

Indexicality of polyglot Yabob ethnopop

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Abstract: Polyglot is a common linguistic life to many parts of Papua New Guinea where small-scale local tongues, Tok Pisin and English are spoken to form multiple strata of social activities. This paper focuses upon the words sung in the Melanesian ethnopop, known as *lokol singsing*, of Yabob village, Madang Province. In a significant number of songs the languages are mixed fragmentarily or with arrangements of obsolete words of traditional dances. Such mixture of languages, which is done at a time to a chaotic extent, in fact liberates a non-referential kind of indexicality that enables to generate 'meanings' according to the audiences' imagination beyond speech community.

Key words: Polyglot, Indexicality, Music, Papua New Guinea

Introduction

The *lokol singsing* is a Tok Pisin term for Melanesian ethnopop which has been in widely circulation as a postcolonial phenomenon since the independence of Papua New Guinea (PNG) in 1975; today, the music has been widely available nationwide through the radio, live performance, cassettes and recently by download. A significant body of the *lokol singsing* are sung in small-scale local languages, not in Tok Pisin, despite that the lingua franca has been commonly spoken as Creole. In addition, the *lokol singsing* frequently mix small-scale language, Tok Pisin and English, and it is not uncommon at all to sing in obscure words and phrases or vocables adopted from traditional dances with electronically refashioned melody and beat. Whereas the messages and addresses sung in a small-scale language remain 'lost in translation' outside of its speech community, the artists prefer to singing it since everyday life experience in village consists indispensable core of creativity. The locals often describe such songs as *salim tingting*, literally "sending out one's own feelings/thoughts". In the sentiment of *salim tingting* the 'meaning' of songs does not depend on deciphering syntax and comprehending contents of the text but is generated from the nuances which the enunciations evoke a restored memory of everyday life. In fact, these songs are on the nationally broadcasted hit-chart radio programs without any translations

or introduction, and nightly dance sessions audiences' taste for the tunes in local languages is apparent. In appreciating the *lokol singsing*, it is indispensable for the audience to recognise the syllables as phonetically Melanesian since the power and value of the music solely lies in the feel of native voices addressing. This further indicates that to the audience which includes the grassroots artists themselves, the "contents" of *lokol singsing* depends on indexicality of sound-shape being enounced in the addressing voice. To the audience singing voice addresses: It does not address something, just addresses.

The *lokol singsing* partakes of a double cognitive-cultural apparatus: *wantok* ideology and fragment-hearing (Suwa 2001, 2005, 2012). *Wantok* ideology (*wantok*: fellows or relatives in Tok Pisin) is iconicity in which Melanesian singing subject, is imagined from enunciation in reconstructing a Melanesian grassroots' face. This generative process of postcolonial Melanesian cultural discourses is actually preconditioned by the lingua franca Tok Pisin. Even though the message in the small-scale language never communicates properly beyond language communities, the audience feels a face of Melanesian grassroots whose everyday life reality, relationships, passion and all, must form affinity with each other. In a spectrum of distant coral islands, rainforests in the rugged mountains, swampy lowlands, coastal plantations or meticulous gardens of urban squatters, these addresses are recognised as the Melanesian enunciation of singing voice, a grassroots Melanesian icon. *Wantok* ideology is a symbolic contingency of semblance to generate iconic reality where ethnic category of a Them-versus-Us dichotomy can also operate to post-colonial social reality: Western pops copied by the local bands would face rejection in which intoxicated crowd might hurl empty beer bottles at the band, yelling: "Stop playing the Whiteman's music and start PNG one".

On the other, fragment-hearing is indexicality of aural cognition which locates the centre or core of signification in any given segment or fragment in the song text. The audience does not properly decipher message from the singing voice due to a complexity of circumstances which makes concentrated listening difficult and unlikely. The confusion in the outdoor or village sound environment caused by broken amplifier, intrusion of natural and human noise, intoxication during dancing sessions, and eavesdropping from the neighbour's radio induces listening to fragmentary bits of singing voice, instead of 'making sense' out of the entire text. Fragment-hearing mediates a discrepancy among the performer and audience by displacing the original text and in a way recomposing it anew in order to embed *salim tingting* in the here-and-now. Some Tok Pisin loan words such as *sore/sori* (sorry or sorrow) in an emphatic tone of addressing voice would determine the overall atmosphere of the song. Repetitive, minimal wording borrowed from traditional dances

would produce an ingenuous feel of beat. In this regard, fragment-hearing is reminiscent of Silverstein's discussions on Peirce's idea of index (Silverstein 1979) that a sign is an aspect of performative interaction. The words in polyglot songs are an index of non-referentiality, and as the words are displaced in meanings the addressing voice generates an experience of wholeness in performance.

Some aspects of the power of singing have been presented in previous monographs on PNG. Feld found what he identifies as "iconicity" in Kaluli songs that induces emotional reaction through trilogy of sorrow, hunger and an image of bird in the bush (Feld 1990, 1994). Borrowing from Barthes's phrase "resistance to meaning" (Barthes 1990:32), Maschio described how much Rauto mourning songs are filled with allusions and how far it constructs the world of meanings and senses, as these songs are rich in "complexity, even opacity, of emotion" despite their shortness (Maschio 1994: 27). Magne left a note on Goroka music, ritual and speech and identified shifting discourse between Arikano and Tok Pisin in performances, that create a polyglot reality (Magne 1995). Among Yabob *lokol singsing* similar aspects have been seen especially its preference of short and repetitive phrases, complex and multivocal discourses, and relatively loosened syntax. The Yabob polyglot song is aesthetics of Melanesian ethnopop in that the power of addressing is evoked by enunciation among the audience beyond the original speech community to move its audience. Therefore, the "iconicity of style" or "opacity" of symbols in the monolingual context, as the previous literature discussed, requires rethinking on a deeper, polyglot plane.

