

POPULAR WITTY RETORTS

by J. AQUILINA

IN the introduction to my *Comparative Dictionary of Maltese Proverbs* (1972), I wrote that 'though rhyme plays an important part in many of them, the strength of a proverb lies in its verbal clinch and rhythm which make it easy to remember and to apply to an appropriate situation when the occasion demands (p. xxiii)'. On p. xxv I wrote 'Some of the proverbial sayings present the features of a riddle. There are a few consisting of a number of phrasal or sentence structure which partake of the nature of a riddle and at the same time they sound like rambling or meaningless talk'. Besides proverbs and riddles one often notices in the conversation of the people the interpolation of what one might describe as apparently non-sensical, but often witty, remarks, the redeeming features of which are either (i) the click generated by the rhyme or (ii) the amusing association of unrelated, and often funny, ideas which carry no evident meaning and which are indeed, so to say, their own end, exercises in amusing, often witty amusement.

In popular peasants' folk songs we notice also the importance attached to the rhyme often at the expense of the meaning. Most folk quatrains, of which hundreds are improvised every year at the folk song competition at Imnarja, which takes place on June 29, can be cut up into two segments of two lines each held together by the rhyme in the first and fourth line but otherwise (not without some exceptions) no logical nexus between the idea conveyed by the first two lines and those in the second. These, like proverbs, can be rhymed or unrhymed and are, in some respect, close to, but by no means similar to, riddles. While a riddle is a sort of brain-teaser, an amusing interpolation in a conversation, of which I am giving a list here, it is not intended to produce an ingenious answer to a tricky question; it is instead intended to click a situation, to strike the attention by the rhyme or the funny image it evokes. Just that and no more. Riddles, in this sense are more like repartees except that they generally sound silly and foolish, (they certainly do so in translation), but are often amusing and funny, curt remarks intended to (i) cut short a conversation or an embarrassing question or (ii) to show up the funny side of a situation or

(iii) to express sarcasm. Some of these rigmaroles, like some of the proverbs, can also be vulgar, though not necessarily obscene. I now give a list of such verbal witty rigmaroles in Maltese with an English translation, in which, naturally, the wit created by the rhyme or the pun in the original text disappears and all that remains is sheer nonsense.

RHYMED RIGMAROLES

1. **Wasal tal-basal**, the onion man has arrived.

Rhyme: *Wasal*, to arrive (he arrived)
(tal-) basal, onion (man).

2. (i) **Ahh kemm hu bard!**/**Għax ma żżewwiġtx u nġbart?**, How cold is it! Why did not you marry and settle down?

This expression, *aħħ kemm hu bard* is used when one is feeling very cold. The reference in the second line may be to the warmth and cosiness of married life.

(ii) **Ahh kemm hu bard/kollu htija ta' Bennard/Bennard ibigh il-labar/minn gos-sodda għal-ġol-qabar**, How cold it is/it is all Bernard's fault/Bernard sells pins/from the bed to the grave.

Rhyme: *labar*, pins
qabar, tomb
Bennard, personal name, Bernard
bard, cold.

3. **Mikiel, fis-sodda kemm tiċkien!**, Michael, how small you grow when you are in bed!

Rhyme: *Mikiel*, personal name, Michael
tiċkien, grow small.

For some strange reason the particular name Michael provokes this rhymed answer.

4. **Qata' xagħru, wiċċu ċkien/u ġie ikrah (isbah) milli kien (baqa' ikrah bħal ma kien)**, He had a haircut, his face grew smaller and he has become uglier (or more beautiful) than he was (remained as ugly as he was).

Rhyme: *ċkien*, grew smaller
kien, was.

A funny remark made to someone who has had a haircut.

5. **Mari għandek bajd?/Habbtu mal-hajt**, Mary, have you got eggs?/

Throw them against the wall.

Rhyme: *bajd*, eggs
bajt, wall.

A teasing remark to a female egg-seller whose name is Mary.

