

FOUR ANONYMOUS OLD MALTESE POEMS

Edited and with an Introduction

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IN 1968, Captain John Bonavita, of Casal Attard, entrusted his family papers to the custody of the library of the Royal University of Malta.¹ Since then, hundreds of the manuscripts have been filed and catalogued. The task of filing and cataloguing was no easy one, since the manuscripts number many thousands of folios, and came to the library in complete disorder. The work is still in progress, about a third of the archive still remaining to be processed.

The larger part of the collection comprises legal records and papers relating to the professional activities of various members of the Bonavita family, who were notaries, lawyers and judges, and spans the period from c. 1600 to c. 1850. However, during the cataloguing, many papers of a nature other than legal came to light, and these include some manuscripts in Maltese. Others may yet be found in the remaining unclassified papers.²

The manuscripts in Maltese, apart from those published here, are as follows:³

- 243 Ab Prayer: Duodecima dell'Immacolata Concezzione, composta dal Padre Cappucino Fedele, 23rd September, 1831. It begins: Leina hares, o hanina. 12 verses.
- 243 Ae Three proverbs in Maltese.
- 272 Z Coronella del Bambino Jesù. It begins: Misbahha 'l Vergini Maria. 9 verses.
- 289 D Proverbs in Maltese and Italian.
- 305 B(3) Sermon in Maltese.
- 305 B(4) Translation into Maltese of the 'Miserere'.

Four of the Maltese poems found in the collection are published below. It should, however, be immediately stressed that, although the poems were found among the Bonavita Papers, this fact is coincidental only, and one need not for a moment regard any of them as having been composed by a member of the Bonavita family. The three oldest poems are certainly largely, if not entirely, popular

verses which were no doubt originally part of the large oral stock. Similar, and indeed almost identical, verses to some of those published here are recorded elsewhere,⁴ but it is fortunate that these particular verses have come to light and so prevented their perhaps being irrevocably lost. The dates of their composition are unknown, as is often the case with literature which was originally oral. The dates when they were committed to writing are likewise unknown, as there is no certain way of making any definite dating, although a fairly accurate dating can be conjectured for one set of verses.

The poems are given in their original orthography (as far as the availability of type-faces for printing will allow), together with a rendering into standard Maltese orthography, and with an English translation. While it must be stressed that the poems are not of any outstanding literary merit, they are nevertheless of interest for certain literary and linguistic reasons: as far as linguistic reasons are concerned, the poems contain certain words or expressions now obsolete in current Maltese usage. The orthography used differs from poem to poem, and none can be said with certainty to be in any particular one of the various systems of orthography used before the present standard system became official. Inconsistencies will be noticed: indeed, at times, the same word may be spelt differently in successive lines. It should also be stressed that no attempt has been made to render the English translation into anything other than straightforward prose, and on the whole the translation is kept fairly close to the original, rather than being a free version.

Before looking at each of the poems in turn, some general introductory comments must be made about early popular poetry in Maltese in order to give some idea of the background context. The oldest poetry was oral, the people having possessed their traditional poetry long before any of the verses were committed to writing. These old poems had been recited by the people's ancestors at various times, and were then passed down from one generation to another with little or no change. Many of the oldest verses, usually containing only four lines, had a particular 'clinch' in the last line, and not infrequently were pertinent particularly to the Maltese scene or showed some particular aspect of the Maltese mind.

From the very beginning, as is hardly surprising, love, usually

requited but also unrequited, formed one of the most popular themes. Some of the verses on this theme show both a charming frankness and purity, and cover the stages of love from its first expressions to references to weddings.

Another interesting and prolific type of popular poetry was that in a religious vein. Being originally very short, the length of some of these poems increased, particularly when they were composed in writing. In Malta, where religion was so deeply ingrained in the people's minds and so strongly tied up with their lives, religious poetry became almost at one with the people's belief. The poems in this religious vein were light and imaginative, but with an imagination to strike the common man, whose life revolved largely around the seasons of the year. In some of the longer poems a moralizing theme was introduced, dealing with the purpose of life and the foolishness of man. Until the mid-nineteenth century, however, the religious poetry of a more serious nature (as distinct from the traditional oral poetry of the people), although it attained quite a high level of expression in certain instances, was still somewhat formal and didactic, and was indeed rather shackled: it was not until the later part of the century that it managed to free itself.

A third type of verse which grew in popularity during the nineteenth century was that of a half-comic and half-serious nature. Such poetry found fertile ground in Maltese journalism. Although it may have been of no literary merit, it nevertheless proved popular, and at least served to help to accustom people's ears to the rhythm of Maltese verse.

Although there were other types of poetry, not least that on a historical theme, either factual or legendary, the three foregoing types have been specifically mentioned, since it is into these categories that the poems published below fall. Each is provided with an individual brief introductory note.

The editors would like to express their thanks and appreciation for considerable help in deciphering and interpreting certain difficult words and phrases in the manuscripts to Prof. J. Aquilina, Mr. J. Cilia, Mr. G. Degabriele and Miss Rose Agius.

DAK LI QALBI THOBBU

The verses below are almost certainly the oldest of all the poems published here. Although the date of their composition is unknown, the date at which they were written down may be conjectured with a reasonable degree of accuracy. They are written on two sheets, but are all undoubtedly in the same hand. One set of verses is written on a note of receipts for payments made to various people by a certain Margherita in 1807 and 1809, and it would seem probable that, being drafted on this sheet, the verses were written down soon after the later date indicated in the note.

Although the verses are of little literary merit, they are nevertheless particularly interesting in their manuscript form, because, in the case of some of the verses, one manuscript supplies a 'draft' version of what would appear to be the 'revised' version on the other. Two possible explanations may be offered for there being a 'draft' and then a 'revised' version. If the person writing down the verses were attempting to recall some verses he may have heard only orally and possibly at some distance in time, and was therefore not sure of certain lines, he may have made alterations as he searched his memory for the correct line. It is also possible that the person writing them down may himself have done a little 'editing' or altering in order supposedly to improve certain lines. In the first verse of the earlier version, the weak line 'Liebes culur di vinu' is replaced by the stronger sounding line 'Fuc l'istudiu cala dinu'. The last line also is more polished in the second version. The second verse shows the desire of the girl either to steal her lover's eyes or to win them from him at cards, and the last line is much tidier in the second version than in the first. The third verse is very weak in both versions, and is indeed weaker in the second than in the first.

Only some of the verses are numbered. However, an attempt has been made to arrange the verses in a suitable order, although it must be emphasized that this order is by no means necessarily the correct one: a different order could be equally plausible and satisfactory. It is indeed likely that no order at all is possible, the verses being several unconnected fragments and not one unity.

The general theme of the verses is one of love. However, unlike the love poem which appears later (*JIEN TQARRAQT BL-IMHAB-BA") in this particular set of verses the 'speaker' in some of the verses is a man, while in others it is a woman.

