

Fruts Pal Mont. By Anna Pia De Luca Fanzutto, Udine: Forum, 2005.



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Fruts Pal Mont is a bridging book. As a trilingual book, it is a bridge between languages, between cultures—and between audiences, as it appeals to both adults and children.

Even if Italy has been facing the multicultural challenge only recently, there is no doubt that also Italian society is becoming more multicultural by the minute. Therefore, the need for multicultural books for children has increased rapidly during the past few years, and *Fruts Pal Mont* surely answers such a need. Anna Pia De Luca Fanzutto's book, though, is a precious instrument even beyond Italian borders. For a local—and by local I mean Friulian—reader this book is a gift. It preserves the local heritage and language—Friulian is the language of Friuli Venezia Giulia, the region on the far northeast Italian corner, on the border of Slovenia and Austria—while completing it with Italian and English. For a non-local reader, though, it is still of interest. As a trilingual book for children, *Fruts Pal Mont* contains nursery rhymes and poems in English, Italian and Friulian—a vast language repertoire, much needed in a multicultural society.

The book is divided into two parts. The first one presents Friulian and English nursery rhymes. Each rhyme is available in Friulian, English and Italian and is accompanied by a full-page illustration.

The translations are both bold and accurate. Nursery rhymes are among the oldest form of children's literature, and despite their often transnational themes, they are also profoundly linked with the local heritage. Translating them, therefore, is no simple matter. As all children may have their own special memories linked to particular nursery rhymes, translating nursery rhymes tastes much like translating childhood. There is also the problem of rhythm; much like poems, nursery rhymes have their own unique rhythms, which need to be preserved, as they are usually chanted. Anna Pia De Luca Fanzutto's translations are a success. It is clear from the purpose of the book—which is not scholarly oriented—that the author has chosen to give precedence not to literary accuracy but to musicality. It is a book to be enjoyed, and indeed all three versions can be sung, chanted and played with. She has also adapted them, transforming foreign cultural details into local ones. Should this be a scholar-oriented book, we could argue about the need to preserve the accuracy, but as it is mainly aimed at child readers, assimilating is most likely the best approach to have. It is a way to allow children to connect other cultures to their own; that is why, for example, 'Going to St. Ives' becomes 'Lant a Faedis' (Going to Faedis)—a village in Friuli Venezia Giulia—in the Friulian version and 'Andando a Fogli' (Going to Fogli) in the Italian version (15). This approach also allows space for the adult voice to explain further the reading, engaging children and caregivers.

Even if the illustrations are not particularly innovative—the trait is simple, linear and realistic—they preserve the playful, country-life atmosphere of the nursery rhymes and surely appeal to children.

The second part of *Fruts Pal Mont* contains details about a few kinds of flowers. Again the text is available in the three languages and is accompanied by a glossary and by full-page illustrations—this time watercolours representing the mentioned flowers. These are not necessarily linked to Friuli, Italy or the English-speaking world; still, each flower is linked to a cultural feature: a legend or its ancient use. The second part of the book is somewhat more didactic and the list of words forms a basic trilingual dictionary.

One can't help but feeling this second part is not a perfect success; maybe the feeling is due to the transition from the playful first part to this more didactic one, which ends up giving the reader a sort of cold shower. Still, while the first part is aimed at

younger children, the dictionary at the end of each comment makes this second part suitable to children as old as eight.

One of the most interesting features of this book is the approach to the franc language. In this case, it is not, as one might expect, English, but Italian, which has to lead Friulian children to better understand English—and of course, for the English reader is the intermediate step towards Friulian.

The book is concluded with two poems linked again to two flowers. The first one, “Stelute Alpine,” is by Arturo Zardini, a Friulian poet, while the second one is by Col. John Mc Crae, a Canadian author. They both refer to memories, and they underline the importance of remembrance.

Fruts Pal Mont is an interesting contribution to multicultural literature for young readers. It is a unique trilingual nursery rhyme book for children, serving as a way to sample different heritages and bearing in mind the importance and the difficulties of translating one’s culture.

Reading it makes clear that remembering one’s roots is as important as encountering, learning and accepting new cultures.