

A STUDY IN VIOLENT LANGUAGE

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WORDS can be either emotionally neutral or emotionally charged. A word is emotionally neutral when it conveys the meaning without any involvement of the emotions and emotionally charged when the meaning thereof is coloured supersegmentally. Every single word in the dictionary is thus emotionally neutral but only insofar as it is no more than a lexeme or morpheme made up of a number of consonantal and vocalic phonemes strung together according to a recognisable semantic pattern. These lexical units become emotionally charged when they occur in contexts and situations charged with feelings of which there is a whole gamut from the very mild to the excitable and explosive. Single words can also be emotionally charged whenever the lexical unit arouses in the mind of the reader a series of provocative associations with past or present experiences or apprehensions of the uncertain and the unknown. Such are words like death, God, love and scores of others. In fact, every associated word can be emotionally charged by the nature of its content. The word *aeroplane*, for instance, can trigger off mental pictures from a wide range of possible associations (travelling, air pockets, crashing, beautiful stewardesses, fears of hijacking and so on).

Let us, as an example, take the following seven words, first singly, unassociated words in their alphabetical order as they appear in the dictionary and then regrouped in an emotionally responsive situation:

1. *A*: America; 2. *H*: he; 3. *K*: killed; 4. *O*: of; 5. *P*: president; 6. *T*: the; 7. *W*: while.

As lexical units these words are just unsituated verbal records without a living context. One has to know their unassociated meaning either from personal knowledge of the language into the context of which they fit sequentially or look them up in a dictionary to establish their semantic identity together with their morphological and syntactic features if the usage thereof is illustrated by examples (words in action). Each one of them as a lexical unit out of

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context is emotionally neutral, naturally only so long as they do not trigger off associated mental pictures in the reader's mind. Take, for example, the word *President* (we might take other examples from the list). The dictionary explains it as (1) head of a temporary or permanent body; or (2) person presiding over a meeting and proceedings; or (3) the person presiding over the meetings of academy, literary or scientific society; or (4) the elected head of Government in the USA. This list of meanings is no more than a plain record of its semantic range. But the word *President* can become emotionally charged if, for instance, used in meaning no. 4, it recalls in the reader's mind John Kennedy or Abraham Lincoln, the two famous Presidents of the USA both of whom were assassinated. In this context, the emotion is generated by a series of mental pictures recalling the two ill-fated Presidents by a process of sheer associations of ideas spread out in time. But in connected speech, association which generates emotion is possible only when the word-sequence creates a number of ideas that not only link up with one another as so many links in one chain and merge into a semantic unit, but also radiate a series of concentric associations which one could compare to the many ripples produced by a stone thrown into a pond.

The seven isolated words, as given in their alphabetical order, do not impinge on one another contextually, and, therefore, they do not generate, much less radiate, emotion. But when these words are so arranged in connected speech as to impinge on one another forming an intelligible sequence of connected morphemes, then we have situationally created emotions the intensity of which depends on one's degree of personal involvement in the event or situation and reaction is often a matter of personal temperament one way or the other. Emotion can be stirred by likes, dislikes, love and sex in general, hatred, pleasure, fear, suspicion and other movements of the human psyche, the so-called 'passions'. Naturally, the degree of intensity is higher (more deep seated) when one is personally involved than when one is not. Death in one's family, for instance, generates greater personal sorrow than that in another man's family.

The list of seven unassociated words can be redistributed as follows: *He killed the President of America while he was addressing the people.* One who reads this statement can read it either

unemotionally as a mere historical chronicle (a statement of facts) as most of us do when we read the daily news, or with a feeling of grief and anger if one feels that the murderer of John Kennedy did him (the victim) and America an irreparable wrong. On the other hand, one can experience indifferent, or even pleasurable, emotion if one feels that the murdered president was not the right president for the USA and that his violent removal was not therefore the tragedy that it was made out to be. This must be the feeling of those who engineered his assassination – a political situation that repeats itself in so many political assassinations.

The ambiguous usage of the 3rd person *he* might also affect the reader's sense of emotion-charged curiosity to know who really killed the president and who was addressing the people. This question would not be in the mind of one who knows the facts of the murder – how it happened and who killed whom. Emotion does not constitute a value-judgement. For this reason, it can be either ethical or unethical, or morally neutral. Law-abiding citizens and violent anarchists form different value-judgements about the same social situation and speak and act accordingly. Both draw upon a reserve of reasons for or against conviction by self-persuasion.