Spiccia genni hu intafa nari
sont tihai ma konisjeh
Capriccia, jen l'eddeuon.
kondez isiet ma toranjeh

Dae li calbi tihobbu
Dae l'ijudiu cala dinu
chem hu corajar
chem hu klejue
Dae demoneu chem hiejinu

2.

Chem humu ibich dem hejnei
Dae hejneih
li ~~ant~~ ^{nija} nija
Hijetice nijraomlu
Inqib el corti
fuu nit hab mihu
Goyi nirbaktomlu

3.

Liccu cejetta nicanjoravon
Bieyc' filochom inchiadomlu
Dinkor nit hasciakh bife
hu bilied bit jon natit (n)chadomlu

JIEN TQARRAQT BL-IMHABBA

This is a type of love poem, in which the 'speaker' is a woman addressing both a third person and her lover who has left her and then goes back to her. It is rather sad in tone, with a good deal of reminiscence in the development of the theme.

As with "INSARA TA' DIL-BELT", which appears later, this type of poem was quite common during the last century, the style being even more common than the theme. Such poems were normally composed of verses of four lines, the last line of one verse being repeated (usually in an identical way, but also possibly slightly modified or shortened) as the first line of the next verse. In this particular poem, the verses are written in the manuscript in continuous lines, giving the appearance almost of rhyming prose. In the transcription and the rendering into standard Maltese orthography below, they have been divided into four lines each, as this is the way such verses would usually be divided.

INSARA TA' DIL-BELT

This poem is of a type quite common during the last century, with a moral as its theme. It urges man to amend his life, since he does not know when death may come. It achieves its aim through an almost morbid tone, attempting to show the transitoriness of this life and the futility of placing too much emphasis on material things. Death is sure to come – and indeed it may come unexpectedly – so man's concern should be with death and what comes after, inasmuch as he should be spiritually in a fit state to meet his Maker when he dies. Despite the poem's almost morbid tone, there is nevertheless some very good language and appealing rhythm, serving to help the poem make an impression.

It is worth noting that J. Cassar Pullicino, whose contributions to the study of Maltese folklore are well known, collected some of the verses of this poem in Gozo during the last war, but by no means all of them. He was therefore particularly interested to have a copy of the poem in its entirety.

KURUNELL

This is a simple poem in a comic vein. It shows the hardships and regrets of someone who became a soldier, and who gives vent to his feelings by saying what he thinks about his commanding officer. Of no literary merit at all, and with a very weak ending, this poem is nevertheless interesting from a linguistic point of view. During the time of the British rule in Malta, and even more so during the past few decades, with much more education for the present generation and world-wide communications, a large number of foreign words were adopted into Maltese. The problem facing modern Maltese lexicographers is how to spell these words – should they be spelt in their original way, or should they be given a Maltese spelling? (For example, should one spell the word 'team' as it stands, or phonetically as 'tim'? Both versions are at present in use in Maltese). In this poem, certain English words and expressions of a military nature are given, and are spelt almost phonetically in the original. In the rendering into standard Maltese orthography, however, they have been given in standard English spelling.

1

- (i) Dac li calbi tihobbu
 Liebes culur di vinu⁶
 (Fuq l'istudiu cala dinu)⁷
 Chem hu smajar
 Hu chem hu *bel* hleju
 (Hu dac *d*)
 Fommi demmu
 Chem ihejnu⁸

2

- (ii) *Dauc b*
 Chem uma sbieh
 Dauc hajneih
 Li con nista nisiracomlu
 Ingib el carti u nilhab mihu
 Isciorti tih echnirbahhomlu

[3]

- (iii) Forsi nirbahomlu
 Gio *taba* cascietta nicconservahom
 Biesc meta niltaca mihu
 Flochom inghiedomlu

* * *

- (iv) L'inquina fuc l'inquina⁹
 Halli ihabbat el martell
 Handec el hali fi calbec
 Bih tinesam hu bih tintem

* * *

A

- (i) He whom my heart loves, / Clad in divine colour, / (He is entirely devoted to study), / How dark-skinned he is, / How sweet he is, / How attractive my mouth finds him.
- (ii) How beautiful / Are those eyes of his: / If I could, I would steal them from him. / I will bring the cards and play with him: / What good fortune will be mine if I win them from him.

1

- (i) Dak li qalbi rhobbu
 Liebes kulur divin
 (Fuq l-istudju ghala dinu)
 Kemm hu smajjar
 U kemm hu *bel* hlejju
 (U dak *d*)
 Fommi demmu
 Kemm ihejnu

2

- (ii) *Dawk gh*
 Kemm huma sbieh
 Dawk ghajnejh
 Li kont nista' nisraqhomlu
 Ingib il-karti u nilghab mieghu
 Ix-xorti tieghi jekk nirbahhomlu

[3]

- (iii) Forsi nirbahhomlu
 Ġo *taba* kaxxetta nikkonservahom
 Biex meta nilraqa' mieghu
 Flokhom inqiegħedhomlu

* * *

- (iv) L-inkwina fuq l-inkwina
 Halli jhabbat i l-martell
 Għandek il-ghali f'qalbek
 Bih tinqasam u bih tintemm

* * *

- (iii) Perhaps I will win them from him./I will keep them safely in
 a *bo* small box,/So that, when I meet him,/I can put them in
 their place for him.
- (iv) Anvil on anvil,/Let the hammer strike./You have sorrow in
 your heart:/It will break and finish you.

(v) Spiccia genni hu intafa nasi¹⁰
Cont tihac ma handisch
Capiccia jen haddeitom
Helavoglia int maritmisch

* * *

(vi) Leusa tal leus melliesi
Misruha fnofs el mandrag¹¹
Jen niecol u niscrob
Inti meita bil gius hu bilhacc

* * *

(vii) Hobni jec trit thobni¹²
Jec matric ma impurtesc
Ihaddi issmie hu jargia ihor¹³
Hu trit thobbni matistasc

* * *

(viii) Sci holma clomt dalleil¹⁴
Li hucajt mil gallaria
Git fhogior hanini
Hu sci ferha ferah bia

* * *

(ix) Omni hu missieri igemgmu
Haliesc nahract innamur
Somni hanina sommi
Hes imnein geit nargia immur

* * *

- (v) My folly is over and my trance is finished:/I could not care less about you./I have done what I wanted to,/Although you did not want me.
- (vi) A nut of the almond tree/Planted in the middle of the Mandragg:/While I eat and drink,/You are dying of hunger and thirst.
- (vii) Love me if you want to love me:/If you do not want to, it does not matter:/This time will pass and another will come:/

(v) Spicča ġenni w intefa' nġhasi
Kont tiegħek ma għandix
Kapricċija jien għaddejthom
Allavolja int ma ridnmx

* * *

(vi) Lewża tal-lewż melliesi
Mizrugħa f'nofs il-mandragġ
Jien niekol u nixrob
Inti mejta bil-ġuħ u bil-ġhatx

* * *

(vii) Hobbni jekk trid tħobbni
Jekk ma tridx ma jimpurtax
Igħaddi ż-żmien u jerga' iehor
U trid tħobbni ma tistax

* * *

(viii) X'holma hlomt dal-lejl
Li waqajt mill-gallarija
Ġejt f'hogor ħanini
U x'ferħa ferħa bija

* * *

(ix) Ommi u missieri igemgmu
Għaliex inhraqt bin-namur
Żommni ħanina żommni
Għax mnejn gejt nerga' mmur

* * *

When you want to love me, you will not be able to.

