

The 19th century

Between the 18th and the 19th centuries a singular figure, the one of a peasant poet called Florindo Mariuzza, was often found at village festivals. With the musical accompaniment of his brother, Secondo, and the help of a guitar and a mandolin, the amorous and playful repertoire of his compositions tries to adapt to the various places such as to be considered some «sort of ante litteram singer-songwriter» (Kersevan).

His verses, that play with the rhythms that are typical of the language, became part of local heritage, but Mariuzza also refers, by ideology of entertainment and decommitment, to the person that will be considered as the poet par excellence: Pietro Zorutti.

The almanac genre was quite popular with Zorutti, a pocket booklet that besides calendar information, contained forecasts and intermezzos in rhyme.

Originally from eastern Friuli (he was born in Lonzano del Collio in 1792), Pietro Zorutti lived in Udine where he worked as a clerk for the Austrian Tax Authorities, spending the time allowed at his estate in Bolzano of San Giovanni al Natisone. His «Strolic» appeared in 1821 and was published, apart from a short pause, until 1867, when he died. This periodical magazine (a genre that is repetitive and entails an ongoing relationship with the readers) published most of his production, stemming from a generous vein that earned him the title of the most popular poet of the 19th century, but which is also the cause of subsequent criticism of his work. His poetry ranges from the natural-sentimental romance, to comedy, epigram, with unlimited inventiveness, drawn by the ease of rhymes. It is no coincidence that his most famous poem is an endless praise to Plovisine (light rain). *Plovisine minudine Lizerine Tu vens ju cussi cidine Senze tons e senze lamps, E tu das di bevi ai chiamps. Plovisine fine fine Lizerine Bagne bagne un frighinin L'ort del puar contadin.* [...] [Light rain, / drizzle, / that falls silent, / without sound or flashes, / quenching the thirsty fields. // Light drizzle, / light rain, / wet a little bit / the vegetable patch of the poor peasant]. With his 'common sense', the philosophy of 'letting something pass', with the poetry of decommitment (his satire is superficial and does not touch upon power), Zorutti expressed the feelings of one part of the Friulian society (the small bourgeoisie of Udine), but the general reader consent contributed to conceiving the idea that Friulian is suitable for witticism, entertainment as an end in itself, as well as for the mannered portrait of nature.

In the 19th century, Friuli, that in the second half of the century passed from Austrian ruling to the Kingdom of Italy, but only as regards the central and western part (Gorizia remained linked to the Austrian-Hungarian empire), however shows a considerable quantity of texts and authors in Friulian. Thanks to the almanacs printed in the Gorizia area, authors try a type of prose that is more suitable for communication, useful writing, meant to educate the peasant masses, and therefore of great importance, even if influenced by Italian.

Refined and rich lexicon marks instead the entrance in Friulian literature of the first woman author, Caterina Percoto (1812-1887). Like Zorutti she belonged to an

impoverished aristocratic family of eastern Friuli (she was born in San Lorenzo di Soleschiano) and, except for rare intervals of time, she lived at her family's estate which she took care of. She became a writer, known for her prose in Italian and Friulian thanks to the guidance and friendship of illustrious names (Francesco Dall'Ongaro, Niccolò Tommaseo, Giosuè Carducci). Her novels and legends reflect the 19th century plan of disseminating a new kind of literature among urban populations with educational and patriotic goals. The proses in Friulian (first published in magazines and then in volumes), partly original and partly the reworking of popular subjects, achieve stylistically high results. Caterina Percoto shows linguistic confidence and sensitivity, and her page flows effective, sometimes lean, faithful to the narrative's theme.

One of the texts that are mentioned the most, *Lis striis di Gjermanie*, which describe the meeting of German and Friulian witches and their separation following a baleful event (probably the war), cleverly combines images taken from popular beliefs, descriptive ability and moral purpose. Both Pietro Zorutti and Caterina Percoto write in a Friulian language that alienates marginal elements. Their choices indicate the route for a common written language.