In everyday speech, at home or in society, in our letter-writing, articles to the press and indeed in any form of self-expression, we use words always more or less charged with emotion. The absolutely neutral, unemotional language is that of the sciences, some of which, mathematics and chemistry for instance, deal more in figures and formulae than in words. This is unemotional computer language. Every human passion charges words with a high, or low, degree of emotion very much as we charge the battery of a car when setting it in motion. Such emotional charging is higher in religious communication (the Psalms, the Koran, the Vedas, etc.), poetic and rhetorical writing (old style Demosthenian or Ciceronian oratory, for instance), love (Dante's treatment of the adulterous love of Francesca da Rimini and Paolo in Canto V, *Infemo* [*amore*]) and hatred (Dante's treatment of Count Ugolino in Canto XXXIII *Infemo* [*odio*]). These and other very powerful ingredients of human passions charge words with a high emotion of the human psyche.

In this short article, I am going to deal with the emotionally charged vocabulary of anger or hatred and in-between feelings or emotions which take single parts of the human body as their tar-

get; the target they shoot their hurting arrows at in impatience and anger.

The list I am giving includes only a selection of sadistic or violent threats which provide material for a comparative study in verbal sadism and violence in six languages.

But before I do so, I must make clear another point which concerns the nexus between Sound and Meaning, Threats and Intention in minatory language. While in ordinary speech, when we think carefully, before we speak to convey a specific meaning unambiguously, Sound and Meaning, bound together, identify each other for the purposes of self-communication, in cases of highly emotional language, the Sound/Sense process very often disintegrates completely in such a manner that while the words we use literally mean one thing, emotionally they are no more than emphatic expressions set loose from their literal meaning. For instance, when a loving mother in an angry moment tells her naughty son that she will kill him if he does not behave, she certainly has no such intention and she would be horrified if she even suspected that she really meant what she said. The same may be said of the many rude words, including swear-words, obscene words and minatory expressions which, uttered in highly emotional situations (impatience, anger, etc.) become more or less sadistically colourful expressions, very interesting and also revealing as material for the comparative study of the different word-pictures used by different peoples in their minatory and explosive temperamental language. With some exceptions, Maltese minatory expressions are of Sicilian or Italian origin. One notes that minatory expressions are comparatively more sadistically worded in Italian and other European languages than in Arabic, at least as far as those referring to the human body are concerned. But verbal sadism need not indicate a more sadistic strain in the people who use it than in another people who do not use it at all, or use it in a comparatively mitigated form. These verbal sadistic expressions may be more the outcome of an explosive temperament than of a really sadistic strain which may, in some cases, be more deeply ingrained in other peoples, some of whom intellectualise their sadism in intellectually refined cruelty, while others express it in emotional outbursts. It is often a case of the silent dog being more dangerous than the barking dog that seldom bites.

I need hardly point out that the supply of examples is inevitably limited being no more than what the informants themselves could remember.

RAS (<Ar. رَأْس) / **Head**

1. **Inhabbatlek (infarraklek, inkissirlek) rasek mal-hajt**, I'll smash your head against the wall.

Arabic: حنخبط راسك في الحيط [ḥa-nikbaṭ rāsak fil-ḥēyṭ]

Italian: Ti sbatto la testa contro il muro.

English: I will bash your head against the wall.

American: Cp. I will smash your head with a brick, hammer, etc. (i.e. with instruments).

German: -

French: -

2. **Niftahlek rasek ktieb**, I will open up your head (like a book).

Arabic: (دماغك) حفتحك راسك [ḥa-ftahlak rāsak (dimāḡak)]

Italian: Ti apro la testa come un libro.

English: I'll split your head open.

American: -

German: -

French: -

3. **Naqsamlek rasek**, I will break your head.

Arabic: حكسرلك راسك [ḥa-ksidak rāsak]

Italian: Ti rompo (ti spacco) la testa (il cranio)

English: -

American: I'll crack (clonk) you on the head.

German: Ich schlage dir den Schädel ein.

French: Je te fendrai le crâne.

4. **Inhabbatkom ras ma' ras**, I will knock your heads together.

Arabic: حنخبط (حنخبط) راسكم في بعض [ḥa-nikbaṭ (ḥa-kbaṭ) rās-kum fba'd]

Italian: Vi faccio sbattere la testa insieme.

English: I will bang your heads together.

American: I will knock your heads together.

German: -

French: -

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I will bash your head in; I will knock your (bleeding) block off (also American but without the word 'bleeding').

American: I will knock some sense into his head - I will bite his head off (i.e. to give him a sound talking) - I will bash your skull (head, brain) in.

French: Je te ferai une tête au carré - Je te ferai une tête comme un bec de gaz - Je te mettrai la tête en compteur à gaz - Je te mettrai la tête entre les deux oreilles.