6. **Ghandek ġuħ?**/Mur tax-xjuħ, Are you hungry?/Go to the old people's house.

Rhyme: *ġuħ*, hunger
xjuħ (pl. of *xib*), 'old people'.

7. **Ghandek għatx?**/Mur tal-Mandraġġ, Are you thirsty?/Go to the Manderaggio.

Rhyme: *għatx*, thirst
Mandraġġ, Manderaggio, a slum area in Valletta, now demolished.

8. **Aħħ!**/*iċ-ċejċa bahħ*, Ouch!/No more sweets.

Rhyme: *Aħħ*, Ouch
bahħ, disappear.

This is supposed to be the humorous answer to someone who says 'ouch' after he has been pinched for fun, etc.

9. **X'int thares?**/Lejn wiċċek il-qares, What are you looking at?/At your sour face.

Rhyme: *thares*, to look
qares, sour.

The answer is an expression of irritation by someone who is pulled up because he has been staring at someone too inquisitively.

10. **X'jiġifieri?**/In-nanna bil-bandieri!, What does that mean?/Grandma with the flags!

Rhyme: *jiġifieri*, it means
bandieri, flags.

This is an impatient, or evasive, reply to someone who wants to know the reason why.

11. **Kieku waqa' u kiser siequ!**, 'If' fell down and broke its legs.

Rhyme: *kieku*, if
siequ, his feet.

An answer to someone who says he thinks things might have gone better if circumstances were different, equivalent to English

'If ifs and an's were pots and pans, there'd be no trade for tinkers'.

12. **Kif? Bl-ghaġeb u t-teftif**, God only knows how.

Rhyme: *kif*, how

teftif, groping about. The use of this word is merely for rhyming purposes only.

The untranslatable answer is an evasive or impatient reply to somebody who wants to know how something has happened.

13. **Isa! isa! ghax taqbddek in-nanna Ghisa**, Hurry up, hurry up, because grandma Isa will catch you.

Rhyme: *isa*, be quick

Nanna Ghisa, Grandma Isa.

14. (i) **Ghall-erwieh tal-wiċċ u tal-qiegh**, For the repose of the souls, those on top and those at the bottom.

Rhyme: *erwieh*, souls

qiegh, bottom.

(ii) **Ghall-erwieh ta' Wied Ghammieq**, For the repose of the souls of *Wied Ghammieq* ('Deep Valley').

N.B. *Wied Ghammieq* for *Wied Ghammiq* is the name of a cemetery in the neighbourhood of Haz-Żabbar.

15. **Hekk hu, fejn jieklek hekk**, so it is, scratch where it itches you.

Rhyme: *hekk hu*, so it is

hekk, scratch.

The rhyme *hekk* is dialectal for *hokku*.

16. **Nofs inhar! It-tigieġa fuq in-nar**, It is noon!/The hen is in the cooking pot.

Rhyme: *nofs inhar*, midday

nar, fire.

17. **X'hin hu? Is-siegha fuq il-pinnur**, What time is it? The hour on the stroke.

Rhyme: *hu*, it

pinnur, hands of the clock.

18. **X'gara?/Raġel (or, qassis) ġera wara mara/bass bassa u taj-jarha**, What has happened?/A man (or, a priest) ran after a woman/he broke wind and blew her away.

Rhyme: *gara*, to happen
mara, woman
tajjarha, to blow.

Specimen of coarse popular humour.

19. **Għaliex?/Għall-hara u l-hniex** (or **għall-hara tal-gerfiex**), For what reason?/For shit and worms (or For the shit of the confuser).

Rhyme: *hniex*, worms
għaliex, why
gerfiex, confuser (*Gerfiex* was the nickname of a lazy man from Siggiewi).

A rude answer to someone who wants to know the reason why.
Cp. no. 121.

20. **Allura?/(Sallura)/Aghmel pass u erga' lura**, So what?/('Eel')/Make a pace forward and turn backward.

Rhyme: *Allura*, what then
lura, backwards
sallura, when the question *allura* is followed by *sallura* we have a double rhyme devise in the reply.