In order to take a closer look into indexicality of the *lokol singsing*, this paper focuses on analysis of polyglot song texts in the Yabob language, a Western Oceanic. Yabob is regularly spoken by less than 3,000 people who reside in Yabob village, which locates 10 kilometres south of the coast of downtown Madang. Linguistically, Yabob is often described as a variety of its neighbour Bilbil and closely related to Bel (Gedaged), which had been a common language in the north of the town with an orthography composed by the Lutheran mission. Most Yabob villagers choose to speak Tok Pisin regularly since many of them are in fact Creole and would comprehend Yabob to a limited extent or use it only fragmentarily, despite that Yabob song texts are composed and deciphered properly. Tok Pisin translation of Yabob transcript was instructed by native speakers during a field research between 1997 and 1998.

Notes on Transcription

1) Legends

Darling	English basically.
<i>Lewa</i>	Tok Pisin or borrowed word from English.
<u><i>Bubengu</i></u>	Yabob in polyglot text.
<u><i>Ulini</i></u>	A non-Yabob local language in polyglot text.

2) English translation is provided after the entire transcription.

3) Stanza and line break in transcription is mostly based upon melodic phrasing.

4) Yabob morphological devices such as *-en*, *-de*, *-lak*, *-lon*, *-oi*, *-wi*, etc. are jointly spelled with the noun as in Bel (Dempwolf n.d). For the others spelling conventions follows transcription by the speakers.

1. Overview

The *lokol singsing*, also known as the power band, turned to electronic as it took over the string band in the 1980. The Pacific string band music, a polyphonic ensemble of the guitars and ukulele, was introduced in Madang town by Melanesian ex-servicemen, seamen, bureaucrats and the expatriates shortly after the Pacific war. The music was an easy pastime and played for social dance at home parties. As it marked a sign of time, the sound quickly attracted the village youth; by 1970 the string band became common to nearly every community in vicinity of town and inter-village rivalry heated up in music competitions sparked creative energy. The text of string band songs is sung in a single language like its counterpart in the Pacific; its syntax is intact, coherent and at times highly lyrical, and the narrative is concentrated on telling a story or sending out a message so that the public can share (Suwa 2010). The power band inherited the framework of the string bands in that the bands are usually formed by clansmen and part of the repertoire is borrowed. Still, experiments with the electronic devices, new musical ideas from the West such as the rock, reggae, pop and the club music culture developed the *lokol singsing* into a distinct genre by 1990. The introduction of modern socio-economic systems such as broadcasting network, transportation, cash economy as well as supply of electricity contributed to make the *lokol singsing* a nationwide phenomenon, and the “six-to-six” nightly dance party hosted by local entrepreneurs has become a common low-cost entertainment.

Table 1 shows an overview of the sample data obtained from commercial cassette recordings of 101 *lokol singsings* performed by Yabob power bands between 1990 and 1998 (See “List of Cassette Recordings”). Most of them were released from a local music studio

in town. Substantial 71 songs (70.3%) are sung in the native Yabob partially or entirely, followed by Tok Pisin with 55 songs (54.5%). Polyglot texts are found in nearly a half of the samples, 45 songs (44.6%). English is hardly used alone but in phrases combined with Yabob and Tok Pisin. Arrangement of traditional dances is found in 29 songs (28.7%), most of which occupies the entire text.

Table 1 Languages of Yabob Song Text¹

Language Combination	Number of Cases	Percentage (%)
Yabob only*	37	36.6
Yabob / Tok Pisin	18	17.7
Yabob / Tok Pisin / English	13	12.7
Tok Pisin only	12	12.0
Tok Pisin / English	3	3.0
Yabob / TP/ Other language	2	2.0
Yabob / English	1	1.0
English only	1	1.0
Other local language only**	5	5.0
Other local language polyglot***	9	9.0
Total	101	100.0

*16 arrangements of Yabob traditional dance are included.

** All 5 songs are rendition from traditional dances.

*** All 9 songs combine Tok Pisin with/out English.

Defining a song in 'local language' has to be taken broadly. A number of Yabob traditional dances are transmitted from other communities, and they are frequently sung in undecipherable syllables and vocables. However, these cases are definitely *bilong ples*, or belonging to the community: The children would join and learn the dance from early childhood and the knowledge is transmitted. Other languages are essentially old string band tunes or traditional dances learned from a parent, spouse, lover or fellow *wantok*. Translation can be hardly obtained: The band would play the song without knowing what the words mean.

2. Local things 'lost in translation'

2.1 Local words irreplaceable

Tok Pisin songs tend to sing in plain common speech and display a highly discursive and coherent syntax; they are almost devoid of poetical devices such as rhyme, syllabic

metre, figure of speech, juxtaposition etc. As a result, Tok Pisin sentences require higher redundancy in order to communicate properly than the local language whose speech community is closely knitted and its context intimate. Tok Pisin songs have to indicate the subject and object, and the prepositions are always required to indicate the predicate (TT42):

*Longpela taim mi no lukim pes bilong yu. Yu stap longwe, yu stap longwe long mi
Mi save lukim ol photos bilong yu tasol. Mi save lukim na mi save tingim yu tasol.
Tasol yu no istap klostu long mi, yu stap longwe tru long mi, mi no save bai mi lukim yu o
nogat.*

For a long time I have not seen your face. You are far away; you are far away from me
I only see your photos. I see them and only thinking about you
But you are not near me. You are far away from me. I do not know if I will ever see you.

(*Longpela Taim*, David Ongkau)

This might discourage some composers. Tok Pisin requires more redundancy than the local languages because of relatively smaller variety of syllables and idioms for signifying local things; as it is shown above its grammar that requires specifying subject, object or tense in each sentence or phrase is obviously another reason. The following example highlights that translating Yabob text to Tok Pisin can be nearly impossible at times without sacrificing the original nuance. On the left original Yobob text is shown with a suggestion of translation in Tok Pisin, not in the actual performance, on the right. Notice, in these short phrases, how little words this poor orphan needs to express his despair and how condense the image he conveys (TT21).