XAGHAR (<Ar. شَعْرَ)/Hair

1. Innittiflek xaghrek sufa sufa, I will pluck out your hair one by one.

Arabic: أنتنك شعرك شعرا شعرا [ʔantiflak šaʔrak šaʔra šaʔra]

Italian: Ti strappo i capelli ad uno ad uno.

English: I'll tear your hair out (to a woman).

American: I will pull every hair out of your head.

German: Ich reisse dir die Haare aus.

French:

GHAJNEJN (<Ar. عَيْنَانِ)/Eyes

1. Nixroblok l-abjad ta' ghajnejk, I'll drink up the white of your eyes, i.e. I'll drink your eyes out of their sockets.

Arabic:

Italian: -

English: -

American: -

German: -

French: -

2. **Naqlaghlek ghajnejk (u naghtūhomlok f'idejk)**, I will pull out your eyes (and give them to you in your hands).

Arabic: (عنيك) حأ لعلك عنيك [ħa-qla'lak 'eynak ('eynēyk)]

Italian: Ti cavo gli occhi e te li faccio mangiare.

English: I'll gouge your eyes out. or She'll scratch her eyes out (woman's minatory language).

American: (My informant says that he "has heard it once or twice from immigrants to America".)

German: -

French: -

3. **Nifqaghlek (naqlaghlek) ghajnejk**, I'll split your eyeballs open.

Arabic: (عنيك) حفاًع (حفتت) عنيك [ħa-fqa' (ħa-fket) 'eynak ('eynēyk)]

Italian: Cp. Ti brucio gli occhi.

English: -

American: -

German: Ich kratze dir die Augen aus.

French: -

4. **Indahhallek subghajk f'ghajnejk**, I'll thrust your fingers into your eyes.

Arabic: حط صبعي في عنيك / صوابعي في عنيك [ħa-ħuṭ sub'ī fi 'eynak/sawab'ī fi 'eynēyk]

Italian: Ti caccio un dito in un occhio - Ti caccio due dita negli occhi - Ti do una ditata in un occhio.

English: I'll gouge your eyes out.

American: Cp. I'll poke you in the eye or I'll poke her (ladies to each other especially) - I'll scratch her eyes.

German: -

French: -

5. **Nimlierek ghajnejk bil-b'zar**, I'll fill your eyes with pepper.

Arabic: -

Italian: Ti riempio gli occhi di pepe.

English: -

American: Cp. Here's mud in your eye.

German: -

French: -

6. **Nibblakkalek ghajnejk**, I'll give you a black eye.

Arabic: -

Italian: Ti faccio un occhio nero.

English: I'll give you a black eye.

American: I'll give you a black eye, i.e. I'll make you look like a ragoon.

German: Ich haue (schlage) dir ein blaues Auge.

French: Je te ferai un oeil au beurre noir.

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I'll shit in your eye; Here's one in the eye for you.

American: May God blind him. (My informant believes this expression is of Irish origin. In Maltese one hears also the imprecation **narrak taghma**, may you go blind).

French: Tu as qu'à crever la gueule ouverte, les yeux plein de fourmis, le nez plein de mouches.

WIDNEJN (<Ar. أذنان)/Ears

1. **Nikollok il-qarquċa ta' widnejk** (**inqarmiċlek widnejk**), I'll eat the lobe of your ears.

Arabic: حناكل أروشة ورنك / حنا رمشلك ورنك [ħa nākul qarqūšit widnak or ħa nqarmišlak widnak]

Italian: Ti mangio il lobo degli orecchi.

English: -

American: Cp. I'll bite your ear off.

German: -

French: -

2. **Naqlagħlek widnejk**, I'll pull off your ears.

Arabic: حنالع ورنك / ورنك [ħa-naqla' widānak/widnak]

Italian: Ti stacco gli orecchi (e te li faccio mangiare).

English: Cp. I'll pull your ears for you (i.e. reprimand).

American: Cp. I'll pull off your ears.

German: Ich ziehe dir die Ohren lang or Ich schneide dir die Ohren ab.

French: Viens que je te tire les oreilles.

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I'll box your ears.

American: I'll give you a cauliflower ear; or I'll bat you on the ears.

German: Du kriegst eine Ohrfeige or Ich gebe dir eine Ohrfeige.

French: Je te mettrai la tête entre les deux oreilles.

HALQ (<Ar. حَنَق , throat)/Mouth

1. **Naghtik daqqa go halqek**, I'll give you a blow on your mouth.

Arabic: -

Italian: -

English: I'll give you a smack in the mouth.