This seems to mean 'Why ask what must be done when you know that there is nothing one can do about it'.

21. **Ajma ta' gol-brajma!**, Alas for what is in the pot.

Rhyme: *ajma*
brajma, small pot.

An expression of weariness made light of by reference to the small pot and the food inside it.

22. **Ehe? Kafe (Zokkor) bit-te**, Eh coffee (sugar) with tea.

Rhyme: *eh*, what
kafè, coffee
tè, tea.

An impatient retort to someone who asks questions because he was not listening when the explanation was being given.

23. (i) **Uff x'riha hawn/Min fesa jmur minn hawn./Fesa Ċikku l-keġb./Mill-qalziet hariglu serp**, Ugh what a smell/let him who has broke wind go away/It is Francis the dog who has broken wind/And a snake came out of his trousers.

Rhyme: *hawn*, here

kelb, dog
serp, snake.

This remark is made when someone breaks wind when he is in company. The intention is to make fun of the embarrassing situation.

(ii) **Uff x'riha hawn/Min fesa jmur minn hawn/Fesa s-Sur Ġuże/Ghax irid kikkra kafe**, Ugh what a smell/Let him who has broken wind go away/It must be Master Joe/Because he wants a cup of coffee.

Rhyme: *hawn*, here
Ġuże, personal name, Joseph
kafe, coffee.

(iii) **Uff x'riha hawn/Min ghamilha jmur minn hawn/Ghamilha Pawlu t-Tork/mill-qalziet hariġlu sold**, Ugh what a smell/let him who caused it go away/Paul the Turk caused it/a penny came out of his trousers.

Rhyme: *hawn/hawn*, here
Tork, Turk
sold, Penny.

24. **Il-hamsa daqqu/Aqbadlu żaqqu!**, It is five o'clock/Get hold of his tummy.

Rhyme: *daqqu*, it has struck (time)
żaqqu, tummy (his).

25. **Grazzi!/Il-baħar bnazzi!**, Thank you!/The sea is calm!

Rhyme: *grazzi*, thank you
bnazzi, clear, fair weather.

26. **Ajma ladajma/Kemm batejna (or, rajna) sakemm tlajna**, Alas, we have really had to struggle very hard before we got on top.

Rhyme: *Ladajma*, meaningless word for rhyming
Ajma, Ouch
Tlajna, we went up.

27. **Kemm int bravu!/Daqs pitravu!**, How clever you are!/As clever as a turnip.

Rhyme: *bravu*, clever
pitravu, turnip.

28. **Żutt!/Il-laham mhux perżut**, Meat is not ham.

Rhyme: *zutt*, jocular exclamation
perzutt, ham.

'A' calls 'B' needlessly and when 'B' answers *hawn* 'A' calls out '*zutt*'. 'B' then readily answers as above.

29. *Wiehed tnejn tlieta/Pacikk qabeż mit-tieqa/Gie fuq blata;/*
(kisser) *qasam il-patata*, One two three/Pacikk jumped out of the
window/He landed on a rock/And broke his bottom.

Rhyme: *tlieta*, three
tieqa, window
blata, rock
patata, potato.

30. *Trid tigi mieghi? Tiekol il-hara tieghi*, Do you want to come
with me? You will have to eat my shit.

Rhyme: *miegħi*, with me
tiegħi, mine.

Another example of coarse humour in the irritating use of the
word 'hara'.

31. *Nini nini qal Manini (ħanini)*, Nini, nini, said Manini (my be-
loved one).

Rhyme: *Nini*, 'snooks' in the sense of never
manini, personal name
ħanini, 'my beloved one'.

This expression is uttered while cocking a snook.

32. *Tridu?/Aqbadlu f'idu!*, Do you want him?/Catch him by his
hand!

Rhyme: *Tridu*, do you want him (it)?
f'idu, in his (its) hand.

33. *A, be, ce, l-iskutella (bil-) tal-kafe!*, A, b, c, the coffee (with)
in the cup.