(viii) What a dream I dreamed last night,/That I fell from the balcony:/I landed in the lap of my darling,/And how happy he was with me.

(ix) My mother and father grumble/Because I have been burnt by love./Hold me, darling, hold me,/Otherwise I will return to whence I came.

(x) Ommi halmitni el pont
Hu missieri hallimni el grob¹⁵
Sesa halmitni insiehel¹⁶
Hu Pressulla halmitni inhob

* * *

(xi) Haliesc il bahar *sejer meugia*
uara meugia (ta rinella)
Sejer meugia uara meugia
Lahiar misc taiba beusa ta scibeiba
Min mil chem hi helua *beusa* (ta) ta misseugia

* * *

(xii) Hu haliesc el mactur¹⁷ (*icciarruta*) ta iscibejba
Minsciur fuc el hait
Hisiptu hamiema hamra
Halih jena sparait

(x) My mother taught me sewing/And my father taught me carpentry,/Zeza taught me to keep myself busy/And Priscilla taught me to love.

(xi) Why does the sea go *wave upon wave* (at Rinella)/Go wave upon wave?/*The best* The kiss of a maiden (is not good),/

(x) Omni għallmitni il-pont
U missieri għallimni il-gropp
Zeza għallmitni inxieghel
U Priscilla għallmitni inhobb

* * *

(xi) Għaliex il-baħar sejjer mewġa
wara mewġa (ta' rinella)
Sejjer mewġa wara mewġa
L-aħjar mhix tajba bewsa ta' xbejba
Min mil kemm hi helwa bewsa (ta') ta' mizzewġa

* * *

(xii) U għaliex il-maktur (*iċ-ċarruta*) tax-xbejba
Minxur fuq il-ħajt
Hsibtu ħamiema ħamra
Għalih jiena sparajt

Than that How sweet is the kiss of that of a married woman.

(xii) And why is (*the rag*) the handkerchief of the maiden/Spread out on the wall?/I thought it was a red pigeon/And I shot at it.

B

- (i) Spiccia genni hu intafa nasi
Cont tihac ma handisch
Capriccia jen haddeitom
Handec isiet ma taranisch

* * *

[1]

- (ii) Dac li calbi tihobbu
Fuc l'istudiu cala dinu
Chem hu smajar
Chem hu hleju
Dac demmu chem hihejnu¹⁸

2

- (iii) Chem huma sbieh *dauc hejnei*
Dauc hejneih
Niscstiec (Li cont nista) nistracomlu
Ingib el carti
Hu nilhab mihu
Forsi nirbahhomlu

3

- (iv) *Geuua* Gio cascetta nicconservahom
Biesc filochom inchiehadomlu
Binhar nithasciach bih
Hu billeil *bil pon natih* nehodomlu

B

- (i) My folly is over and my trance is finished:/I could not care less about you./I have done what I wanted to:/You will never see me again.
- (ii) He whom my heart loves,/He is entirely devoted to study,/How dark-skinned he is,/How sweet he is,/How attractive I find him.

- (i) Spiċċa genni w intefa' ngħasi
Kont tiegħek ma għandix
Kappriċċija jien għaddejthom
Għandek iżjed ma taranix

* * *

[1]

- (ii) Dak li qalbi tħobbu
Fuq l-istudju għala dinu
Kemm hu smajjar
Kemm hu hlejju
Dak demmu kemm iħejnu

2

- (iii) Kemm huma sbieħ *dawk għajnej*
Dawk għajnejh
Nixtieq (Li kont nista') nisraqhomlu
Ingib il-karti
U nilgħab miegħu
Forsi nirbaħhomlu

3

- (iv) *Ġewwa Ġo* kaxxetta nikki nservahom
Biex flokhom inqiegħedhomlu
Binhar nitgħaxxaq bih
U bil-lejl *bil-ponn nagħtib* neħodhomlu.

- (iii) How beautiful are *those eyes*/Those eyes of his:/I would like
(If I could) I would steal them from him./I will bring the cards
/And play with him:/Perhaps I might win them from him.
- (iv) I will keep them safely *in* in a small box,/So that I can put
them in their place for him:/By day I will delight in him,/And
by night *I will hit him with my fist* I will take them away from
him.

Canzonetta

1. Iena tkarract blimħabba,¹⁹
U manafsc fein ghandi immur,
Mita ipratkajt imħabteċ
Mighi siptech traditur.
2. Mighi siptech traditur,
Għasc chiefer mort u halleitni,
Uara li tant ħabbeitech,
Għal ħattieħor ittradeidni.
3. Għal ħattieħor ittradeitni,
Fsiġha li cont mignun,
Cont inħobboc u għadni inħobboc,
ħalli incun li ghandi incun.
4. Hħalli incun li ghandi incun,
Għal ħattieħor manħallics,
Dejem ħabbeiteċ u inħobboc,
Għavolia int mathobbnisc.
5. Għavolia int mathobbnisc,
Għal menu magħandec s turini,
Iaħracdina tant imħabba,
Manidisc ruħ innamuri.
6. Iaħracdinom tant namuri
Chif sahti u ruħi tilfuli,
Min dac ismien mignuna dejem,
Mi ta bħerrur tieċ Kaluli.

1. I have been deceived by love,/And I do not know where to go:/When I experienced love with you/I found that you betrayed me.
2. I found that you betrayed me,/Because cruelly you went and left me:/After I loved you so much/You betrayed me for another.
3. You betrayed me for another/In a moment of madness:/I loved you and still love you,/I do not care what happens to me.
4. I do not care what happens to me,/I will not leave you for any-

Kanzunetta

1. Jien tqarraqt bl-imħabba,
U ma nafx fejn għandi mmur,
Meta pprattikajt imħabtek
Mieghi sibtek traditur.
2. Mieghi sibtek traditur,
Għax kiefer mort u hallejtni,
Wara li tant ħabbejtek,
Għal ħaddieħor ittradejtni.
3. Għal ħaddieħor ittradejtni,
F'siegha li kont mignun,
Kont inħobbok u għadni nħobbok,
Halli nkun li għadni nkun.
4. Halli nkun li għandi nkun,
Għal ħaddieħor ma nħallikx,
Dejjem ħabbejtek u nħobbok,
Avolja int ma thobbnix.
5. Avolja int ma thobbnix,
Almenu m'għandekx turini,
Jahraq dina tant imħabba,
M'għandix ruħ in-namuri.
6. Jahraq dinhom tant namuri
Kif saħħti u ruħi tilfuli,
Minn dak iż-żmien mignuna dejjem,
Meta bl-errur tiegħek qaluli.

body else:/I have always loved you and still love you,/Although you do not love me.