American: -

German: -

French: -

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I'll smash you in the kisser (mouth) - or I'll wash your mouth with soap (mother to child) or shut your gob (mouth) - I'll bash you in the cake hole (bughole=mouth) - I'll give you a split lip.

American: I'll wash your mouth with soap.

LSIEN (<Ar. لِسَان)/Tongue

1. **Naqlaghlek (nahraqlek) ilsienek**, I'll pull out (burn) your tongue.

Arabic: حنقرتك لسانك بنار [ħa neħraqlak lisānak bin-nār]

Italian: Ti strappo la lingua.

English: No equivalence for Maltese expression, but cp. dogerell "Tell-tale tit, your tongue shall be split, and every little dog in town (puppy dog) shall have a little bit (school children to a tell-tale).

American: I'll pull out your tongue. Cp. also I'll bite your tongue off.

German: -

French: -

2. **Li kien Alla jahraqlek (inixxiflek) ilsienek**, would God burn your tongue.

Arabic: رَبَّنَا حَرِّأ (يَأْطَع) لِسَانَكَ [rabbina jeħraq (jeqta') lisānak]

Italian: Dio ti faccia seccare la lingua (che ti si secchi la lingua).

English: -

American: Cp. May you burn your tongue (to a greedy eater).

German: -

French: -

3. **Naqtaghlek il-ħajta ta' Isienek**, I'll cut the thread under your tongue.

Arabic: -

Italian: Ti taglio il filo della lingua.

English: -

American: -

German: -

French: Cp. Je t'arracherai la langue.

4. **Nirrah ilsienek bejn snienek**, May your tongue get stuck between your teeth.

Arabic: -

Italian: Ti si secchi la lingua (tra i denti), (chiaccherona).

English: -

American: Cp. May your tongue get stuck to the roof of your mouth or May you bite your tongue. (In Maltese **igdem ilsienek** is a warning to someone who does not think before he speaks).

German: -

French: -

5. **Nirrah ilsienek jinxef**, May your tongue dry up or wither away.

Arabic: -
Italian: -
English: -
American: -
German: -
French: Cp. Je te ferai avaler ta langue.

IMNIEHER (<Ar. مَنَاحِرَ)/Nose

1. Nigdimlek imniehrek u nobżoqhulek f'wiċċek, I'll bite your nose and spit it in your face.

Arabic: -
Italian: Ti stacco il naso e te lo sputo in faccia.
English: -
American: -
German: -
French: -

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I'll punch you in the nose - I'll give you a bloody nose - I'll biff you on the boko (girl) - I'll stot you on the beak (Scots).
American: I'll punch you in the nose - I'll give you a bloody nose - I'll twist (tweak) your nose; You'll get your nose caught in the door (to eavesdropper).
German: Du kriegst einen Nasenstüber.
French: Je te ferai le nez comme une tomate - Tu as qu'à crever la gueule ouverte, les yeux plein de fourmis, le nez plein de mouches.

SNIEN (<Ar. أَسْنَانُ)/Teeth

1. Infarraklek snienek, I'll smash your teeth.

Arabic: حنفرطك (نكسرلك) سنانك [ħa-nfarrattek (nkassarlak) si-nānak]
Italian: Ti spacco (ti cavo) tutti i denti.
English: I'll smash your teeth in.

American: Cp. I'll kick your teeth in.

German: Ich schlage dir die Zähne aus.

French: -

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

Italian: Ti faccio saltare i denti ad uno a uno.

English: I'll give you a mouthful of teeth.

American: How would you like some free dental work? - I'll give you a mouthful of bloody chicklets.

French: -

WİĊĊ (<Ar. وَجْه)/Face

1. Nobżoqlok f'wiċċek, I'll spit in your face.

Arabic: حتف ف وشك [ħa-tiffu fwiššak]

Italian: Ti sputo in faccia.

English: -

American: Cp. I'll fling mud in your face.

German: -

French: Je te crache à la gueule.

2. Nikollok wiċċek, I'll eat your face.

Arabic: -

Italian: Ti mangio la faccia - ti spacco la faccia - ti spacco il muso.

English: -

American: -

German: -

French: -

3. Inkissirlek wiċċek, I'll smash your face.

Arabic: -

Italian: -

English: I'll smash your face in.

American: Cp. I'll step on your face.

German: Ich haue dir eins in die Fresse.

French: Je te casse la gueule.

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I'll push your face through the back of your neck (head)
– I'll spoil your beauty (by slashing a girl's face with a razor).

American: I'll kick you in the face – Wipe that smile off your face or I'll wipe it off for you; I'll grind your face in the dirt.