Rhyme: *kafè*, coffee, Sic. *caffèe*
cè, third letter of the alphabet.

34. *L-ghala?/Għal hara tal-baġħla*, Why?/For the dung of the mule.

Rhyme: *ghala*, why
baġħla, mule.

35. *Għid appa/Il-habel skappa!*, Say 'appa'/'The rope has slipped
off.

Rhyme: *Appa*, meaningless word
skappa, slipped off.

Generally an evasive remark by someone who is asked to give something he does not want to give. The origin of this saying may be traced to a Maltese folk tale about a giant that is let down into a well by a boy and when the giant asks him to lift him, the boy answers 'Nothing doing, the rope has slipped away'.

36. **Pawlu pasparawlu/jagħmel foss u jisparawlu**, Paul pasparawlu he makes a noise and they shoot him.

Rhyme: *Pawlu*, personal name Paul
pasparawlu, meaningless word. Just a rhyme device.

37. **Axxa, axxa missieri mastrudaxxa, axxa axxa!**/my father is a carpenter.

Rhyme: *axxa*, meaningless
mastrudaxxa, carpenter.

38. **Anni fuq il-bejt iddoqq u tghanni**, Anne is on the roof playing (the guitar) and singing.

Rhyme: *Anni*, Anne
tghanni, singing.

39. **Ara ġej il-pulizija biex idahhlek għand iz-zija**, Be careful! The policeman is coming to take you to your aunt's home.

Rhyme: *pulizija*, police
zija, aunt.

40. **Storja vitorja/siġġu fuq l-gholja**, History victory/a chair on the hill.

Triple rhyme: *storja*, *vitorja* + *gholja* assonance.
storja, story, history
vitorja, victory
gholja, hill (assonance).

41. **Kilt (kilt u kilt inġid) u xbajt, fastidju 'l hadd ma tajt**, I have eaten and I am quite full and I have caused inconvenience to none.

Rhyme: *xbajt*, quite full (food)
tajt, I gave.

42. **Patta parapatta/qalziet ta' taht kollu mqatta'**, Tit for tat/and your under-pants are all tom.

Rhyme: *parapatta*, meaningless word
mqatta', tom.

43. **Umbaġhad, /Ix-xita u r-raqhad, Then what! /rain and thunder.**

Rhyme: *umbaġhad*, then
raqhad, thunder.

44. **O Sinjur xi grazzja tajtni/kont imghawweġ u ddrittajttni! /Kont musmar u sirt grampun/w issa ġejt kif ghandi nkun, O God what a special grace you have granted me! /I was crooked and you have straightened me /I was a nail and I have become a hook /and now I am as I should be.**

Rhyme: *tajtni*, you have given me
ddrittajttni, you have straightened me
grampun, hook
inkun, I should be.

This is an ironical exclamation by someone who finds himself in a worse condition than he was before.

UNRHYMED RIGMAROLES

1. **Lesta? /Ifflaxxa, Are you ready? /Then flush (the closet).**

2. **Jiena hawn, il-Papa Ruma, u r-Reġina l-Ingilterra, I am here, the Pope is in Rome and the queen is in England.**

3. **Hadt qatġha? /Mur bul fuq xkupa, You had a fright? /Go and piss on a broom.**

The humour of this rigmarole lies in the popular belief that one way of preventing the consequences of a sudden fright, generally jaundice, or shock is by immediately pissing on a broom.

4. **Ahh, qalet il-baqra meta gidimha il-berghud, Ouch, said the cow when she was bitten by a flea.**

A person who suddenly feels pain, as when he gets stung by a needle, and says ouch, very often to make light of the pain, adds the reference to the cow making light of the bite of a flea.

5. **Ghandi ghoxrin sena. /L-ebda hanzir ma jghix daqsek, I am twenty years old. There is not a pig that has yet lived as long.**

This is an amusing reply to someone who declares his birthday.

