal lexicon. Yet after Pazarnik, it did. (Bassnett, 2007, p. 182)

Spanish writer Javier Marías "did not publish a novel of his own [for six years]" (Edemariam, 2005); instead he translated and "learned to write by imitation" (2005). Reflecting on that experience, he observes:

> this is how I really learned to write. Because no expression has an unambiguous meaning in every language: in order to translate it you must choose every single word, recreating the same feelings in a different culture. It is a difficult, underrated and badly-paid job, but an irreplaceable exercise. Paradoxically, by translating great writers, I stopped mirroring them in my novels and I found my own style. (Marías, as translated/cited in Laviosa, 2007, p. 197)

In other words, during the process of translating the authors he valued, Marías evolved as a writer.

In much the same way, translating, for me, has served as a form of apprenticeship. I did not notice the impact on my writing when I undertook my first translation, but after completing this more difficult translation I can see the contribution it has made to my own writing. Maniacco's language and style were a substantial step up for me, an extreme challenge. I tried to imitate him and emulate the same command of the English language as he possessed in Italian. As I recreated his work for consumption within a completely different culture to his, sometimes his voice was clear and dominant, at other times not so clear and mine took over. There was tension, often involving simple word choices. I would be torn between using a word that I imagined would be one Maniacco would use if he had command of the English language, versus one I would be more comfortable choosing and using. The process forced me to broaden my vocabulary and to consider the many nuances and meanings of words and phrases, both in Italian and English, thus improving my English language writing skills. Let me add a brief word on my approach to this translation: I chose to focus on my reader, trying to make Maniacco's work as accessible as possible to someone who might have an entirely different literary and cultural formation.

Maniacco was clearly the master and I his apprentice, channelling the epigraph he used at the beginning of *Mestri di mont*: George Steiner's *Lessons of the Masters* (2004): "What empowers a man or a woman to teach another human being, where lies the wellspring of authority?" (Steiner, as cited in Maniacco, 2020, p. 9). While Steiner may have been implying that he did not support the idea of any man or woman imposing their ideas on another, Maniacco, I discovered, viewed the role of teacher as reciprocal, one where the teacher learns as much from the student, as the student learns from them.

Reciprocity brings to mind Marcel Mauss and his foundational essay on "the gift" (1950/1990). Originally published in 1950, Marcel Mauss's *Essai sur le Don* was based on his research into archaic societies and their rituals of gift giving and receiving. Sloterdijk (2014) suggests that Mauss's study has applicability in the modern world, which "could not function without a second economy, i.e., gift circulation" (p. 10).

Mauss's premise is that while gifts may be thought to be given voluntarily, "in reality they are given and reciprocated obligatorily" (Mauss, 1950/1990, p. 3). His study, in brief, found there were mechanisms in place that would oblige a person to reciprocate when a gift is given (p. 9). The theme of reciprocity resonates within the realm of literary translation.

Gomez (2016) investigates the role of reciprocity in her doctoral thesis. Studying the works of a number of Latin American translators, she identifies their translations as reciprocal and categorises them as "gifts translators give to authors … gifts to a new reading public … gifts the translators are receiving themselves through the process of composition", and/or as a "form of potlatch", where the gifts include "new vocabularies, popular cultural forms, or literary insights" (p. 2). More explicitly, Gomez suggests that "reciprocity in literary translation operates in four concrete ways" (p. 26):

1. "Reciprocity in which translators act as gift-giver to authors from whom they have received something" (p. 26). For example, when the translator is also an author, and the two, translator and author, translate each other's work, "a direct mutual exchange" (p. 27).
2. "Translations in which the translators give gifts to texts or to source or target languages or cultures" (p. 26). For example, when the translator views their work as a gift to the target audience who would not otherwise have discovered or been able to read the author's work.
3. "Translators as the recipients of gifts through the act of translation" (p. 26). That is, "the work of translation gives something to the translator", be it "a confirmation of their own poetic concerns, a literary echo or a sense of common cause" (p. 28). Gomez presents these as positives but suggests that receiving the "opportunity to experiment with writing styles that he or she would never write" could be perceived as a negative (p. 28). I do not see this as a negative, because experimenting with different writing styles can help a writer discover, improve or consolidate their own style.
4. "The translation itself as space of reciprocal gifting, which holds the history of its own exchange between different languages and cultures" (p. 26). For example, when cultural items are imported into the translation or when expansive annotations are added.