French: Je te chie sur la gueule – Tu veux mon poing sur la gueule – Ferme ta gueule.

GEDDUM (<Berber udem, face)/Chin

1. **Inkissirlek geddumek**, I'll smash your chin.

Arabic: –

Italian: Ti rompo il mento.

English: Cp. Split him to the chin.

American: I'll smash (box) your chin.

German: Du kriegst einen Kinnhaken – Ich gebe dir einen Kinnhaken.

French: –

2. **Nifqaghlek ix-xedaq**, I'll smash your jaws.

Arabic: –

Italian: –

English: Cp. I'll break your jaw.

American: –

German: Ich haue dir die Schnauze voll.

French: –

GHONQ (<Ar. عُنُق)/Neck

1. **Naqlaghlek ghonqok**, I'll dislocate your neck.

Arabic: حَالَعْلَك (حخلعلك) رَأَيْتَكَ [ħa-qla'lak (kl a'lak) raqabtrak]

Italian: –

English: Cp. I'll break your neck, to which cp. Maltese **ksir il-ghonq**, Italian **rompi collo**, for a 'trouble maker'.

American: I'll break your neck.

French: -

German: -

2. **Nilwilek (il-ġewża) ta' għonqok**, I'll twist your neckbone.

Arabic: حلويلك زأبتك [ħa-lwīlak raqabtak]

Italian: Ti rompo l'osso del collo - ti torco il collo.

English: Cp. I'll screw your neck round.

American: I'll punch in your Adam's apple - I'll wring your neck -
I'll strangle you.

German: -

French: Je te tordrai le cou.

3. **Norbotlok mażżra ma' għonqok**, I'll tie a millstone to your neck.

Arabic: -

Italian: Ti lego una pietra al collo e ti butto nel pozzo (in mare
o in un fiume, che viene nominato [p.es. "in Arno"]).

English: -

American: -

German: -

French: -

GERŻUMA (<Ar. فرجومة) / Throat

1. **Naqlaghlek gerżumtek**, I'll pull out your throat.

Arabic: -

Italian: -

English: -

American: -

German: -

French: -

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

Arabic: حاكل زورك [ħa-ākul zūrak]

Italian: Ti taglio, or ti sego la gola.

English: I'll slit (cut) your throat.

American: I'll cram it down your throat – May it stick in your throat (so you choke to death).

ID (<Ar. يَد)/Hand

1. **Naghtik daqqa ta' ponn u nherrik** (nhassrek, infarkek), I'll strike you with my hand and main you (cripple or smash you).

Arabic: حاطمك بإيدي حنت [ħa-qatṭa'ak bi-īdi ħitat]

Italian: Ti do una manata e ti faccio a pezzi.

English: Cp. I'll break your arm.

American: –

German: –

French: –

2. **Inbiççrek bid-daqqiet li naghtik**, I'll give you such a hard blow that I'll bruise you all over (lit. butcher you).

Arabic: –

Italian: Ti carico di botte.

English: –

American: –

German: –

French: –

3. **Naghtik daqqa ta' fenek**, I'll strike you as one strikes a rabbit. i.e. I'll give you a blow on the nape of your neck.

Arabic: –

Italian: Ti ammazzo come un coniglio.

English: I'll give you a rabbit-punch.

American: –

German: –

French: –

4. **Jaqta' idu**, He makes the sign of cutting his arm half way by slapping the right hand right across between the upper and the lower part of the arm. This is a vulgar custom of Sicilian origin. The gesture, accompanied by the words **Naghtik dan** "I'll give you this", is supposed to represent the penis (phallic symbol).

Arabic: -

Italian: According to my informant, this gesture, followed by *Ti vado in ...*, which is considered very vulgar, occurs in Sicily and Italy.

English: -

American: -

German: -

French: My informant tells me that the same gesture is made in France but nothing is said.

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I'll twist your arm (metaphorically: put pressure on you).

French: Tu veux mon poing sur la gueule.

SIDER (<Ar. صَدْر) / Chest

1. Nifqaghlek il-kaxxa ta' sidrek, I'll smash in your chest (lit. the box of your chest).

Arabic: حَكَسْرَكَ عَضْمَ سَدْرِكَ [ħa kassarɔdak 'aɖm sidrak]

Italian: Ti sfondo il torace.

English: Cp. I'll kick you in the ribs - put the boot in (i.e. kick him in the ribs or the body).

American: -

German: -

French: Je te défoncerai.