6. (i) **X'hin hu? /Il-hin tal-bieraħ bhalissa, What time is it? Yesterday's time at this very hour.**

An answer to someone who is always asking the time, or by someone who himself does not know the exact time. cp. no. 7.

(ii) **X'hin hu? Is-siegha. Tifhem f'tal-hmar,** What time is it? One o'clock. You do understand in the donkey's (time). Cp. no. 6.

Used when one wants to pull someone's leg who answers the question 'What time is it?' while an ass is braying.

7. **X'int kwieta!/Biex naqla' santa,** How quiet you are!/To receive a Holy Picture.

Naughty children are often quietened by the promise of a holy picture if they behave well. This answer is often intended to evade certain questions as to the real question why one is keeping quiet.

8. **Sella ghalik./Min?/Il-hmar,** He has sent you his greetings./Who?/The donkey.

9. **Issa, mhux umbaghad/Ghada filghodu mhux illum,** Now, it is not then, tomorrow morning is not today.

Remark to someone who wants to know what he must do next as if in answer to the question 'Now what next?'

10. **Gib dawk il-hamsa. L-ewwel harja li qbadt b'idi,** Give me your hand (lit. five fingers, for a handshake). That is the first shit I have caught in my hand.

Again another example of coarse humour supposed to be funny but it is in fact in bad taste.

11. **Qalbek tajba daqs perzuta,** Your heart is as good as a piece of ham.

12. **Tkun 'l hawn ghaddi 'l hemm! Ikollok b'zonn xi haga ixtriha,** If you will be in the neighbourhood go the other way, and if you need something buy it.

A roundabout way of letting someone know that his visits are not welcomed.

13. (i) **Fejn toqghod?/Bieb u ghatba (Il-bieb mal-hajt u l-ghatba fl-art),** Where do you live?/Close to the door and the threshold. (The door by the wall and the threshold on the floor).

An evasive answer to put off someone who asks us to tell him where we live.

(ii) **Fejn toqghod? Strada çappas, numru çellaq (dellek),** Where do you live?

Again another evasive answer to someone not to tell where one lives. Cp. no. 13(i).

14. **Irfes fuq Malta!**, Tread on Malta!

A remark to someone who treads on one's feet.

15. **Għaliex?/għal hara tal-Gabaj**, Why?/for the shit of Gabaj.

PUNNING RIGMAROLES

1. **Imbilli!/Xarrabni!**, So what?/Wet me all over.

Imbilli, grammatically a conjunction, is made to sound like *bell*, *ibill*, to wet, hence the pun.

2. **Għandek riĥ?/Mur biġhu lil tal-mithna**, Have you got a wind?/Go and sell it to the miller.

The pun is on the double meaning of the word *riĥ*, (i) a cold (*għandu riĥ*, he has got a cold) (ii) wind.

3. **Hadit qatgħa?/Izragħha ful**, Have you had a shock? Go and sow it beans.

The pun is on the double meaning of *qatgħa*, (i) shock. (ii) Plot of land.

4. **Iddejjaqt?/Mur twassa' l-pjazza**, Are you fed up? Go to the square and stretch yourself there.

Pun based on the double meaning of *iddejjaq*, (i) To get fed up. (ii) To become narrow or straightened.

5. **Eee! Ara minn hawn/kemm tara ċar**, See who is here!/How clear you can see from here.

Pun based on the double meaning of *hawn*, (i) here. (ii) quite near.

6. **Hares! Mhux fatat**, Mark you! Not a ghost.

Pun is based on the double meaning of the word *hares*, (i) Look you, imperative of *hares*, to look, to watch. (ii) Ghost, which plays practical jokes on people.

7. **X'nagħmlu? Bħal fil-forn**, What shall we do? Cook (it) as in the oven.

Pun is based on the word *għamel*, (i) To make. (ii) To cook (for example *għamlet stuffat tal-fenek*, she has cooked a rabbit stew. This is an evasive remark made by someone who does not have a ready answer for what must be done next.

8. **Għandi tliet ibniet./Mela aġtathom in-nar**, I have got three daughters./Set them on fire.