Gomez (2016) chose authors/translators and translations which demonstrated "a set of alternative and contestatory translation values that break taboos of the market-driven literary world in order to perform reciprocity in translation" (p. 2). Hence, she was able to identify and reflect on their reciprocity.

If I were to consider my translation of *Mestri di mont* in light of Gomez's categories, it would overlap with several. Having had to deconstruct and reconstruct Maniacco's sentences, so that they make sense in English, enabled me to push my boundaries, to challenge my usual preference for shorter and less complex sentences. As Newmark

(1998) suggests, "English sentences tend to be shorter than those in other European languages" (p. 20). Yet, Maniacco's sentences were, at times, exaggeratedly long, even when allowing for that tendency in the Italian language.

Maniacco helped me to recognise the power of repetition, a stylistic device which I am now more confident in using and have used throughout this paper. Maniacco uses repetition often as a form of emphasis, to create rhythm in his sentence, or to frame one of his digressions. Given this feature is part of his style, I used it in my translation when I needed to break up one of his long sentences, using the repeated word as the opportunity to provide the reader some relief by way of a full stop, then commencing the next sentence with the repeated word. For example:

> The valley began to swarm with dark foggy corpuscles as the Julian Alps shone bright red, a reflection of the triumphant sunset just a few metres over our shoulders. Down there, I said, in a quiet voice, as if the hour invited a slow and thoughtful reflection, not the usual regurgitation of facts and figures so characteristic of teachers who, although constantly alerted to and constantly confronted with the diabolic nature of sciolism, infantile malaise of the teaching profession, are constantly predisposed to it by the paternalistic nature of their profession. Down there, in that mass of incandescent rocks is Mt Canin, so named, according to some, because its profile resembles that of a dog. There it is, see it's there, there, there, they said excitedly pointing their fingers, and Marco, called bolp, fox, pointing my Zeiss, followed them. (Maniacco, 2020, pp. 62–63)

In the original text this paragraph is part of one sentence (Maniacco, 2007, p. 50). I broke it up into four and used his repetition of "down there" as a point in which to add a pause.

When it came to his habit of limiting his use of punctuation – because he wanted to leave it to his readers to discern the pauses based on the cadence of their breath – I struggled, preferring to take advantage of the tools furnished by the English language; in particular, the power of punctuation. I did indeed become more confident, some might argue cavalier, in my use of punctuation. I used it to help clarify meaning and make the sentences easier to digest. I was also adamant in wanting to explain any cultural, historical or literary references that might not be clear to my readers. Hence, the inclusion of footnotes, which are the result of my dialogue with both the text and Maniacco. For example, one of the more difficult paragraphs to decipher and render was:

> *Bondì*, good day, he said in Friulian, rolling his tongue in that composed cadence that the Carnian restrains when he transfers to another language his most ancient tongue forged by the march of generations. A slow process, moving from Indo-European to Venetic, taking its time, then swimming in a Gaulish moulded and moderated by the Latin of the tribes of central Italy – who comprised the indigenous legions who were sent to those areas from Rome, to solve the ancient and urgent problems of agricultural production – until all this milk condensed

> giving rise to that native cheese,[*] sweetly perfumed by its original Carnian features.
>
> [Footnote:][*] Here Maniacco uses cheese as a metaphor for the Carnian dialect of Friulian. Creating a language is like curdling and maturing a cheese. Over time, all of the elements condensed to produce Carnian. (Maniacco, 2020, p. 24)

The original paragraph was one sentence, with little punctuation. My translation required unpacking the paragraph and then reassembling it in order to understand that he was using cheesemaking as a metaphor for language-making. The addition of this footnote, and others like it, could be viewed as both a gift to my potential reader, but also a reciprocal gift to Maniacco, ensuring that our new readership understands his meaning. As already mentioned, my focus was on my English language reader, and my strategy, especially my use of footnotes, was to help them where possible; my publisher agreed. For a more detailed discussion on my use of footnotes see "An Argument for Footnotes: The Special Case of Translating Tito Maniacco's *Mestri di mont* (2007)" (V. Maniacco, 2021).