5. Although you do not love me,/At least you must not show me this./To hell with this love,/I do not have the heart for courting.
6. To hell with these passions,/They have ruined my health and soul:/I have always been distracted/Since they told me of your misdeed.

7. Mita blerrur tiec Kaluli,
Maghanafc li tajtec cagiun,
Halluni nilminta u in ghemghem,
Ghasc fdin il hagia ghandi ragiun.
8. F'din il hagia ghandi ragiun,
La hanini mar u hallieni,
Ghal ma cherom²⁰ daun iddoluri,
U ghal macherom daun il puieni.
9. Ghal macherom daun il puieni,
U culhat fion ighadimi,
Hanini talabni scusa uara
Li ghalhartiehor bdirrni.
10. Uara li ghalhartiehor bdirrni,
Issa imsiechen ragia bdielu,
Li maconc ghasc tant inhobbu,
Chiecu scein machien isiuielu.
11. Chiecu scein machien isiuielu,
Ghasc Kat ma cont inhares leih,
Chem chien ipchi limhabba tighi,
U iara scitlef mi gioideih.
12. U iara scitlef min gioideih
Ghasc bhali machiensch isip,
U icollu bilfors ta Kalbu,
Dil pena sa Kabru igip.

7. Since they told me of your misdeed,/I do not know that I gave
you any cause for it:/Let me complain and grumble,/Because
in this matter I am in the right.
8. In this matter I am in the right,/Because my darling went and
left me:/How nasty are these sorrows,/How nasty are these
griefs.
9. How nasty are these griefs,/And everyone pities me for them./
My darling asked me to forgive him/After he changed me for
another.

7. Meta bl-errur tieghek qaluli,
Ma nafx li tajtek kagun,
Halluni nilminta u ngemgem,
Għax f'din il-ħaġa għandi raġun.
8. F'din il-ħaġa għandi raġun,
La ħanini mar u ħallieni,
Għal m'akrahom dawn id-duluri,
U għal m'akrahom dawn il-pwieni.
9. Għal m'akrahom dawn il-pwieni,
U kulħadd fihom iġhadimi,
Ħanini talabni skuża wara
Li għal ħaddieħor bidilni.
10. Wara li għal ħaddieħor bidilni,
Issa msejken reġa' bdielu,
Li ma kontx għax tant inħobbu,
Kieku xejn ma kien jiswielu.
11. Kieku xejn ma kien jiswielu,
Għax qatt ma kont inħares lejħ,
Kemm kien jibki l-imħabba tiegħi,
U jara x'tilef minn go jdejħ.
12. U jara x'tilef minn go jdejħ
Għax bħali ma kienx isib,
U jkollu bilfors ta' qalbu,
Dil-piena sa qabru jgib.

10. After he changed me for another,/Now the poor thing has
changed his mind again:/If I did not love him so much/This
would have been of no use to him.
11. This would have been of no use to him,/Because I would
never look at him again./How he would cry for my love/And
realise what he had let slip through his hands.
12. He would realise what he had let slip through his hands,/
Because he would not find anyone like me:/Whether he liked it
or not he would have/To carry this sorrow to the grave.

13. Din il pena sa Kabru igip,
U ipKa iftaKar figha,
U flimħabba li'en ħabbeitu
Min mita cont cicheicna traibia.
14. Meta cont cicheicna traibigha,²¹
Kalbi collgha ingibdit leic,
U nisctieK inħallas ħaiti
U isciorti icolli noKot ħdeic.
15. Isciorti icolli noKot ħdeic,
U em infacrec fdac ismien,
U imfacrec fdic limħabba
Li bigha irdbadna flimchien.
16. Bigha irtbadna flimchien
U taina il chilma sa ghomorna,
U bigha marbutin nibcu
Mita il campagna morna.
17. Mita il campagna morna,
Mil meut ghal ftit scappaina,
U chenna isciorti cbira
Li aħna irgiaina intcaina.
18. U issa li irgiaina intcaina,
Iziet manzidusc niftercu,
Ien nifraħ bich u int tifraħ bigha
Bħalma col frot ifraħ buercu.

13. [He would have to] carry this sorrow to the grave,/And always
remember it/And the love I gave him/Since I was a little
child.
14. Since I was a little child/My whole heart was drawn towards
you,/And I want to spend my life with you/And it is my hope
to be near you.
15. It is my hope to be near you,/And there to remind you of that
time,/And to remind you of that love/With which we were
bound together.

13. Dil-piena sa qabru jgib,
U jibqa' jiftakar fiha,
U fl-imħabba li jien ħabbejtu
Minn meta kont ċkejnkna tarbija.
14. Meta kont ċkejnkna tarbija,
Qalbi kollha ngibdet lejki,
U nixtieq inħallas ħajti
U x-xorti jkolli noqghod ħdejk.
15. Ix-xorti jkolli noqghod ħdejk,
U hemm infakkrek f'dak iż-żmien,
U nfakkrek f'dik l-imħabba
Li biha rtbatna flimkien.
16. Biha rtbatna flimkien
U tajna il-kelma sa għomorna,
U biha marbutin nibku
Meta l-kampanja morna.
17. Meta l-kampanja morna,
Mill-mewt għall-ftit skappajna,
U kellna x-xorti kbira
Li aħna ergajna ltqajna.
18. U issa li ergajna ltqajna,
Iżjed ma nżidux nifterqu,
Jien nifraħ bik u int tifraħ bija
Bħalma kull frott jifraħ b'werqu.

16. We were bound together with it,/And we promised to be each other's for ever:/And bound with it we wept [for joy]/When we went to the country.
17. When we went to the country/We missed death by a hair's breadth,/And we were very fortunate/To meet again.
18. And now that we have met again/We must never part again:/I rejoice in you and you rejoice in me,/As every fruit rejoices in its leaves.

19. Col frot ifrar buercu
U aħna nifirħu bsulscin,
Mita bdeina din limħabba
Chienu sciħat imKarchin.
20. Chienu sciħat imKarchin,
Mita raitec irgichait feħdani,
Din isceuKa deiem chelli
Li ien namac, u int tamani.²²
21. Ien namac u int tamani,
U ech nipKu ghalħaima,
Ighaddi zmien u iargia liehor,²³
U ghaldeiem tissemma imħabbitna.
22. Ghaldejem tissemma imħabbitna
Ghal fedeltà limsceina bigha,
Ninħabbu bimħabba sinciera
Li ħat minna maiħallia.
23. Li ħat minna maiħallia,
U għanKas minna iargia lura,
Ninħabbu bimħabba chbira,
U ghandna nimmantenua pura.
24. Ghandna nimmantenua pura,
U fiħha inzommu fem,
Ninħabbu bimħabba chbira
Li min clubna Kat ma tintem.