Pun is based on the word *tibniet*, (i) daughters, made up, as heard, i.e. by *t marbuta* + *ibniet*, (plural of *bint*). (ii) straw (pl. of *tibna*).

9. **Ghandek ittina tal-laħam**, You owe us money for meat.

Pun is based on the word *ittina* for *tagħtina*, (i) you give us; and for its homophone *it-tina* (ii) buttocks.

10. **Kemm hi tajba!/Mela doqtha?**, How good it is (a joke)! Have you tasted it?

Pun based on the double meaning of *tajba* (i) of good quality. (ii) of a good taste, fruit, etc.

11. **X'ghidt?/jew il-bardħa**, What have you said?/or a pack saddle.

Pun based on the pronunciation of *x'ghidt* 'what have you said', *xedd*, harness and *bardħa*, pack saddle.

12. **Tikolha ommok il-patata?/Hokkielha**, Does your mother eat potato?/scrape it for her.

Pun is based on the double meaning of *patata* (i) potato; (ii) polite word for 'arse', 'buttocks'.

13. **Hadt qatħa/Hawwilha bajtar**, I had such a shock/Have it planted with prickly pears.

Pun is on the word *qatħa*, which means (i) shock in the sense of violent impact creating a disturbing mental impression. (ii) Plot of ground or small piece of a field.

RECENT RIGMAROLES WITH A RHYME PROVIDED BY AN ENGLISH KEYWORD

1. **Please. Xommi l-qmis**, Please, smell my shirt.

This is intended to make fun of those who, while they speak Maltese, use the word please as an expression of politeness.

Rhyme: *Please/qmis*, shirt.

2. **Take it easy, bħall-ħgliži**, Take it easy like the English people do.

Rhyme: *Easy/ħgliži*, English people.

3. **Żiemel horse u l-iskola tmur bil-fors**, A horse is a horse, and you have got to go to school.

Rhyme: *Horse/(bil-)fors*, (by) force.

4. **Happy Christmas, same to you, / Mur hu banju int u hu, Happy Christmas, same to you, / take a bath you and he.**

Rhyme: *You/hu, he.*

5. **What? / Hara fil-bott, What? / Shit in the pot.**

Rhyme: *What/bott, pot.*

6. **Hello, hello, hello / Ċettina marret tghum / hadet is-siġġu maghha / ghat-taparsi l-gharus taghha, Hello, hello, hello / Connie went to swim / she took the chair with her / pretending it to be her bridegroom.**

Rhyme: *Hello/tghum, she swims.*

7. **Once upon a time Ċikku waqa' fit-tajn, Once upon a time Francis fell into the mud.**

Rhyme: *time/tajn, mud.*

8. **Thank you very much / f'imniehrek ghandek taċċ, Thank you very much / on your nose you have got a small nail.**

Rhyme: *much/taċċ, small nail.*

9. (i) **One / il-harufa ta' San Ġwann, One / the lamb of St. John.**

Rhyme: *One/San Ġwann, St. John.*

(ii) **Two / il-palazz tal-Gvernatur, Two / the palace of the Governor.**

Rhyme: *Two/Gvernatur, Governor.*

(iii) **Three / iż-żokra ta' Mari, Three / The navel of Mary.**

Rhyme: *three/Mari, Mary.*

(iv) **Four / iż-żokra ta' Vitor, Four / the navel of Vitor.**

Rhyme: *Four/Vitor, Victoria.*

(v) **Five / la xitwa lanqas sajjf, Five / Neither winter nor summer.**

Rhyme: *Five/sajj, summer.*

(vi) **Six / La xitwa lanqas silġ, Six / Neither rain nor snow.**

Rhyme: *six/silġ, snow.*

(vii) **Seven, it-tiġieġa fuq id-demel, Seven / the hen on the manure.**

Rhyme: *seven/demel, manure.*

(viii) **Eight, it-tiġieġa fuq il-bejt, Eight / the hen on the roof.**

Rhyme: *Eight/bejt, roof.*

(ix) **Nine, la xita lanqas tajn, Nine / neither rain nor mud.**

Rhyme: *Nine/tajn, mud.*

(x) **Ten, intik daqqa ntajrek 'l hemm, Ten/I'll give you a blow and send you sprawling.**

