

## The 16th century

Apart from a spell against the wolf and an idle tale ascribed to Nicolò de Portis from Cividale (with yet some typical features such the feminine ending in -o), the 15th century is silent with regard to literary evidence. At the turn of the century, Pietro Capretto chose the «lengua trivisana» (language spoken in the Treviso area) to vernacularize the *Constitutioni de la Patria del Frivoli* aimed at «li populi furlani» /the Friulian people) and this might deprive Friulian of its scope though in the humble sphere of administration records.

The 16th century started with new issues, the historical conditions changed and difficult events gripped the peninsula. Fallen under Venetian rule, Friuli echoed the question of the Italian language that led to accepting the illustrious Tuscan as the vernacular deemed suitable for literary communication, took part to the dissemination of the Petrarchan model for lyrical poetry and, above all, it portrayed a changed picture of the written use of Friulian. The language basically disappeared from practical papers and records which tended to be written in a form of Italian vernacular, but emerged «with a wealth of metric exercises» in poetry (Pellegrini).

Many texts can be ascribed to the 16th century and seem to thrive in a sort of literary society with Udine and the relationships intertwining around it as its core, i.e. small literary societies where verses circulate within a restricted community of readers and writers with similar taste.

Apart from an anonymous canzoniere (a collection of tales of love) written in 1513 with the defamatory hues of the chirivari, i.e. satire at the expense of a non-canonical married couple (old groom and young bride), the wealth of 16th-century compositions that survived to the present day, though occasional and often anonymous, mostly date back to the second half of the century. They are generally written with the aim of entertaining and carry the Friulian language in the furrow of the reactions to the prestige of the Tuscan language. The verses lend themselves to humour and fun, but the authors that we know so well give us the idea of a rather lively panorama. Though conforming in part to some sort of central Friulian or, in any case to a 'levelled' Friulian, they belong to marginal areas compared to Udine.

Nicolò Morlupino, a Notary Public from Venzone (active between 1528 and 1571), Girolamo Sini (1529-1602) from San Daniele, and Girolamo Biancone from Tolmezzo (with «uncertain personal data» as reported by Pellegrini), are renowned for their praise of the Friulian language. Chel vuarp chu za chiantà chun grech latin (That blind man who sang in Greek) is the famous composition by Morlupino in defence of writing poetry in Friulian (*Jo sarès un menchion / A favellâ e no jessi intindut / Dentre de ville là ch'io soi nassut*, «I would be a fool / to speak without being understood / in the country where I was born», Pellegrini[Translated into English by O.Bisegna]), where the stance in favour of the local idiom vis-à-vis other codes, however corresponds to a stylistic choice rather than an ideology. It cares for variety and free relationships between languages In laude de lenghe furlane di Girolamo Sini (*A par che al Mont cui chu scrif in rime / Al sei tignut a*

*falu par Toscan [...] Iò l'hai par un abùs, parcè ch'un stime / Chu chel cil sool seij rich e vebi a man / Dut chel di biel chu chiaat in cur human, «People think that who writes in rhyme / must do so in Tuscan [...] In my opinion this is an abuse, because people believe / that only that sky is rich and holds / all the beautiful things that dwells in the human heart»), whilst the superiority of Friulian seems to be announced by Girolamo Biancone in the sonnet, with its long tail, Furlans, voo havees lu vant in plan e in mon(t).*

In this sonnet, Biancone states that the Friulian language is suitable for 'silly stories', parlour games, nonetheless, what he writes should not be read in simplistic terms. In fact, it is this very author that in his sonnets and octaves adjusts, for the first time, this language to high content keynotes, a «thoughtful religiosity» and an «intimate and hurtful expression» (Cantarutti). The register used is constant, a feature that stands out also in translations, just like in this sonnet borrowed from Petrarch that does not aim at copying or even contaminating or upsetting, but at remaking the model: *Io no pues vivi in paas e non hai vuere, e tremi in miez dal cuur duquant glazaat. Trop alt io monti e no mi moof di tiare. Du'l mont è mio e sì non hai dal flaat. [...] [I cannot live in peace and I do not fight, / and I shiver in a half frozen heart. / Too high I climb and yet do not leave the ground. / The whole world is mine and I am breathless]* (Translated by O. Bisegna).

Two more authors are worthy of mention as regards the 16th century. The canzoniere by Giuseppe Strassoldo (born in Strassoldo around 1520 and vicar to the Beligna Monastery) is not very wide; he writes love verses borrowing aulic notes which cause him to be erroneously defined as 'petrarchist'. Giovan Battista Donato (born in Venice but of Friulian adoption), who spent most of his life between Gruaro and Porto, strikes a discordant note. Giovan Battista Donato distanced himself especially from those who praised Friulian (conversely he defended marginal varieties as opposed to central Friulian), and was characterised by great freedom in adopting different codes, as well as by a sparkling multilingual game that was partly suggested by the Venetian environment. His poetry blends western and central Friulian traits or adopts micro-varieties with lively compliance. Prose too was quite interesting (*il Testamint di barba Pisul Stentadizza*), an unprecedented example of lexical wealth and syntactic creation.

Pellegrini thought that Donato had a «sparkling yet unfocused personality», and this explains the reason behind the «failed emergence of a literary Friulian on the right side of the Tagliamento river» If Donato and Biancone need to be examined in depth for their remarkable personality, the 16th century does not simply boast anonymous verses but also compositions by known authors that exalt the dignity and use of the Friulian language.

The translation, or better the conversion into parody, of the *Raging Orlando* (first song, transmitted by two non-authographed manuscripts preserved at the Vatican Library and the Civic Library of Udine, and part of the second song, the octaves of which are transmitted by an 18th century copy) can be traced back to the second half of the century.. This translation is linked to a well-known strategy of “reflective Italian literature” that presents a twisted version of classic compositions, quite different from the original text, and peppers them with details of the lower part of the body. A comparison of the original with the revised text can give an idea of the process, that is not targeted for the general public but highly-educated recipients, capable of understanding the irreverent side. Friulian does not derail from its burlesque use, for entertainment purposes. *Glis polzettis, gl'infangh, gl'amors, glis armis, glis balfueriis, plases e i grangh rumors chu for dal timp ch'al*

*cuul haver lis tarmis e ziir cerchiant chui chu grattas iu Mors [...]* [The girls, the young, the love affairs, the arms, / the stunts, attentions and the loud noises / of the times the Moors had itchy bums from crawlies / and went in search for people to scratch them] (Translated by O. Bisegna) Original: *Le donne, i cavallier, l'arme, gli amori, le cortesie, l'audaci imprese io canto, che furo al tempo che passaro i Mori d'Africa il mare, e in Francia nocquer tanto [...]* At the height of battle of Lepanto (1571), amidst the exultation at the victory over the Turks, the commemorative series, that exalt Venice and insult the defeated infidel, welcome the verses in local language with abundance of details, transmitted by both printed texts and manuscripts. It is in this context that, for the first time, popular participation «comes to the fore of Friulian literary news» thanks to a «mestri sartoor / Zuan dal Toos» (thus a dress-maker) that claims to have written one of those texts.