19. Every fruit rejoices in its leaves,/And we rejoice in each other:/When we began this love/Some people were mistaken about it.
20. Some people were mistaken about it:/When I saw you, you returned to my arms./This wish I always had,/That I should love you and you should love me.
21. I love you and you love me,/And thus we still stay for the rest of our lives:/This age will pass and the other will come

19. Kull frott jifrah b'werqu
U ahna nifirhu b'xulxin,
Meta bdejna din l-imhabba
Kienu x'uħud imqarqin.
20. Kienu x'uħud imqarqin,
Meta rajtek ergajt fi hdani,
Din ix-xewqa dejjem kelli
Li jien namak, u int tamani.
21. Jien namak u int tamani,
U hekk nibqghu ghal hajjima,
Ighaddi z-żmien u jerga' l-iehor,
U ghal dejjem tissemma mhabbitna.
22. Ghal dejjem tissemma mhabbitna
Għall-fedeltà li mxejna biha,
Ninhabbu b'imhabba sinciera
Li hadd minna ma jhalliha.
23. Li hadd minna ma jhalliha,
U anqas minna jerga' lura,
Ninhabbu b'imhabba kbira,
U għandna nimmantenuha pura.
24. Għandna nimmantenuha pura,
U fiha nzommu ferm,
Ninhabbu b'imhabba kbira,
Li minn qlubna qatt ma tintemm.

again,/And our love will always be remembered.

22. Our love will always be remembered/For the faithfulness that we showed:/Let us love each other with a true love,/That neither of us will forsake.
23. That neither of us will forsake/Nor go back on:/Let us love each other with a great love,/And we must keep it pure.
24. We must keep it pure/And be constant in it:/Let us love each other with a great love/That will never die in our hearts.

25. Min clubna Kat ma tintem,
 Ghasc mita bdeina dasciscin²⁴ conna,
 Conna barra il campagna,
 Kalp il fiuri geua il gionna.
26. Fil campagna geua il gionna,
 Ghaħna intKaina leuel darba,
 Mita imħaptec dahlet fKalbi
 Gialitni nocrop carba.
27. Gialitni nocrop carba
 Mita raitec feini geit.
28. Mita raitec feini gejt,
 Kalp ta Kalbi daul ghaineja,²⁵
 Chif ghaddielec il martaKabec
 Mita irsact bissiggiu ħdeija.
29. Mita irsact bissiggiu ħdeija
 Sciruh hasseit dahret mighi
 Min allura ippersuadejt ruhi
 Li inti ghandec tcun tighi.
30. Li inti ghandec tcun tighi
 U ta ħattieħor matcunsc,
 Sa chem alla jatini haja
 Min gioideja matmursc.

Fin qui s'estende l'ennu e non altro

25. It will never die in our hearts/Because when we fell in love
 we were very young:/We were in the country/Among the
 flowers in the gardens.
26. In the country in the gardens,/We met for the first time:/When
 your love entered my heart/It made me groan deeply.
27. It made me groan deeply/When I saw you coming towards me.
28. When I saw you coming towards me,/Heart of my heart, light of
 my eyes,/How the sickness in your heart vanished/When you

25. Minn qlubna qatt ma tintemm,
Għax meta bdejna daqs xulxin konna,
Konna barra l-kampanja,
Qalb il-fjuri gewwa l-gonna.
26. Fil-kampanja gewwa l-gonna,
Aħna ltqajna l-ewwel darba,
Meta mhabbtek dahlet f'qalbi
Ġegħlitni nokrob karba.
27. Ġegħlitni nokrob karba
Meta rajtek fejni gejt.
28. Meta rajtek fejni gejt,
Qalb ta' qalbi dawl għajnejja,
Kif għaddielek il-mard ta' qalbek
Meta ersaqt bis-siggu hdejja.
29. Meta ersaqt bis-siggu hdejja
X'ruh hassejt dehret miegħi
Min allura ipperswadejt ruhi
Li inti għandek tkun tiegħi.
30. Li inti għandek tkun tiegħi
U ta' haddieħor ma tkunx,
Sa kemm Alla jagħtini hajja
Minn go jdejja ma tmurx.

Fin qui s'estende l'inno e non altro

moved your chair next to me.

29. When you moved your chair next to me/What a wave I felt pass over me:/From that moment I persuaded my soul/That you had to be mine.
30. That you had to be mine,/And you would not be anybody else's:/As long as God gives me life/I will not let you go.

The song ends here and there is no more.

1. Insara ta' dil Belt²⁶
Geit naticom dil aKbar
Illi il col ghandna i mutù
Tant chem aKna sghar, u CKbar.
2. U dil Meut tchun darba bis,
Meta tchun mà iafu Kat,
Fein tmur ruKna la mutu
Ghia min ghem ma tochrog cat.
3. Darba bis l'immutu taiep,
Ghala deim mirbuchin,
Tcun darba il meut Kazina
Ghala deiem mitlufin.
4. Din l'aKbar conna nafugha
Ghasc narau i Nies i mutu,
Min tilef il Missieru,
Ghandu iitlef l'ommu ul CKutu.
5. Chif i mutù Irgiel ù Sciuch,
Ghech i mutu i Nisa ul Bniet,
Chif i mutu i Tfal ù Trabi
Ghech i Sghasach, ù Scebbet.
6. Iindifnu il Gogna mal Focra
IitKallat il ghadam mà trap
Ghiech ghem sci gmiel fil Kaia,
Uara il Meut, scein ma iinsap.
7. Ghandna aKna l'ocbra taghna,
Mimliin bi trap, ù dut

1. Christians of this city, / I have come to give you these tidings: / We must all die, / All of us, both young and old.
2. Death comes only once; / When that will be, nobody knows. / Wherever our soul may go when we die, / It never leaves there again.
3. We can have only one good death, / And we will be saved for ever. / There can be only one bad death, / And we will be lost for ever.
4. We have always known these tidings, / Because we see people

1. Insara ta' dil-belt
Ġejt nagħtikhom din l-aħbar
Illi lkoll għandna mmutu
Tant kemm aħna żgħar u kbar.
2. U dil-mewt tkun darba biss,
Meta tkun ma jafu hadd,
Fejn tmur ruħna la mmutu
Hija minn hemm ma toħrog qatt.
3. Darba biss li mmutu tajjeb,
Għala dejjem mirbuħin,
Tkun darba l-mewt hażina
Għala dejjem midufin.
4. Din l-aħbar konna nafuha
Għax naraw in-nies imutu,
Min jitlef 'il missieru,
Għandu jitlef 'il ommu u 'l ħutu.
5. Kif imutu rġiel u xjuħ,
Hekk imutu n-nisa u l-bniet,
Kif imutu t-tfal u t-trabi
Hekk iż-żgħira żgħira u x-xebbiet.
6. Jindifnu l-għonja mal-foqra
Jithallat il-għadam mat-trab
Jekk hemm xi gmiel fil-ħajja,
Wara l-mewt xejn ma jinsab.
7. Għandna aħna l-oqbra tagħna,
Mimlijin bit-trab u d-dud

dying. / He who loses his father / Must also lose his mother
and brothers.