<u><i>Bi a, rien so pia mon</i></u>	O Anti, yu noken krosim mi tumas
<u><i>Konom hangu nalon heideg</i></u>	Mi yangpela yet na mi no save
<u><i>Bigabeg hangu</i></u>	Mi nogat mamapapa
<u><i>Piadep panaup neni.</i></u>	Yu krosim mi orait na givim mi kaikai.

O Auntie, do not scold me so much
For I am so little I do not know (how to behave)
I am an orphan
You can scold me but then give me something to eat.

(*Bi A*, Sandie Gabriel)

The desperate protest of the hungry orphan is communicable to Yabob audience without being clearly informed of its background: The little boy's mother died from sickness, his depressed father hanged himself, and one day his aunt (the composer's mother) suspended his meal as punishment for picking up dirty leftover on the ground. When the text is sung in an emotional tone of voice, in just one word it can communicate an intense image of the *bigabeg*, orphan,² which amalgamates loss, hunger, sorrow, misery, insecurity and alienation. If Tok Pisin *pikinini i nogat mamapapa* (child without mother and father, i.e. an orphan) was replaced, its awkward sound would turn away *wantok* audience. The power of closing line in just three words *piadep panaup ηeni* would be lost in any translations.

2.2 Condensed images

The following *Nimor Wag* is another example of how images can be condensed in local language. The word cannot be replaced by Tok Pisin *kanu*. A *wag* is nothing more than Yabob's *wag* whereas the *kanu* can be too abstract to specify if it is from the Trobriands, the Sepik, Motu or Manus. The Yabob poet chose *wag* because the word immediately visualises an image of Yabob canoe paddling or an ancient one sailing through Yabob waters. *Wag* is the source *salim singting* in which the foremost value of *lokol singsing* lies since it figuratively means the dead in mourning as well. The rhetoric of the following lines in fact resembles women's ritual cry (TT66):

Dalon hei e ηabol inan hei e. Hangu Nimor wag domden mok rebesine?

Dolou bagenlon iyo wag, iyo wag, iyo wag ipadal ile.

Hangu Nimor wag, domden masde? Wug wabip ηalonp e.

Yabob buruwanlon, Mareg buruwanlon, iyo wag ipadal ile.

I do not know what to tell you. Where has my canoe Nimor gone away?

Against the *dolou* wind, the canoe sails, sails, the canoe sails and is gone away.³

Nimor, my canoe, where are you? Answer back to me so I can hear from you!

In the middle of Yabob waters, Mareg waters, the canoe sails and is gone away.

(*Nimor Wag*, Sandie Gabriel)

In this piece of *sore singsing*, or lament, beyond the horizon there is the realm of the dead, as it had been believed by the coastal people. In olden times, a broken canoe would be split in half to be used as a stretcher to carry the body for burial. The name of the canoe, taken after Yabob sub-clan Kakon Nimor-Darem, expresses *wantok* tie. *Dolou* brings rain and calm sea, and is the wind for a long trading quest. The local toponyms become

remembrance of the sentiment, and they eternally evoke *salim tingting*. They also visualise the voyage of the canoe sailing between Yabob and Mareg islands. As a result, the song dramatises the old man's preparation for death in calmness in an image of traveller for bon voyage, which Tok Pisin could have never properly articulated.

2.3 Appropriation of traditional dances

The traditional dance, is called *singsing tumbuna* in Tok Pisin, which means "ancestor's song". In Yabob there are three dance pieces known today and two of which are in practice. Since their ownership belongs to the Yabob people collectively the local artists of *lokol singsing* freely appropriate the traditional. In arrangement, the words are retained but applied with virtually unrelated rhythm, often the reggae, with new melodic contours. The traditional dances are arranged only after the age of *lokol singsing* since the string band is originally performed for social dances of highly formalised styles such as the waltz, foxtrot, country dance, swing, etc. In the New Guinea coast traditional dance pieces are composed of a chain of brief, highly repetitive sections of very short phrases. The following is a rendition of a section from *Daik*, one of the Yabob *singsing tumbuna*. While the people can explain that the piece was originally sung as nightly courtship dancing for the unmarried, the exact meaning of the words is completely obsolete (TT67):

Daik tali ruŋ e ruŋ e. Daik tali ruŋ e ruŋ e.

Daik daik a tal e ruŋ e ruŋ e. O daik a kumba ruŋ e ruŋ e.

(*Daik*, Mesi Gauns)

Indeterminacy of meaning allows multiple association and interpretations, which makes up a kind of polyphony. The locals offered a range of opinion on the meaning of the obsolete Yabob word *sirori* as it appears in rendition below (TT66):

Sirori o, sirori e, waŋ e damon a. Sirori o, sirori e, sam e damon a.

Barnacles, barnacles, on the head of the canoe (outrigger).

(*Sirori E*, Kale Gadagad)

As it turned out, a *sirori* means a barnacle. Another said that *sirori* must be the traditional ornament made of pig tusks. Another contemplated that it is a corruption of *sori*, the Tok Pisin word to mean sorrow. All the versions could definitely make sense in the context here since the traditional reference to the canoe implies a long, celebrated voyage of inter-tribal trade and the departure evokes the sorrow of loss. The appropriation from the *singsing*

tumbuna, therefore, stimulates imagination thanks to fragment-hearing that instantly displaces syntactical organisation in creating a new one.

In fact, the locals make positive aesthetical judgement on the repetition that it would *strongim* (intensify) the sentiment conveyed. Repetition of the short phasing of the *singsing tumbuna* might have inspired composers creativity. The following was played with an upbeat rhythm as it became a favourite dance piece. In actual performance each phrase and line is repeated many times so that *ad* (the Sun) and *bigabeg* (an orphan, derelict) would stand out (TT42):

Ad o, ad o, ad o mugudude. Bigabeg, bigabeg burulon mon ηatol pitul hunia
Ma uyan hei mamok alan me ηeni e. Ad idude, ad idude naug ηubulig ηene heig ilug imul.