I have now served two apprenticeships. The first, translating Wu Ming's contemporary story *American Parmigiano* (2008), which the authors published on their website. And now with the more challenging *Mestri di mont* (2007). This time, my process was multifaceted. Not only did I translate Maniacco's memoir, but I immersed myself in learning about him. The process contributed knowledge about Maniacco and myself. That knowledge – of him, his context, and his language – along with a growing confidence in my own writing, enabled me to know when to step back and when to take the lead. To give an example based solely on word choices, I would not normally use words such as "corpuscule" or "parallepiped" – their Italian counterparts are words that form part of Maniacco's vocabulary. I deferred to him and used them. Instead, when it came to the word "ukase", I was conflicted. Ukase would have been a valid choice in English and it was not until one of my later revisions that I changed it to "edict", feeling that a term derived from Russian did not fit well in a paragraph focusing on the hierarchy of the Italian education system. These word choices are not the trifle examples they seem, because it was in negotiating those moments that I found my own voice as a writer, no longer as an apprentice. It took a "punctilious" approach (another of Maniacco's words) in order to recreate his work, including much dialogue between us in order for me to become the "surrogate author" of the English version of *Mestri di mont* (Cordingley, 2013, p. 2). As Cordingley suggests, the translator has the "daunting task of equalling the comprehension of the author in the author's tongue and matching that author's skill and style in another" (p. 2).

As a teacher, Maniacco's mission was to impart knowledge, and given the intimate nature of my involvement with *Mestri di mont*, he too has shared much with me: his way of writing, his culture, his literary preferences, his politics, and his lessons in morality. These are his gifts to me. Yet, I have reciprocated. I have returned his story to him, in new words, my words; words which will also gift him a new audience, one he would not have

unless someone else had plucked this particular book out of the obscurity it might otherwise have been destined for. My debt to him is repaid. Let me add that prior to my undertaking this project, *Mestri di mont* was out of print, languishing on the bookshelves of local libraries in Friuli. I have given *Mestri di mont* an "afterlife" (Benjamin, 2012, p. 76; Ece, 2015, p. 154).

I suspect not all translators see their work as reciprocal. Some may feel the benefits all flow one way; that is, their writing is improved by translating, but they do not recognise, or at least they do not articulate, that they are giving back. At some stage, which I cannot pinpoint precisely, the relationship between Maniacco and I changed. Rather than master and apprentice, we began to reciprocate; it happened as I learned more about him and became more confident in my work – in other words, once I had become immersed in his world and his writing. Similarly, Rabassa (2005) describes his close relationship with some of his authors:

> Three of the authors I have translated went on to become good friends… These are Julio Cortàzar, Demetrio Aguilera-Malta, and Luis Rafael Sànchez. It isn't that I wasn't friendly with the others, but there weren't those relaxed moments of cabbages and kings and various elixirs, listening to my old jazz 78s with Julio, Brazil with Demetrio, and enjoying Luquillo beach with Wico (Luis Rafael Sànchez). I've tried to figure out if this type of relationship is of any help for a translator beyond direct questions, whether a sense of nearness lets me hear the voice of these particular people as I interpret their words. If I am the translator I am supposed to be, it really shouldn't make any difference and yet I do hear their voices along with their personal pronunciations and intonations. This is that misty world of translation that is hard to describe. We feel it or sense it, perhaps, and get an idea of how things take place there, but description is difficult. (Rabassa, 2005, pp. 114–115)

Rabassa does not perceive any reciprocity; rather, he acknowledges the dimension added when the translator has a more intimate relationship with their author, even though the benefit is difficult to describe.

Parks (2020) compares and reflects on the differences between translating and original writing, something he has done in tandem. He has a contract to translate a literary work and there is an agreed deadline. He recognises that if he does not do it, someone else will. Instead, there is no contract for his novel, no deadline, and if he does not write it no one else will. He does not share the chapters of his novel with anyone, but shares the progress he makes on his translation with the original author whose command of English is good. Various dictionaries, a thesaurus, and other useful texts are the tools he uses to translate, while the internet is a valuable source for his imagination and novel. When he states "the translation can feed into the novel" (2020), he intends that some of the ideas and character traits of those in the story he is translating help him develop ideas in his novel. Yet "nothing feeds from the novel to the translation" (2020). My experience has been different