ŽAQQ (<Ar. زَق, wine skin) / Belly

1. Naqbdek u nifqaghlek žaqkek, I'll seize you and burst your belly.

Arabic: حَطَّلَعْلَكَ بَطْنَكَ (مَصَارِيْنِكَ) بَرَّة [ħa-ṭalla'lak baṭnak (masarīnak) barra]

Italian: Ti piglio e ti brucio la pancia - Ti apro la pancia e ti cavo le budella - Ti cavo le budella.

English: I'll give you a punch in the bread-basket.

American: I'll kick you in the belly.

German: -

French: Tu veux que je t'étripe?

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I'll have your guts for garters – Hit him below the belt (metaphorically for dirty trick):

SIEQ (<Ar. ساق)/Foot

1. **Daqqa ta' sieq (fuq somok) u nitfghek 'il barra,** I'll give you a kick (on your buttocks) and throw you out.

Arabic: حضريك شلوت أطلعك بره [ħa-ḍrabak šallūt 'aṭalla'ak barra]

Italian: Ti caccio fuori con un calcio nel sedere.

English: –

American: –

German: Ich trete dich vors Schienbein.

French: Je te foutrai dehors avec mon pied au cul.

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: Hey, hold your foot up (stop! from a dog urinating (?)) – I'll tear you limb from limb – I'll tear your limb from Warburton (origin unknown – Cheshire dialect?).

French: Tu vas avoir mon pied au cul. (also Maltese)

FWIED (<Ar. فؤاد)/Liver

1. **Fwiedek nikolhulek,** I'll eat your liver.

Arabic: –

Italian: Ti mangio il fegato.

English: –

American: –

German: –

French: –

SOME GENERIC THREATS

1. **Nimsah (niknes) l-art bik,** I'll wipe (sweep) the floor with you.

Arabic: حمّسح بيك الأرض [ḥa-msah bīk el-ard]

Italian: Con te ci scopo la terra – Di te ne faccio strame.

English: I'll wipe the floor with you.

American: I'll wipe the floor with you.

German: –

French: –

1. **Inkisser jew infarrak kulma hawn bik**, I'll lay my hands on you and smash everything with you.

Arabic: –

Italian: Ti piglio e ti spacco tutto.

English: –

American: –

German: –

French: –

3. **Trid nurik il-qamar fil-bir?** (Malajr nurik il-qamar fil-bir), Do you want me to show you the moon in the well? (I'll soon show you the moon in the well).

Arabic: –

Italian: Ti faccio vedere la luna nel pozzo (in the sense of "to cheat someone").

English: –

American: –

German: –

French: –

4. **Infarrak das-siġġu fuq rasek**, I'll smash this chair on your head.

Arabic: حكّسر الكرسي على راسك [ḥa-kassar il-kursī 'ala rāsak]

Italian: Ti rompo questa sedia sulla testa.

English: –

American: I'll smash this chair on your head.

German: –

French: –

5. **Nirrak tmut zobtu**, May you die suddenly (drop dead).

Arabic: رَبِّنا يَأْكُدك [rabbina yākdak]

Italian: Ti venga un colpo – Ti pigli un accidente.

English: –

American: More commonly "Drop dead – Go to hell – Damn you".

German: –

French: –

6. La ma jīhdokx imqar sa kwarta oħra, If only God would take you away (kill you) at least within the next quarter of an hour (but not more).

Arabic: –

Italian: Se Dio ti facesse sparire almeno per un quarto d'ora.

English: –

American: –

German: –

French: –

7. Li kien Alla jehlisni minnek, I wish God would help me get rid of you (generally a death-wish).

Arabic: رَبِّنا يَجْلَسنا مَنَّك [rabbina jkallaṣna minnak]

Italian: Vorrei che Dio me lo levasse di tomo (me lo togliesse dai piedi).

English: –

American: –

German: –

French: –

8. Nagħmlek trab bis-swat li nagħtik, I'll beat you so hard that I'll turn you into dust.

Arabic: حَمَمك كَتَم [ħa-'milak kufta]

Italian: Ti riduco in polvere.

English: Cp. I'll break every bone in your body, beat you to a pulp.

American: –

German: Cp. Ich schlage dich zu Brei.

French: Je te réduirai en miettes (en poussière).

9. **Inpattihierek minn hawn jew minn hemm**, In one way or another, I'll pay you back.

Arabic: —

Italian: In un modo o nell'altro te la faccio pagare.

English: I'll get my own back.

American: In one way or another I'll pay you back.

German: Cp. Das kriegst du wieder.

French: —

10. **Nagħmilhierek jien**, I'll teach you a lesson you'll never forget.

Arabic: حورريك [ħa-warrīk]

Italian: Me la pagherai.