The Sun, Sun, Sun falls down. Orphan, orphan I wander in the bush but hungry
 There is no good food and I only eat old taro. The Sun goes down; I turn my face and think
 about going home.

(*Ad-O, Ad-O* Sandie Gabriel)

Just like the words of traditional dances are unable to locate exact meanings, the meaning of this song is also obscure, unless one is informed about a real-life story of the composer who stole a housewife to marry and escaped in the bush like an orphan, scavenging pieces of taro left on the field to avoid payback attack. The sense of beat and allusion of scorching sunlight on the face of miserable orphan is what a Yabob villager can feel *salim tingting*.

2.4 Polyphonic discourses

Discourse of Yabob songs can be polyphonic when multiple layers of meaning are involved. The artists include them in their cassette with an emphatic tone of singing voice; as a consequence, enunciation of the singing voice activates the fragment-hearing. Polyphony takes place as the small-scale language condenses images in micro-scale interactions over time in multiplicity, whereas expressions in Tok Pisin inevitably generalise its content as if the local density of image is incessantly centrifuging. As a result, singing in the local language evokes even deeper images which drive the artists for further performance and composition. The following is one of the numerous examples (TT66):

Nen a e mala bisap a, hotu me nehi e ge mere me hangu sain pisini
Timtain mesi e wi timudin manin mok, nen a e so uruti mon ηame hinan tibun.
Nen ηame Panudomon me hinan, nen a e so uruti mon ηame hinan tibun.

Mama, do not cry: Look around the place, as my life is ending
The sea has become calm and the breeze is blowing so softly: Mama, do not cry, for this shows my power.

Mama, I am the man of Panudomon: Mama, do not cry, for this shows my power.

(*Nen a*, Sandie Gabriel)

The addresser of the song is an old man from Bilbil on his deathbed. He is from the Panudomon clan who inherits sorcery to control the weather for safe voyage. The composer heard these words at the funeral as the old man's daughter, who is actually the "Mama" addressed in the text, were uttering them as ritual cry.⁴ His *wantok* audience can add up another voice in the polyphony in memory of Sandie Gabriel himself who died as a victim of traffic accident. Yabob songs in fact have many examples of polyphony similar to *Nen A* like aforementioned *Bi A*. As it has been noted, for uninformed Melanesian audiences, Yabob or non-Yabob, the polyphony echoes each other in the emotional tone of voice addressing, and the musical world in their own *wantok* context resonates in multiplicity of the memory in everyday life.

3. Polyglot Songs

3.1 The gospel as possible origin of polyglot songs

Polyglot song texts are also found among Christian devotional songs for they tend to conserve older original texts sung in local languages even after it is sung in Tok Pisin English. The original language was perhaps saved for the devoted old members for the sake of comprehension. Around Madang, the Lutheran hymn *Kanam* is still sung in the original Karkar languages where one of the first missions was built. Sacred songs are also sung in Bel, in which a number of early gospels were initially composed. This gospel below is in Bel followed by a verse in Tok Pisin:

O Iesus awag ulon, Iesus awag ulon. Ulon o tamol gawai tia. Iesus awag ulon.

O Jisas yu wari mi, Jisas yu wari mi. Harim mi o tarangu rabis man. Jisas yu wari mi.

O Jesus, have mercy! Jesus, have mercy! Hear me the poor wretched one. Jesus, have mercy!

(*O Iesus Awag Ulon*, Traditional)

The following is an example from secular old string band tune which employs in Tok Pisin, Yabob and Motu. In making his production in Mort Moresby, the Yabob composer added a line in Motu to sing this short, innocent tune (CHM1136):

Ayo papa ayo mama, meri ya i kukim mi. Bai mi mekim wanem? Maski ya bai mi hangamap.

Ayo nen o ayo mam o, porohume me meri ya. Dodog nonowi e? Hagad nakukiwi.

Lau sinagu lau tamagu o, kekeni dekanai lau mase. Daka lau kara ya? Maksi ya bai mi hangamap.

*Ayo Mommy, ayo Daddy, the girl is burning me up. What should I do? Never mind if I hang myself!*⁵

(*Ayo Papa Ayo Mama*, Willie Tropu)

3.2 *Sore*: Tok Pisin loan words

The Tok Pisin word *sore* (also spelled and pronounced *sori*), which derives from English “sorry”, frequently appears in the *lokol singsing* as it also used in everyday conversation. Aside from meaning sorrow, *sore* is much more often used as an exclamation to contain a mixture of feelings of yearning, affection, loss, loneliness, despair or regret. Inclusion of *sore* in Yabob text as a borrowed word creates an effect to signify the index of singing subject in just one word (TT73):

O sori hangu panu bala uyan mok e ien de. (Repeat)

Mesi manini manini mok. Usop tadup wag tasop tala e. Hangu panu me bala mok e.

No ken lusim tingting long Beautiful Madang.

Oh, *sori*, my island! There are beautiful things (Repeat)

The sea is so beautifully calm. Come, paddle your canoe and let's go. My island is a beautiful place.

Do not forget about Beautiful Madang.

(*Hangu Panu*, John Saul)

In the song above, the syllables of *sori* is placed in the very beginning, stretched for about three seconds in a vibrating, wavy tone of voice as if the singer is addressing as he weeps. The last line is delivered in Tok Pisin to include English nickname Beautiful Madang appears as an envoy after the verse was repeated for three times.

The following also employs the addressing *sori* at the beginning of the verse to determine the overall atmosphere. The broken underline is in Amele spoken inland of Yabob (TT37):

Sori o ulini e ubada Lae niugeno, ubada Lae niugeno.

Sori o tirungu e nagan Laede nalawi, nagan Laede nalawi.

Sapos yu no lukim mi long hia tingting tasol oltaim long mi o, tingting tasol oltaim long mi o.