5. Just as men and old people die, / So also do women and girls:
/ Just as children and babies die, / So also do young men and
maidens.
6. The rich will be buried with the poor, / The bones will mix
with the dust. / If there is any beauty in life, / After death
nothing will be found.
7. All of us have our graves, / Full of dust and worms. / They

Daun mai fachrunies iehor,
Cul min tuelet ghandu i mut.

8. Cul min iigi fdina i digna
Ghandu i mut, ù i Kalligha,
I Kalli il git, Chibiep, ù Craba
U cul Ghazis li ghandu figha.
9. Maghna mà gibna scein,
Mà nechdusc Kagia oKra maghna,
Chlief dnubietna bis,
U l'opri i taiba taghna.
10. Min tant ilbies li ghandech
I chefnuch f'lagar lizar
U ghal intiena tighach
I checchiuch barra mi dar.
11. Ghech iagmlulech il ghizies tighac
Dauch li Chisiebech deiem fighom,
Gal min raKdem, ù tonfoch
Challeit l'Alla ghalighom.
12. Gal erbgħa ù ghoscrin sigħa
Sci Kat iuri li iipchich
La gheda i dach tal chiniepen
Chat mà iiachsep iisiet fich.
13. Il Craba i gaudu gidech,
U fich ma iiftacru sceiin,
Feinu gismech, chalp i dut,
Feingħa RuKech, Alla iaf fein.

remind us of nothing but that / Everyone who is born must die.

8. Everyone who comes into this world / Must die and leave it, / Leave his wealth, friends and relations, / And every dear one that he has in it.
9. We bring nothing with us, / And we take nothing else with us / Except only our sins / And our good works.
10. Of all the clothes that you have / They will wrap you up in the worst sheet; / And because of your smell / They will kick you out of the house.

Dawn ma jfakkruniex iehor,
Kull min twieled għandu jmut.

8. Kull min jiġi f'din id-dinja
Għandu jmut u jħalliha,
Iħalli l-gid hbieb u qraha
U kull għaziż li għandu fiha.
9. Magħna ma gibna xejn,
Ma neħdux haġa oħra magħna,
Hliel dnubiema biss,
U l-opri t-tajba tagħna.
10. Minn tant ilbies li għandek
Ikeffnuk fl-aġar liżar
U għall-intiena tiegħek
Ikeċċuk barra mid-dar.
11. Hekk jagħmlulek l-egħżież tiegħek
Dawk li hsiebek dejjem fihom,
Għal min taħdem u tonfoq
Hallejt 'l Alla għalihom.
12. Għal erba' u għoxrin siegħa
Xi hadd juri li jibkik
La heda d-daqq tal-qniepen
Hadd/Qatt ma jahseb iżjed fik.
13. Il-qraha jgawdu gidek,
U fik ma jiftakru xejn,
Fejn hu gismek qalb id-dud,
Fejnha ruħek Alla jaf fejn.

11. This is what your loved ones will do to you, / Those of whom you are always thinking, / For whom you work and provide; / And for whom you forsook God.
12. For twenty four hours / Someone will show that he weeps for you. / Once the bells stop ringing / No one will/He will never think of you any more.
13. Your relations will enjoy your wealth / And never remember you. / Where is your body? – Among the worms. / Where is your soul? – God knows where.

14. Trit taf fein, ara chif tghisc,
Chaia taiba, ul meut aKiar,
Chif hi il Kaia, tcun il meut,
Kiaia Kasina, u meut aghar.
15. B dach il neul li bdeit i sciocca,
B'dach il neul t'ispedigha,
Ghiech mà tactachiesc barra
U tibdel il cait li figha.
16. Ghiech trit immela meuta taiba,
Acta i dnup, u ibda min gidit
Ghech mà t'indimsc meta tista
Mà tcunsc tista meta trit.
17. Ghasc l'indiema misc fi deich
Ghandu Alla iatighielech,
Schin taghielech, inti mà rettghiesc
Meta tchun tridgha, iicKadghielech.
18. U iiech tmut min ghair indiema
Sc'farac iipca ghalich,
Iachbdù fich i Sciaten,
u fl'Infern i morru bich.
19. La ruchech uaslet fl'Infern
min iigi ù i nechighielech,
Ghiech tcun i digna colgha tighach
I digna scein mà tisuiielech.
20. Sc'ocla chibira tcun f Chalbech
Bi dnubietech bein ghaineich,

14. Do you want to know where? – Watch how you live: / A good life and a better death. / For as is life, so will be death: / A bad life, and a worse death.
15. With that loom with which you began the weave, / With that loom you will finish it, / Unless you cut it out / And change the thread that is in it.
16. So if you wish for a good death, / Stop sinning and begin anew: / If you do not repent when you can, / You will not be able to when you want to.
17. For repentance is out of your hands: / God must give it to

14. Trid taf fejn: ara kif tghix,
Hajja tajba u l-mewt aħjar,
Kif hi l-hajja tkun il-mewt,
Hajja hażina, u mewt aghar.
15. B'dak in-newl li bdejt ix-xoqqa,
B'dak in-newl tispediha,
Jekk ma taqtagħhiex barra
U tibdel il-hajt li fiha.
16. Jekk trid immela mewta tajba,
Aqta' d-dnub u ibda mill-ġdid
Jekk ma tindimx meta tista'
Ma tkunx tista' meta trid.
17. Għax l-indiema mhix f'idejk
Għandu Alla jagħtihielek,
X'hin tagħhielek, inti ma ridtiex
Meta tkun tridha, jiċhadhielek.
18. U jekk tmut mingħajr indiema
X'faraġ jibqa' għalik,
Jaqbdu fik ix-xjaten,
U fl-infern imorru bik.
19. La ruġek waslet fl-infern
Min jiġi u jneħħihielek,
Jekk tkun id-dinja kollha tiegħek
Id-dinja xejn ma tiswielek.
20. X'għoqla kbira tkun f'qalbek
Bi dnubietek bejn għajnejk,

you. / When He gave it to you, you did not want it: / When
you want it, He will deny you it.

18. If you die without repenting, / What happiness can you look
forward to? / The devils will seize you / And take you with
them to hell.
19. Once your soul gets to hell, / Who will come and take it out of
there for you? / If all the world should be yours / The world
will avail you nothing.
20. What great grief will be in your heart / When you see your sins

Ghasc mà cherreitghomsc f'Chaitech
Meta chellech i smien fi deich.

21. Thallisc il crar ghal aKar
Bi tama li colloch i smien
Ghasc il Meut ghia trastura²⁷
Tigi cul uacht, u cul imchien.
22. La tghic ghadni Saghsuch,
Incosni caui, ù schich,
Tista tigi il Meut, ghal gharrieda
Tista toctloch p'feugia rich.
23. Tista tmut tiechet billeil,
Tista tmut libghien binghar,
Fuch l'art, ù fuch il bachar
Miesci fi triech, ù chieghet geua i dar.
24. Min challech li tmut fsottoch
Min giebhielech din l'achbar
Min ueghdech ghacal, ù feghma
Biesc tista taghmel l'aKbar Crar.
25. Bil biza tal Meut li corbot
Bil fiscla, bil mart ù blugich,
U bil ghada il Kazina,
Dach il Crar sci cun sabich.
26. Bdach il cliem l'inti drait f'ghomroch,
Fil meut ghandu i cun chliemech,
Bdach il chisiep l'inti drait tachsep
Jargia fil meut i cun cuddiemech.

before you, / For you did not confess them in your life / When
you had ample time to do so.