English: Cp. I'll teach him a lesson.

American: —

German: —

French: —

11. **Issa nurik x'naf nagħmel**, I'll show you what I can do (what I am capable of).

Arabic: حورريك حممك ايه [ħa-warrīk ħa-'millak ēy]

Italian: Ti faccio vedere io quel che ti faccio.

English: —

American: I'll show you what I can do.

German: —

French: —

12. **Stenna ftit ha tara xi nsarraġ**, You wait and see what I am capable of (i.e. I'll show you how I can cut you down to size, pay you back etc.).

Arabic: استته عليه وشوف [stanna 'alayya wi-šūf (+gesture)]

Italian: Aspetta e vedrai che cosa sono capace di fare.

English: —

American: You wait and see what I am capable of doing.

German: -

French: -

13. **Inbewlu tahtu daqs kemm inbezzghu**, I'll frighten him so much that I'll make him wet his trousers.

Arabic: حخلك تشخ على روكك [ħa-kallik tušukħ 'ala rūħak]

Italian: Gli farò una paura tale da fargli riempire i pantaloni.

English: He'll be so scared he'll pee his pants.

American: Cp. I'll beat the shit out of you - I'll frighten him out of his wits.

German: -

French: -

14. **Trid tinzel gharkubbejk (quddiemi) biex tkellimni**, You'll have to get down on your knees to speak to me.

Arabic: -

Italian: Per parlare con me ti dovrai inginocchiare.

English: -

American: -

German: -

French: -

15. **Nivvindikak daqs tazza ilma**, I'll avenge myself on you as easily as I drink a glass of water.

Arabic: -

Italian: Con te ce la faccio come bere un bicchier d'acqua.

English: -

American: -

German: -

French: -

16. **U aqqas jekk naf li nehel ghomri l-habs ghax inpattihielu**, I'll pay him back even if I get a life imprisonment.

Arabic: حاخذ فيك ستشهور سجن [ħa-ākud fik sitt šhur siġn]

Italian: Gliela faccio pagare a costo di beccami l'ergastolo.

English: -

American: (A similar expression occurs.)

German: -

French: -

17. **Noqtlok jekk ma taghmilx kif qed nghidlek**, I'll kill you if you do not do as I tell you.

Arabic: إن مملتش زى ما ألتك حأ تلك [in ma'miltiš zayyi ma qul-tilak ha-qtilak]

Italian: T'ammazzo, se non fai quel che ti dico.

English: -

American: I'll kill you if you do not do as I tell you.

German: Ich schlage dich tot.

French: Fais ce que je te dis ou je te tue.

18. **Inħallik tal-kolp tkun fejn tkun**, I'll strike you (kill you) on the spot wherever you may be.

Arabic: -

Italian: Ti piglio e t'ammazzo dovunque ti trovi.

English: -

American: -

German: Ich schmeisse dich um.

French: -

19. **Nitlob is-saħta ta' Alla fuqek**, I invoke the curse of God upon you.

Arabic: رَبَّنَا يَسْخُطْكَ [rabbina jiskeṭak.]

(This expression is used also in a flattering sense to express admiration.)

Italian: Tu sia maledetto - Dio ti maledica.

English: -

American: -

German: -

French: -

20. **Nqieghdek fil-frisk**, I'll make things hot for you (=I'll make you regret it, make trouble for you, i.e. things difficult for you).

Arabic: -

Italian: Ti renderò la vita impossibile.

English: -

American: (A similar expression occurs.)

German: -

French: -

21. **La ma taqbdex fetha**, I do wish you have a bout of diarrhoea!

Arabic: إن شاء الله يجيلك إسهال [inšālla jiġilek ishāl]

Italian: Ti venisse la diarrea - Ti venisse quindici giorni di correre sottointesse (alla toilette), (un'espressione veneta.)

English: -

American: -

German: -

French: -

22. **La ma tiksirx saqajha hi u ġejja (ittajjarha karozza)**, I do hope she breaks her leg as she comes; or (a car runs her over).

Arabic: إن شاء الله تفرمك عربيّه [inšālla tufrumak 'arabiyya]

Italian: Vorrei che si rompesse una gamba o che una macchina lo mettesse sotto.

English: -

American: Break a leg. (It is very curious that, according to my informant, this is said to actors going on stage as a means of wishing them good luck!)

German: -

French: -

23. **Inqaxxrek (nieklok) haj**, I'll skin (eat) you alive.

Arabic: -

Italian: Ti spello; ti scortico; ti mangio vivo.

English: I'll skin you (him) alive.