Sori, oh, my friend! I am about to go for Lae, I am about to go for Lae

Sori, oh, my friend! I am about to go for Lae, I am about to go for Lae

If you are not seeing mi from here, just remember me, just remember me!

(Sori O Ulini E, Demas Saul)

As a consequence, the city of Lae, the narrator's destination, becomes not so important for the sentiment evoked. The sentiment *sori* that expresses affection bridges the sentiment as it is inserted in phrases in the local languages. As in the words of traditional dances, *sori/sore* augments its power when its poetical frequency increases in the entire text (TT42):

Umar malain hei tamasdeg binama pik ta tamas hei. Hina sain malainiendeg bedeni, sori bubengu.

Piap nalonp e gomu uyan ta napaup e. Heig a binamag o ule

Kankan hunamag bubama rubuti mok mok e. Sori o hangu e o ule.

I no longpela taim na yu lusim mipela, i no laik yu stap liklik. Longpela taim bilong yu i stap na yet nau yu go, sori, lewa bilong mi.

Sapos yu bin tokim mi bai mi ken tokim yu sampela toktok. Nogat na yu lusim mipela na yu go

Tingting i kilim mipela na lewa bilong mipela i bruk pinis. Sori, o David, yu lusim mipela.

It is not a long time that you had been with us. Your time was supposed to be much longer, *sori*, my dearest.

If you can talk we might share something nice to talk about. But, no, you passed away

It is unbearable for us and my heart is about to break. *Sori*, my dearest, you passed away.

(Umar Malain Hei, Sandie Gabriel)

Between the verse in Tok Pisin, there are slight alterations in phrasing but the entire nuance are intact: Between *ule* (Yabob: you went = passed away) and *yu lusim mipela* (Tok Pisin: you left us), or between *bubama rubuti mok* (Yabob: Heart breaks much) and *lewa bilong mipela i bruk pinis* (Tok Pisin: our liver = seat of passion has broken up). The word *sori* appears twice in the last phrases of first verse and reappears in the second verse in the same

manner, as well as in the last line of both verses is refrained a few times; as a result, the entire song in performance increases density of the address of *sori* throughout. The function of translation is not so important as *sori* being repeated multiple times to intensity fragment heaving.

The bands often incorporate a song from other communities upon consent. However, the musicians hardly worry about the meanings. They would plainly say: “I can’t translate this song. Sure, we recorded the tune but actually don’t know what we were singing about” or “I heard it from my *wantok* and asked for translation.” The transcription below is a power band rendition of Amyors String Band of Amele, about 20km inland of Yabob. Because the language is totally unrelated, transcription was not possible without a help from a Yabob man who married an Amele woman and occasionally stayed to work there. Here, too, *sori* and *maski* interacts in indexicality, and the Melanesian audience would find semblance of anxiety in their own *wantok*’s everyday life (CHM1014):

Mel unug balu e na masar mel matiab e. Mel unug uligi uligi unei na o
Sori, maski egedi o. Obi o bobo na.

Everybody has been gone and there are not many left. They all have been gone for good. *Sori*, although we are left alone we just keep going as ever.

(*Mel Unug*, Anonymous)

As these cases have shown, insertion of borrowed words in Tok Pisin into the native context entitles the latter to a status of a third language, a musical discourse; it is transmitted beyond the speech community but still capable of evoking sentiment with density in the addressing in performance.

3.3 Yabob words borrowed in Tok Pisin

The Yabob words inserted in Tok Pisin are not loan words, but they articulate addressing. The most common instance might be the word *bubengu*, which means liver, the seat of passion as in the text of *Umar Malain Hei* above. When it is used in an address, it signifies one who is dear to the addresser; as it being a favourite word for *salim tingting* in a similar way as *sore*, it appears in a number to tunes (CHM1136):

Bubengu, bubengu, we na stail bilong yumi tupela yu no ken fogetim
Sweet love, sweet love bilong yumi, o hina kaginwi nabolde ilo so padal mon.

Bubengu, bubengu, the way and style of two of us you should never forget
Sweet love, our sweet love, the way we are you should never forget.

(*Bubengu, Bubengu*, Willie Tropu)

The word combination of *bubengu* and *sweet love* (this could also be a very English-like Tok Pisin phrase *swit lav*) might represent a common style of love letter, along with occasional insertion of English phrases. The following *Sampela Tingting* was recommended a local informant as a case of good poetry in Tok Pisin in describing delicacy and intimacy in secrecy between the whispering couple who are almost falling in love (TT42):

Sapos yu gat sampela tingting orait yu mas tokim mi nau.

Bubengu o mi nogat toktok long tokim yu nau

Olgeta toktok lewa bilong mi e mi bin tokim yu pinis bifo

Mi no inap tokim yu gen: Olgeta toktok lewa bilong mi e mi bin tokim pinis bifo.

O gomu ta ditap piap ηalon mere me mok piap ηalon

Bubengu o gomu ta ηapau inan hei

Gomu gugul bubengu mugag ηapaug ulonjende

O haun gomu ta ηapau inan hei. Gomu gugul bubengu mugag ηapaug ulonjende.

If you got something to say, alright you must tell me now

My dearest, I got nothing more to tell you now

All my words, my dearest, I already told you before.

I can't talk any more. All my words, my dearest, I already told you before.

(*Sampela Tingting*, Sandie Gabriel)

Frequent appearance of *bubengu* in Tok Pisin discourse fixates the nature of addressing, in this case a romance, and without the presence of translating verse it becomes an index for performativity. As the addressing word is inserted in a dominantly Tok Pisin discourse, and as it being repeatedly sung over, it acquires indexicality. The audience would be drawn to the addressing voice in short phrases as they savour the texture of musical sound with bodily movement of dancing. The language world of Yabob and Tok Pisin or English are complimentary, not independent, and the switching of the languages is indispensable for the poetics in articulating village and Melanesian spaces of life (TT21):

First *taim tru long mi long go long yu na raun wantaim*

Dreams bilong mi, yes, **dreams** bilong mi i tokim mi tru

Tasol mi no save long tingting bilong yu yet

Dreams bilong mi yes, dreams bilong mi i tokim mi tru.