Rhyme: *ten/hemm, away.*

RHYMED RIGMAROLES WOVEN ROUND RELIGIOUS WORDS

1. **Gheżiež Uliedi, taqil ghulix fwiedi, My dear children, do not tire me to death (lit. Don't tear out my liver).**

Rhyme: *uliedi, children*
fwiedi, liver.

This rigmarole makes fun of the phrase 'dear beloved children' used frequently at the beginning of a Bishop's or Parish Priest's sermon.

2. **Huti l-gheżiež, la tkunux qżież, My dear brothers and sisters, do not be disgusting.**

Rhyme: *gheżiež, dear ones*
qżież, disgusting.

Again this rigmarole makes fun of the phrase 'dear brothers and sisters' at the beginning of a priest's sermon.

3. **Insara devoti, imsaren tal-vopi, Devout Christians, entrails of a fish.**

Rhyme: *devoti, devout*
vopi, boops, kind of fish.

4. (i) **Qaddisa Marija Omm Alla/Dun Ġużepp ghandu gundalla/'tlob ghalina midinbin/dellikhielu bil-butir, Hail Mary, Mother of God/Father Joseph has a swelling on his forehead/pray for us sinners, smear it (swelling) with butter.**

Rhyme: *Alla, God*
gundalla, a swelling
midinbin, sinners
butir, butter.

This doggerell is a mixture of extracts from a well-known religious prayer and profane words.

(ii) **Qaddisa Marija Omm Alla, iftah il-bieb u itlaq 'l barra, Hail Mary, Mother of God, open the door and go away (assonance).**

(iii) **Qaddisa Marija Omm Alla, il-Kappillan keċċieni 'l barra, Hail Mary, Mother of God, the Parish Priest sent me away.**

The first part of nos. 4, 4ii, 4iii, is the first line of the prayer

'Hail Mary'. The last line in no. 4 is from the same prayer, i.e. pray for us sinners.

5. **Dominus Vobiscum, il-qargha ta' Frangisku**, Dominus Vobiscum, the baldhead of Francis.

Rhyme: Vobiscum/*Frangisku*, personal name Francis.

Dominus Vobiscum, 'God be with you' are words uttered by the priest whilst saying the mass.

WEEK DAYS' RIGMAROLES

1. (i) **It-tlieta/in-nanna ftieta**, Tuesday/grandma is a sop.

Rhyme: *tlieta*, Tuesday
ftieta, sop.

Erbgha/il-hara tal-kelba, Wednesday/the shit of the bitch.

Rhyme: *Erbgha*, Wednesday
kelba, bitch.

Hamis, ommok bla qmis/u missierek Ġappuniż, Thursday, your mother without her nightgown and your father is a Jap.

Rhyme: *qmis*, shirt
Ġappuniż, Japanese.

Ġimgha/ġib 'l ommok ha nigdimha, Friday/bring your mother to bite her.

Rhyme: *Ġimgha*, Friday
nigdimha, bite her.

Another fuller variant in a more serious tone is the following list:

1. (ii) **It-Tnejn ta' l-erwieh**, Monday – All Soul's day.

It-Tlieta ta' Sant'Anna, Tuesday – St. Anne's day.

L-Erbgha tal-Karmnu, Wednesday – the day of Our Lady of Mt. Camel.

Il-Hamis ta' l-Ispirtu s-Santu, Thursday – the day of the Holy Ghost.

Il-Ġimgha tal-passjoni, Friday – Passion day.

Is-Sibt tal-Kuncizzjoni, Saturday – Conception day.

Il-Hadd m'hu ta' hadd ghax il-festa ta' kulhadd, Sunday belongs to no one because it is everybody's feast (i.e. day off).