American: -

German: Ich ziehe dir das Fell über die Ohren.

French: J'aurai ta peau.

24. **Nghattnek taht saqajja**, I'll crush you under my feet.

Arabic: حند وسك تحت رجليه [ħa-ndūsak taht riġleyya]

Italian: Ti schiaccio sotto i piedi.

English: -

American: -

German: -

French: Je t'écraserai.

25. **Naqsmek (fi tnejn)**, I'll split you (into two).

Arabic: حناطعك نصين [ħa-nqaṭṭa'ak nuṣṣēyn]

Italian: Ti spacco in due pezzi - Ti faccio a pezzi.

English: -

American: I'll break you into two.

German: -

French: -

26. **Nirrah jaqaghlek (u mġar jiġborhulek kelb)**, May it fall down (genital organ) and a dog pick it up for you.

Arabic: -

Italian: Ti taglio i coglioni e li do a mangiare al gatto.

English: -

American: -

German: -

French: -

Other Generic examples unknown in Maltese versions:

Italian: Ti strappo le unghie.

English: Get your finger out (also American) - I'll stamp on your fingers - I'll put you on your back (knock you down) - I'll give you a kick up the arse (also American) - Up your flue (= V sign gesture with 2 figures) - I'll tan your backside - Kick his arse, in the crutch (crotch), on the slims, on the kneecap - Tap his ankles - Blood in the eye (Hungarian for jealousy) - Fee fi fo fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman, Be he alive, or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread - I'll brain

you – I'll beat your brains out – I'll give you a piece of my mind.

American: I'll tear your heart out (and serve it for dinner) – Up yours or Up your jiggy with a ten foot pole, the famous Sicilian gesture and its American diminutive performed with the middle finger 'Go screw yourself' cp. English (above) Up your flue – I'll shit on you – I'll rub shit in your face – Have some cowpat for dinner – I'll kick you in the balls – I'll bite your prick off – Let him cry his guts out until his tongue dries up (Jewish) – May he rot in hell – I'll pound you one – I'll turn you into pulp – I'll slice it off for you (genitals) – I'll chew his ass out – I'll bite off his balls – I'll stuff shit up your cock – I'll shove it down your throat – I'll tie his tongue in knots – I'll chew him out.

German: Ich hau' dir eine 'runter – Ich klebe dir eine, (to which can be added: dass dir Hören und Sehen vergeht – dass du in die Knie gehst) – Ich lege dich aufs Kreuz – Ich trete dich in den Arsch – Ich schlage dich zusammen – Ich spieße dich auf – Ich schmettere dich gegen die Wand – Ich zerschmettere dich – Ich drehe dich in die Wurst – Ich mache Frikassee aus dir – Ich verdresche dich – Du kriegst Dresche.

French: Va t'faire foutre – Je te planterai – Je te tueraï – Je te boufferai – Tu tiens à ta peau? – Je te découperai en rondelles – Je te ferai bouffer tes couilles – Va te faire enculer – Va te faire empapouater chez les Grecs – Au cul la vieille – Fume, c'est du belge – Je te pisse au cul.

These and similar expressions are not to be taken in their literal sense. They are, as I have already said, expressions of intense feelings of anger or irritation. Taken in their literal sense, they would indicate a criminal or violent type of mind, but in the emotional context in which they are uttered, they are no more than vulgar expressions of anger or irritation completely detached from the literal sense of the words used, as in the case of some Latin words used in Maltese as emphatics in a sense completely different from

the literal. An example would be *ghamel ta' lawdemus*, "it rained heavily" or "it rained cats and dogs". Here *ta' lawdemus*, which stands for Latin *Te Laudamus*, "We praise thee" becomes an expression of mere verbal intensity. The same can be said of *nobis* (literal Latin meaning *for us*), in *tah xebgha nobis*. Here *nobis* is used as an emphatic equivalent to English *sound* in a *sound thrashing*. Father Confessor, who may be shocked by such blasphemous expressions, will be less shocked if he understands the semantic function of these expressions as mere emphatics or expletives which are vulgar but not necessarily blasphemous. We have such expressions also in English as e.g. *zooms* (*God's wounds*) and *bloody* (= *by our Lady*) which in today's English are considered as mere emphatics. In Maltese and other languages, swear-words or obscene or blasphemous utterances can be no more than shock words with a meaning quite different to their literal meaning. Pent-up emotions frequently release themselves in violently worded expressions, sometimes uttered with a torrential escalation corresponding to the rise (degrees of irritation and anger) in temperature, which, in a literal sense, would be considered merely vulgar, obscene, irreligious and often sacrilegious.