Smail bilong yu na we bilong yu i stilim lewa bilong mi

Bubengu hina kagin nabol e

Oru bi dilo ibolg e mere me mug tatolde

Dreams bilong mi, yes, dreams bilong mi i tokim mi tru.

For the first time we made rendezvous / [as] it appeared in my dream

But, I don't know about your idea / [although] it appeared in my dream.

Your smile and the way you act stole my heart / *Bubengu*, I'm talking about your way.

Now, we are in love and go around together / [as] it appeared in my dream.

(*First Time Tru*, Sandie Gabriel)

The phrase *stilim lewa bilong mi* is almost becoming a cliché. At any rate, the images are condensed as the English word “dream” appears repeatedly in the short lyrics. Being placed with Yabob *bubengu* and its Tok Pisin counterpart *lewa*, the word “dream” acquires indexicality for attention

3.4 English phrases in polyglot verses

In a number of cases English words are inserted in phrases or even a sentence. The following shows that English phrases can either form a sentence independently or jointed in Tok Pisin or Yabob syntax. These phrases and sentences in most cases form a locution with subject “I”, an imperative or an interjection so that its subjectivity instantly connects with a Melanesian everyday life beyond language community (TT66):

Oh, so many days! Oh, so many days!

Long bipo taim yumi yangpela yumi bin wokabaut olsem ol brata. Yumi no bin bruk nabaut.

O Korrie, o Ian, o mata dodogwi e gonoug ibini ya gibug niug ketei, oh, so many days!

Ibini ya gibug niug ketei gomu ta nabol. Inan nalon heig ge nabol I wish you the best of luck.

Oh, so many days! Oh, so many days!

We have been around for a long time like real brothers. We have never been parted.

O Korrie, O Ian why, why are you leaving me alone. Oh, so many days!

I don't know what to say and will never, too. I just say to you: "I wish you the best of luck"

(*So Many Days*, Sandie Gabriel)

The word *mata* is a Bilbil expression equivalent to Yabob *dodog* meaning "why", which implies that the band members Korrie and Ian are in some way related to Bilbil. In terms of discourse, this text does not have to require the audience to be familiar with the local languages but only Tok Pisin and English in order to understand the contents. Emphasis is placed on the English phrase "Oh, so many days" and with the reference to personal names the addressing voice articulates the memory of *wantok* friendship and sorrow of departure of three old *friends*⁶. If one persists what the song actually 'means' the text might be deciphered as follows:

Oh, so many days! Oh, so many days! We have been around like real brothers, never been apart.

O Korrie. O Ian. Oh, so many days! I wish you the best of luck.

Indexicality in terms of evocative addressing is not necessarily contained in these lines since there is no concrete contextual background indicated. The power of addressing might be present as the phrase "Oh, so many day" is repeated, but the text definitely needs to be sung in syllables of the local language so that the *wantok* subjectivity of the three men becomes apparent.

The following instance uses English sentences in order to designate the topic of the song. Here, the English lines compensate the broken sentence in a mixture of Tok Pisin and Yabob which would hardly make sense without comprehending the local tongue. The audience can locate the topic of song from the Tok Pisin fragment in the beginning combined with the English words (TT21):

Pasin nau yu mekim long mi mugag egede hei.

Hangu sainowi nebedeni e hambas mala nonou namas.

Good times *bilong yumi tupela i no olsem long nau.*

Hambas hina sain so bedeni mon ilo padalp hanga ula e.

Days went by as a fool for you, *mala nonou namas.*

So, please darling give me one more chance, *bai feelings bilong mi i orait.*

The way you are acting is no longer the same.

I'm wasting my time with you in vain.

The good time for two of us is no longer the same.
 I don't mind if you forget about me and go away.
 My days went by as a fool for you as I kept waiting for you.
 So, please my darling give my one more change so that I can feel better.

(*Pasin Nau Yu Mekim*, Sandie Gabriel)

In the first and third lines, not only English but Yabob and Tok Pisin phrases are grafted with each other in forming a proper sentence. These hybrid sentences only vaguely make sense alone to a non-Yabob speaker; however, as English phrases and Tok Pisin sentences are inserted the overall atmosphere of the separating couple becomes imaginable. As this case indicates, Polyglot is an index for the orality in the communal environment and fragment-hearing is a result of polyglot but not necessarily an intended effect. In fact, in the village environment it is not uncommon that Tok Pisin and the local language are mixed as spontaneous response in casual situations: The people casually switch the language before uttering the entire sentence whenever they feel the nuance not communicate adequately to their *wantoks* (TT66).

Darling, *taim yu bin tokim mi bai mi stap wantaim* forever mo'
O mug ilo padal nia kukunlon mon utordeg
Tasol lewa, mi i no inap ting lus long yu. Bai mi oltaim tingting long yu
 But, one thing you make me wonder if I ever say good-bye.

Dirimal me yati bala Yabob-Bilbil-lan asop o
Peti ai kobolu dine asop en e heip amule
Diseg dine heig dibol e Dirimal me bala mok e
Ainta dimaisge dibol e a, o sori o lewa ule a.

Darling, when I spoke to you I'll be with you forever more
 O that you forgot and faded away
 But, my dearest, I can't forget you. I'm always thinking about you.
 But one thing you make me wonder if I ever say good-bye.

The Dirimal reef is beautiful. The Yabob and Bilbil people should pay a visit.
 It has rocks and rare trees. Come and see before going home.
 They come, see and then speak that Dirimal is very beautiful
 Some others would say: "O *sori* my dearest, you have been gone."

