

# A LITERARY ITINERARY FULVIO TOMIZZA



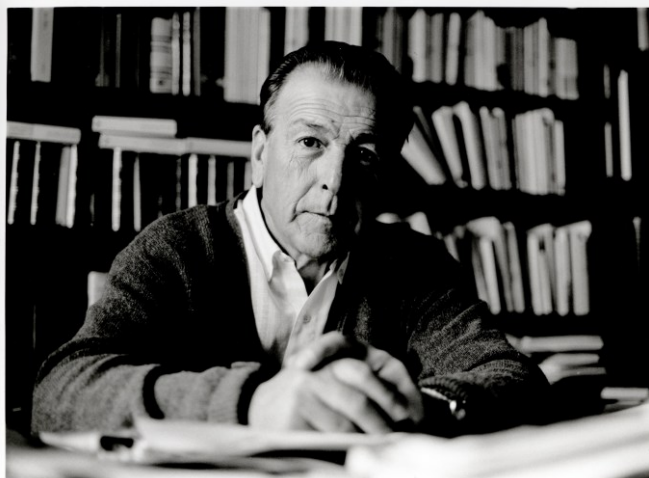
## IN SEARCH OF FULVIO TOMIZZA'S HIDDEN GEMS

The present itinerary unfolds over the whole of Umago area, following the trail of the quotation from the works of Fulvio Tomizza: *Materada, La miglior vita, La quinta stagione, Le mie estati letterarie, La casa col mandorlo, I rapporti colpevoli, Alle spalle di Trieste*.

Following the Itinerary, you will find yourself immersed in Tomizza's world, learn the tortured history of Umago territory and of its people; the drama of the exodus that, in the decades after the Second World War, profoundly changed the identity, culture and social structure of Istria.

### **FULVIO TOMIZZA (Giurizzani / Matterada 1935 – Trieste 1999)**

Fulvio Tomizza is an important and prolific Italian writer of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his works he is the authentic voice of the larger Umago area, and thenarrator of the dramatic historical events that took place in Istria.





Tomizza was born on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 1935 into a lower-middle class family, in Giurizzani, a village in the Matterada Parish, under Umago jurisdiction. His parents owned a small holding of agricultural land and also ran commercial activities. Aged 10 Fulvio went to Gorizia to attend the seminary and then on to classical studies. He graduates from high school in 1953.

These were also years of deep and radical changes for Istria, culminating in the exodus of Italians in the next two decades. Tomizza's family was one of the first to move to Trieste. While all his peers also chose Trieste for their higher education, Tomizza decided to go to Belgrade to study Cinema and Drama, with a grant from the *Triglav Film* Ljubljana. The Belgrade experience was a lonely unhappy one. Writing alleviated the profound discomfort and pain, thus becoming his destined career.

*I hid away in the freezing furnished room, leaving it only for two meagre meals. I had to bargain the loan of extra blankets and the use, at agreed times of, a little electric heater with the landlady. I couldn't even concentrate on reading. Instinctively I would take a blank page, take the top off the fountain pen and start to draw geometrical shapes, retracing them again and again, as if trying to put some order into the chaos of thoughts and feelings that were oppressing me. Maybe in that little room, of which I have only a vague memory of a pale green, like inside mosques and a scent of cooked apples, my fate was sealed. I started to write, that is, I tried to fill the sudden void between myself and life outside.*

("Inverno iniziatico" from *La casa col mandorlo*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano 2000, p.12)

In the spring of 1954, after the Belgrade experience and a short spell in Ljubljana working as an assistant director, Tomizza returned to Matterada. Here he rekindled old friendships, he fell in love again and, most importantly, reconnected again with his birthplace. But this was also a time of important historical events. On the 5<sup>th</sup> October 1954 with the signing of the London Memorandum, the Zone B of the Free Territory of Trieste was given to Yugoslavia. This decision, sparked the beginning of a devastating exodus of entire Italian families and would change forever the identity of the Umago territory. These events would impact



upon the life of young Tomizza, making him reconsider his initial decision to stay on, as he did not recognise himself in the new reality.

*As it happened, little by little, all the friends left, so did the girls, including Renata whom I fail to stop with a promise, and my relatives and the best acquaintances. By October I was one of the few remaining in the abandoned village, with the empty houses taken over progressively by families from other parts of the country. When the deadline for leaving was almost up, I started thinking differently: the soul of things, places and memories had moved to the other side, everything was there now. So I left, knowing, or at least fearful, of being permanently stuck in a middle space, neutral and hard, in which I would feel a stranger even to myself.*

(*Il sogno dalmata*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano 2001, pp.57 - 58)

Tomizza settled down in Trieste and found a job as a journalist for Radio Trieste which would later become RAI. In 1960 his first novel, *Matterada* was published attracting the attention of Italian critics. It was followed by *La ragazza di Petrovia* and *Il bosco d'acacie*. The three novels would later be reprinted together as *Trilogia Istriana* (*Istrian Trilogy*).

From 1965 his novels started to attract much greater critical acclaim and to win important and prestigious Italian literary prizes. His career

would culminate in 1977 with the publication of *La miglior vita*, which was translated in ten languages, won Italian and international prizes.

From 1981 on, Tomizza wrote a number of historical novels. For the detailed research carried out for these works, especially for *Il male viene dal Nord* (1984), the *University of Trieste* awarded him an *honorary degree*.

Besides novels, Tomizza also wrote short stories, plays, essays and children's books.

Fulvio Tomizza died on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1999 and is buried in Matterada.



GRADSKA KNJIŽNICA UMAG  
BIBLIOTECA CIVICA UMAG