21. Do not leave confession to the last moment / In the hope that
you will have time: / For death is unpredictable – / It comes
at any time and any place.
22. Do not say: I am still young, / I feel healthy and strong. /
Death can come unexpectedly, / It can kill you with a puff of
wind.
23. You can die asleep at night, / You can die alert by day, / On
land or at sea, / Walking in the street, or sitting inside at
home.

Għax ma qerrejthomx f'ħajtek
Meta kellek iż-żmien f'idejk.

21. Tħallix il-qrar għall-aħħar
Bit-tama li jkollok iż-żmien
Għax il-mewt hija trastura
Tigi kull waqt u kullimkien.
22. La tghidx għadni zaġġżuġh,
Inħossni qawwi u shiħ,
Tista' tigi l-mewt għal għarrieda
Tista' toqtlok b'fewga riħ.
23. Tista' tmut rieqed bil-lejl,
Tista' tmut libien bi nhar,
Fuq l-art u fuq il-baħar
Miexi fit-triq, jew qieghed gewwa d-dar.
24. Min qallek li tmut f'soddtok,
Min gibhielek din l-aħbar
Min wegħdek għaqal u fehma
Biex tista' tagħmel l-aħħar qrar?
25. Bil-biża' tal-mewt li qorbot
Bil-fixla, bil-mard u bl-uġiġh,
U bil-għada il-ħa zina,
Dak il-qrar x'ikun sabiħ.
26. B'dak il-kliem li int drajt f'għomrok,
Fil-mewt għandu jkun kliemek,
B'dak il-ħsieb li int drajt taħseb
Jarga' fil-mewt ikun quddiemek.

24. Who told you that you die in your bed, / Who brought you these tidings, / Who promised you the prudence and judgement / To be able to make the last confession?
25. In the fear of approaching death, / In the confusion of sickness and pain, / And with your bad habit – / How can that confession be a good one?
26. Those words that you got used to during life / Must be your words in death: / Those thoughts that you got used to thinking / Likewise must be before you in death.

27. Issa mela li ghu i smien fideich
 Isma milli inghidlech iena,
 Ibni mur indem, ù cher
 U acta il ghueiet²⁸ il Chisiena.
28. Ibda ghisc phal inusrani
 Acta il loghop, ù l'achbiep,
 T'itKailsc l'ilmeut ghecda bghida
 Iista, i cun li ghia uara il biep.
29. Acta i dagha ù acta il Chfir,
 Mur, rot dach li mà ghusc tighac
 Daca bis li taghmel fi Kaitech
 Uara il meut i sibu mighac.
30. Cul mà naghmlu f'Kaitna, ò
 Taiep ò Kazin
 Ghandna uara meutitna
 Achna tighù incunu imKalsin.
31. Ghiech l'opri i cunu taiba
 Fil Genna aKna ingaudughom
 Ghiech l'opri i cunu chisiena,
 AKna bis fl'Infern nipsughom.
32. Min iista i mut cul Kin
 U mà i ghisc chif ghandu i cun
 O il Meut mà ieminsc bigha
 O ghiech iemmen ghù Mignun.

27. Now therefore when you have ample time, / Take my advice:
 / My son, go and repent and confess / And cut out bad habits.
28. Start living like a Christian, / Stop gambling and give up your
 friends. / Do not assume that death is far away: / Perhaps it
 is just behind the door.
29. Cut out swearing and cruelty, / Return that which is not
 yours. / Only that which you do in your life / Will you find
 with you after death.

27. Issa mela li hu ż-żmien f'idejk
 Isma' milli ingħidlek jiena,
 Ibni mur indem u qerr
 U aqta' l-egħwied il-ħżiena.
28. Ibda għix bħal nisrani,
 Aqta' il-logħob u l-ihbieb,
 Tithajjilx il-mewt qieghda bghida
 Jista' jkun li hija wara l-bieb.
29. Aqta' d-dagħa u aqta' il-kfir,
 Mur rodd dak li ma hux tiegħek
 Dak biss li tagħmel f'ħajtek
 Wara l-mewt issibu miegħek.
30. Kull ma naghmlu f'ħajjitna,
 Tajjeb o ħazin
 Għandna wara mewwitna
 Aħna tiegħu nkunu mħallsin.
31. Jekk l-opri jkunu tajba
 Fil-ġenna aħna ngawduhom
 Jekk l-opri jkunu ħżiena
 Aħna biss fl-infern nibkuhom.
32. Min jista' imut kull ħin
 U ma ighixx kif għandu jkun
 O il-mewt ma jemminx biha
 O jekk jemmen hu mignun.

30. Everything we do in our life, either / Good or bad, / We must
 after our death / Receive our deserts for it.
31. If our works are good, / We will enjoy them in heaven: / If our
 works are bad, / We will weep for them alone in hell.
32. He who can die at any moment / And does not live as he
 should / Either does not believe in death / Or, if he believes,
 is mad.

Curunell

1. O xhaija ingrata infami ia dina²⁹
xamilt bideija mort thalt suldat
mixtri bil gisem bir-ruh u fcul hin
max il sigħa f'gurnata iddisprat
2. Fil bart u ix-xita billeil u bin-nar
il assa namel imobbi phal hmar
mahruk fixxemx u spis nibdel
u curunel curunel curunel
3. Mita tcun franc tarah gei minnufih
il curunel seu fil hin tal mistrih
igip il mara it-xfal u culhatt
u issuldat mi strih ma andu kat
4. Xi bicca dril iordna dan minnufih
u [con]tra kalbec icolloc dobdih
trit isserviħ ta purcinel
il curunel curunel curunel
5. Chif ibda iordna iddril issigniur
mar rait ul lefft iena nibda indur
bil marc in oder end quic ebaut tern
u hak ixxiaten xi hriht mil infern
6. Dakka fuk moħħi tislima natih
ech emx bzon iziet siniur nistaksiħ
u bla cliem xein niħu il cappel
il curunel curunel curunel

1. Oh, what an ungrateful and infamous world this is. / What have I let myself in for! I went and became a soldier, / Sold body and soul, and always / Am at the end of my tether twelve hours a day.
2. In cold and rain, night and day, / I stand guard, laden like an ass, / Burned in the sun, and often I wilt away. / Oh Colonel, Colonel, Colonel.
3. When you are off duty, you see him coming immediately, / The Colonel, right in the time of your rest. / He brings his wife, children and everyone, / And there is never any rest for the soldier.