(*If I Ever Say Good-Bye*, Sandie Gabriel and Willie Tropu)

His *wantok* friends recall that the composer picked up these phrases from a country tune on a radio program, which was probably *If I Ever Had to Say Good-Bye to You* by Tom Jones. After the death of Sandie Gabriel in 1993 *If I Ever Say Good-Bye* appeared in arrangements attempted by non-Yabob artists. The second verse, sung entirely in Yabob, was an independent composition by Willie Tropu inserted for an unknown reason. Here, the presence of English phrase appears to dominate overall atmosphere of the entire song. However, meaning of the phrase is somewhat obscure and in this regard longstanding popularity of the song around Madang remains a mystery; it only vaguely makes sense that the line represents a lost love gradually fading out, but even that is up to deciphering the second line, literally “You walked away tipping your toe”, a figured speech in Yabob. Indeed, the phrase “If I ever say good-bye” is non-referential since it is not rooted in any context, hardly describes anything and completely jumbled with Yabob and Tok Pisin words.

In addition, as in the other examples enunciation of the English words follows Tok Pisin phonemics. The ending of the first verse, for instance, is pronounced like Tok Pisin: *Bat wan ting yu mek mi wanda if ai eva sei gu'-bai*. Likewise, usually English phoneme /f/ is pronounced as [ɸ] and /v/ as [β]; accordingly, [θ] and [ð] in /th/ is replaced by [t] and [z]. English phrases in the *lokol singsing* are treated really as an extension or variant of Tok Pisin, which displaces the linguistic capital of English as the official language. In this ethnolinguistics Tok Pisin does not derive from English, but English is spoken as a variety of Tok Pisin in which a special kind of grassroots nuance can be expressed in the addressing voice.

The below is an example of hypercorrection of English, perhaps as an attempt to emphasise English syntax. Notice the way which plural suffix -s is inserted in “good times” and “feelings” in the context which is not necessarily required. Also, the definite article is very often omitted, which in fact makes them sound even closer to Tok Pisin. Again, English phrases here is a poetic language in order to generate indexicality which plain Tok Pisin discourse otherwise might fail to realise, as below (TT42):

Webiap e forever mo'. *Hotu mug bagen inou ilug haun imor* long-time *bipo*

Pilim heartache *pen na* happiness *bilong lav, lav, swit lav*.

Tokim mi forever mo' *wantaim smail bilong pes*. *Bubengu, hotu mug seseli e*

Hagad War binap a, you can make it some other days.

Hold me forever more. The place is now light and I recall my memory a long ago,
 Feeling the heartache, pain and happiness of love, sweet love.
 Talk to me forever more with a smile on your face. My dearest, it's the sunrise.
 Even if War⁷ leaves you can make it some other days.

(*Webia Pe*,⁸ Sandie Gabriel)

I is rather common in contemporary Madang accent of Tok Pisin that the words derived from English with the phoneme /f/ is likely to be retained as [ɸ] to be distinguished from /p/: as in *Pilim* (feeling, to feel), *pes* (face), *poto* (photo), *pinga* (finger), *bipo* (before) etc.⁹ As a result, some phrases would be difficult in identifying the language, as in the initial phrase *forever mo'* which also could be deciphered as an Anglicised Tok Pisin *foeva moa*. This leads to a whole question about how essential a Tok Pisin sentence can be. If grammatically corrupt wording, insertion of conjunction (*na, tasol*) auxiliary verb (*bai, bin*) and preposition (*long, bilong*, etc.) as well as the phonetics would produce the syntax identical to Tok Pisin, the relationship between English and Tok Pisin discourse might become an assemblage, losing clear distinction against each other: English infinitely becoming Tok Pisin, Tok Pisin incessantly making incursion in English. This continuum of a variety of speech acts between Anglo-Pidgin and Tok Inglis is exactly be what is taking place in the *lokol singsing*.

As it has been shown, the three languages make up a mosaic as they are alternately sung within the same sentence. If the narrative is not properly paraphrased in context, translation would become nearly impossible (TT21):

Sain tap just when I needed you most

Krai bilong yu turangu, husat bai helpim, helpim yu

Olgeta awa dilon hei, tirap a heip e

Lonely *mok utap utorwi: O mam o diniap e, ηatag ηator uwug diebi hei.*

Sometimes when I just needed you most

You are crying, poor one. Who are to help you?

They all did not hear your cry as if they were not there:

Feeling lonely, you cry and walk around: "Daddy, help me. I'm crying and walking around for nobody listens to me!"

(*Sain Tap*, Ian Michael)

It appears, if not vaguely, that the narrative depicts a deserted child and the last line reproduces the utterance of the young derelict. However, absence of pronouns, improper

discursive frames and ambiguity caused by switching languages in the single sentence rather form a chaos: It sounds like a sad story but appears to lack any direction. Indexicality of polyglot, especially insertion of English, therefore, does not necessarily signify a sign of the contemporary, vogue, modernity, or coolness. Rather, English phrases intensify non-referentiality of the text, and this linguistic mosaic stands for itself so that the indexes can be released in fragments for a richer imagination depending upon the audience's own *wantok* experiences.

3.5 Words of traditional dances in polyglot

In most cases, a rendition of traditional dance does not mix languages. Since the repetitive nature of words and melodic fragments of traditional dance are suitable for the *tromoi lek* club dancing sessions, these tunes tend to be sung in the reproduced words throughout. The two songs below are rare exceptions and, interestingly, became a hit; in particular, *Kadoi E* attracted the listeners nationwide as it was released in cassette from Port Moresby. *Kros bilong Tupela* marks the opening tune of the debut album by the band Kale Gadagad, a prominent Madang band from Yabob. The both songs insert the traditional dance as the chorus. *Kros bilong Tupela* sings the entire verse section in Tok Pisin, followed by a piece of dance presumably from Yabob (TT21):

*Kros bilong tupela ol i no tingting long pikinini. Pikinini mi no save long mama i dai pinis
Avinun nau na aiwara i kam na em i stap long krai.
Mam o ye, gigo wain e sar e, sar e, sar e, sar e.*

The fight between the two: They do not think about their child. The child, I, do not know the mother has been dead

Now in the afternoon tear drops from the eyes and then he starts crying.