to this and I suspect it is because my translation of *Mestri di mont* has been undertaken on a more personal level. To me, this was not just a translation project, it formed part of my learning about family and roots. And in a circular fashion, that learning helped me understand Maniacco's writing and therefore render his thoughts more accurately in my translation. While the tools on my desk were similar to Parks's, I sought other inputs. For example, I spent time in the same places – the physical locations – that Maniacco described: the city of Udine, the mountain trail, and the remote village of Moggessa di Là. That experience served to not only consolidate the memory, but made me reflect on my own writing. Those visits had an impact on my translation; they helped me confirm the words I chose to use for my descriptions, because my imagery had merged with his (Vezzaro, 2010, p. 6). I interviewed people who were close to him and knew his work. Their stories helped me to know him better, enabling me to decipher some of the complexities of his writing. And, of course, the internet was a powerful tool for providing images to aid my renderings and memory. These fed into my translation as well as my own writing of the experience; they provided confirmation. Hence, in my case, the translation fed my writing and my writing fed my translation.

In *Telling the Story of Translation: Writers who Translate* (2017), Judith Woodsworth dedicates a chapter to the once translator, now writer, Paul Auster. She discusses his early life as a translator of French poetry and how translating helped him find the writer within. In an interview with Woodsworth, Auster comments:

> It was part of my development as a writer to translate and I found it thrilling and altogether helpful not only as a thing in itself but as a way of feeling more comfortable with a pen in my hand looking at a blank page. In a way the pressure's off. You're in the hands of someone who is necessarily more advanced than you, when you're young, and there's a lot you can learn. Certainly translating is the very best way to study anything, a work of literature, be it a poem, novel, or story, and it gives you the liberty to try to do something inventive in your own language, to try to mirror whatever's strong and original in the primary text. (Woodsworth, 2017, p. 166)

At the beginning of his translation of *Chronicle of the Guayaki Indians* (1998), Auster comments that the anthropologist Pierre Clastres "writes with the cunning of a good novelist … that rare scholar who does not hesitate to write in the first person, and the result is … a portrait of himself" (p. viii). One could surmise that Auster admired this style of writing; as Woodsworth (2017) observes, "These are all qualities that would resonate with the writer that Auster was to become" (p. 136). In an interview with Michael Wood for *The Paris Review*, Auster (2003) explains, "translating or critical writing … were preoccupations that absorbed me when I was young … Both were about discovering other writers, about learning how to become a writer myself. My literary apprenticeship, if you will" (p. 68).

Like many of the translators mentioned above, I too have learned much working with Maniacco. Having had to adopt his structures, conventions, language, style, and ideas, I have learned what I like and dislike in his writing, and therefore, what I want to absorb and use in my own. If I were to offer some advice to other budding translator/writers I could not do better than Julio Cortázar:

> I would advise a young writer who is having difficulty writing – if it's friendly to offer advice – that he should stop writing for himself for a while and do translations, that he should translate good literature, and one day he will discover that he is writing with an ease he didn't have before. (Cortázar, as cited in Barthes & Léger, 2011, p. 280)

The process of translating Maniacco's story and writing my own has taught me that language, just like voice, is forever evolving, ripening and maturing as it absorbs its many influences. You practice getting it right when you write. Romano (1992) reflects, rather poetically, on the evolution of his own voice; his words resonate with me:

> It's a voice I know well, a voice that has grown from my reading, my perception, my place in life. It harks back to the speech of my childhood. It reflects the current speech of my adulthood. With this voice I am able to see and learn and write. The voice is not just the sound of my speech or the cadence of my words on a page. My voice is the way I think, too. It limits me; it empowers me. And it's mine. As years pass, it will continue to evolve, just as life does, ever onward and outward. Respected and nourished and used, voice is a source of pleasure, insight, and invention for us. Voice enables us to write our letters, plays, essays, fictions, and poems. Language collaborates with flash of image, with unmistakable felt sense, with sudden sound or smell or taste. And if we respond to the urging of language and experience, our voice gets on the page. (Romano, 1992, pp. 16–17)

Translating Tito Maniacco's writing forced me to improve my linguistic skills, in both Italian and English. He gave me the confidence to experiment and step outside of my comfort zone. Prior to this project, I had thought of myself as a budding translator and had never identified the creative writer within. Now I can see Maniacco's influence, but it was only after all of the writing was done that I could articulate it. Translating *Mestri di mont* was just the beginning. Writing about my process, writing about Maniacco, writing the stories of others, all enveloped in my own story, helped me to develop my own voice. At some point, I landed on the one that I was comfortable with, the one that feels and sounds like me, and I recognise that it is still evolving. I now look forward to the changes another translation will bring.

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