Kurunell

1. O x'hajja ngrata nfami hija dina
X'ghamilt b'idejja mort dħalt suldat
Mixtri bil-gisem bir-ruh u f'kull ħin
Tnax-il siegħa f'gurnata ddisprat
 2. Fil-bard u x-xita, bil-lejl u bi nhar
Il-ghassa nagħmel imghobbi bħal ħmar
Maħruq fix-xemx u spiss nibdel
Oh Kurunell, Kurunell, Kurunell
 3. Meta tkun frank tarah ġej minnufih
Il-Kurunell sew fil-ħin tal-mistrieħ
Iġib il-mara, it-tfal u kul ħadd
U s-suldat mistrieħ ma għandu qatt
 4. Xi biċċa drill jordna dan minnufih
U kontra qalbek ikollok tobdiħ
Trid isservih ta' purċinell
Il-Kurunell, Kurunell, Kurunell
 5. Kif jibda jordna d-drill is-sinjur
Mar-'right' u l-'left' jiena nibda ndur
Bil-'march in order and quick about turn'
U ħaqq ix-xjaten xi ħriġ mill-infem
 6. Daqqa fuq moħħi tislima nagħtiħ
Hekk hemmx bżonn iżjed sinjur nistaqsieħ
U bla kliem xejn nieħu l-kappell
Il-Kurunell, Kurunell, Kurunell.
-
4. Immediately he [the Colonel] orders some drill, / And willy-nilly you must obey him: / You must serve as his puppet. / Colonel, Colonel, Colonel.
 5. As soon as Sir orders drill / I start spinning left and right / With 'March in order and quick about turn'. / Curse the devils, what have I brought out of hell!
 6. I salute him with a blow on my forehead, / And ask him if he needs anything else. / Without a single word I take my hat. / Colonel, Colonel, Colonel.

¹The poems and illustration are published by kind permission of the Librarian.

²A brief description of the Bonavita Papers will be available soon: see R. Vella Bonavita, 'The Bonavita Papers: One Method of Preservation', in the *Proceedings of the Conference: Maltese History, What Future?*, edited by Ann Williams & R. Vella Bonavita, to be published shortly by Malta University Press.

³The references given are those of the progressive catalogue. All the proverbs in Maltese occurring in MSS 243 Ae and 289 D are recorded, either directly or as variants, in J. Aquilina, *A Comparative Dictionary of Maltese Proverbs*, (Malta, 1972).

⁴See, *inter alia*, B. Ilg & H. Stumme, *Maltesische Volkslieder*, (Leipzig, 1909); J. Cassar Pullicino, '200 Maltese Folk-Songs', *Maltese Folklore Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (Malta, 1962); A. J. Arberry, *A Maltese Anthology*, (Oxford, 1960); *Il-Muza Maltija*, edited by G. Aquilina, 3rd edition, (Malta 1969).

⁵The verses in A are reproduced from MS 222 Aa and those in B are reproduced from MS 305 B1, which is shown in the illustration. The first three verses of A are a draft of verses [I]-III of B. In these sets of verses as they appear here, words in italics show a deletion in the original manuscript, words within brackets show an addition.

⁶The words *di vinu* are open to two possible interpretations, either 'divine' or 'of wine', in this latter case regarding the words as a straightforward use of Italian in Maltese. In the rendering into standard Maltese orthography and in the English translation, the former interpretation has been adopted.

⁷The exact meaning of this line is uncertain.

⁸The exact meaning of these two lines is uncertain. Cf., however, the word *hejn*, 'di grazia', (A. E. Caruana, *Vocabolario della Lingua Maltese*, (Malta, 1903)): it is possible that *ibejnu* may be a verbal formation from this noun.

⁹Cf. Ilg & Stumme, *op. cit.*, p. 49, no. 212.

¹⁰This verse is a draft of the first verse in B.

¹¹The Mandragg was a slum area of Valletta, built on the site of an unfinished project of the Knights of the Order of St. John for an artificial galley port. At one time there were orchards in the area, and it is to these that these lines refer.

¹²Cf. Ilg & Stumme, *op. cit.*, p. 53, no. 241, & J. Cassar Pullicino, *op. cit.*, p. 24, no. 81.

¹³Cf. Ilg & Stumme, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 52, nos. 145, 229.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 72, no. 367.

¹⁵The word *gropb* actually means 'a knot (in wood)'. The exact meaning is uncertain here, but it is assumed to be 'carpentry'.

¹⁶The Form III verb *xieghel* means, *inter alia*, 'to give work to, to keep busy', but such a causatively transitive meaning would not be fully satisfactory here. The Form I verb *xeghel* means only 'to light, to kindle', but strangely enough has no meaning connected with the idea of 'work'. It is possible that the Form III verb *xeghel* may originally have had some basic meaning such as might have been expected of a Form I verb, but that this has now become obsolete.

¹⁷ Cf. Ilg & Stumme, *op. cit.*, p. 67, no. 332.

¹⁸ The exact meaning of this line is uncertain; cf. p. 126 above, note 8.

¹⁹ This poem is reproduced from MS 305 b5.

²⁰ An informant thought she remembered her grandmother using this expression in a cradle song. It is probably a relic of a now obsolete Form IV verb **akrah*, formed from the adjective *ikrah*, 'ugly, nasty, horrible', preceded by the word *ma*, with the meaning of 'what', and with the addition of the 3rd person plural pronominal suffix *-om*. The combination of *ma* + Form IV verb is used to express what may be called a 'verb of wonder'. So *m'akrah* would literally mean 'what has made nasty ...', what has made horrible ...', and the usual meaning would be 'how nasty is/are ...', 'how horrible is/are ...'. Cf. *m'akbar Alla*, 'how great is God', literally, 'what has made God great'.

²¹ Cf. Ilg & Stumme, *op. cit.*, p. 43, no. 173.

²² The words *namak* and *tamani* are both composed of a pronominal prefix (as subject) and a pronominal suffix (as object) attached to a now obsolete stem **ama*, derived from Italian *amare*, 'to love'. Cf. Aquilina, ... *Proverbs*, Section XVII, no. 50, *Min thobbu u tamah dak li jaghmel ma tarabx*.

²³ See p. 126 above, note 13.

²⁴ The meaning of *daqs xulxin* is 'of the same age'. In the context of which it is used here, it is more satisfactory to regard it as meaning 'very young'.

²⁵ Cf. Ilg & Stumme, *op. cit.*, p. 32, no. 102.

²⁶ This poem is reproduced from MS 242 Aa.

²⁷ The word *trastura* is not used in current Maltese, nor is it recorded in any of the older Maltese dictionaries. The most likely explanation is that it would seem to be an adaptation of the Sicilian-Italian word *trastula*, meaning 'cheat, deception'.

²⁸ The word *eghwied* is recorded in proverbs as a plural of *ghada*, meaning 'custom, habit', although the usual plural in current Maltese usage is *ghadiet*. For *eghwied*, see Aquilina, ... *Proverbs*, Section XX, no. 5, *Il-bniedem jingharaf minn eghwiedu*.

²⁹ This poem is reproduced from MS 305 b2. For similar comic verses, see J. Cassar Pullicino, *op. cit.*, p. 18, nos. 30, 31.