Mam o o o ye, gigo wain e sar e, sar e, sar e, sar e.

(*Kros bilong Tupela*, Sandie Gabirel)

Mam is an address to father as in "Daddy", *sar* means a parrot in Yabob, but *gigo* and *wain* are undecipherable. At any rate, the implication of the song resembles with the Kaluli legend of a boy whose grief and hunger turned him into a bird to fly away in the bush (Feld 1979), although unlike the Kaluli nothing contextualises contents of the Yabob traditional dance. The audience would simply hear *em i stap long krai* (he is crying) followed by the vocal line and feel an index of the child's cry in the old *singsing tumbuna*. The feel of the repetition *sar e* can indicate the cry of tearful child without constructing a meaningful

sentence, as any juvenile weep can be. Simultaneously, the rhythm caused by the repetition makes the song suitable for dancing in open-end sessions, which made it a popular tune around Madang. Incidentally, this is one of the earliest attempts for the *lokol singsing* to incorporate a traditional dance song.

The following *Kadoi E* was a popular number as it was released from Port Moresby and broadcasted widely around the country. The artist Willie Tropu made his solo debut after the success of this song. The identity of the dance, however, was not clear if it was a very old Yabob one or appropriated from another community (CHM1014):

Darling, let us say it again why are you crying for?

Mi save yu laikim mi tumas bikos tia bilong yu i ken tokim mi

Darling, don't you worry *tumas*. I love you more than words can say

Long tokim yu olsem mi lavim yu. Mi ken singim yu song olsem dispela song:

Kadoi e, doi e, doi e, ita soni soni o. Kadoi e, doi e, doi e, ita soni soni o.

Darling, let us say it again why are you crying for?

I know you are attracted to me because your tears are telling me.

Darling, don't you worry too much. I love you more than the words can mean

For speaking to you that I love you. I sing to you this song:

Kadoi e, doi e, doi e, ita soni soni o. Kadoi e, doi e, doi e, ita soni soni o.

(*Kadoi E*, Willie Tropu)

Whether the traditional song has Yabob origin was not substantiated but the word *kadoi* in Yabob traditionally means a trade partner who resides in a distant community as it appears in a old traditional dance song. The selection for English *song* instead of Tok Pisin *singsing* is very rare. Since the melody is original, like most renditions from the *singsing tumbuna*, the narrator's utterance "song" frames the following verse as a local piece. The time-space which the performance *Kadoi E* generates does not make reference to any ancestral past but always point to "*dispela song*" taking place in performative here-and-now. The narrative finds a bridge, a convergence in its addressing voice between Yabob its Melanesian and others, and between the traditional and present time. This incorporation of the words from the *singsing tumbuna* does not necessarily signify Melanesian traditionalism but its importance solely lies in this bridging interaction; it becomes a musical index for dancing a liberal, plain and earthy *six-to-six* hype on weekends.

Conclusion

Among the tripartite Peircean *representamens*, index solely involves alterity between an abstract and material plane: Smoke rising from the roof *becomes* a fire in house, or a gradually appearing mast of the ship from the horizon *makes* the globular earth. Indexicality embeds the imaginary in the real. The polyglot songs show indexicality of the *lokol singsing* is a non-referential speech act. It makes parallel with de Certeau's account of the power of voodoo chants as he discusses about everyday life reality: "They create another space, which coexists with that of an experience deprived of illusions. They tell a truth (the miraculous) which is not reducible to the particular beliefs that serve it as metaphors or symbols" (de Certeau 1984:17). In the intermediated space of polyglot songs, as it is broadcasted and eavesdropped, whatever the pretext their message becomes a phantasmagoria of desire; it has been intensified as postmodern technology, such as electronics, has become everyday reality of the grassroots *wantoks*. In the examples obtained aside from Yabob, similar traits have been identified in other language groups at least among Nobonob, Amele and Bel around Madang, the Siassi of Morobe, and the Lake Chambri area: Perhaps, it might be a prevalent phenomenon throughout PNG, even in the Solomons which share the same music market. In this regard, the indexicality of polyglot songs might be called as Melanesianism. The following concludes discussions:

Firstly, postulating fragment-hearing, indexicality of the song words elucidates that it is non-referential at large, and the sensing of addressing voice itself, without a clear identification of the addressee, makes the song evocative and enchanting. The 'meaning' of song texts, therefore, lies in the power of non-referential index. In the *lokol singsing* English phrases are not a symbol of time of postmodernism, Tok Pisin narrative not a result of a will to communicate with the Melanesians, and the Yabob lyrics along with the *singsing tumbuna* arrangements not cultural essentialism, regionalism or nostalgia.

Secondly, in terms of orality the polyglot songs are not a consequence of historical development of the musical genre, despite in the first look as postcolonialism is put into perspective. In the linguistic environment of PNG, any enunciation in musical activity *sui generis* contains a sprout of polyglot discourse. The *singsing tumbuna*, traditional dance, is filled with vocables, repetitive short words and phrases instead of discursive narrative; the songs could be transmitted across the trade network as if obsidian or clay pots are traded from a tribe to a tribe afar. The musical language is mimesis of natural and human sound which interacts as a resource of sound to be incorporated in the body of host language. Therefore, the small-scale languages in PNG even in its most isolated condition comprise a polyglot of everyday and musical discourses.

Thirdly, the polyglot discourse is essentially polyphonic. As in the analysis of English phrases inserted, a mixture of languages would create a multiple layers of voices: Each of the three languages and the three combined as a whole. Historically speaking, musical polyphony once existed widely when the size of string band was limited to about four players at an early stage with no electronic devices were introduced. Around 1960, two or three vocals with the guitar and ukulele without the microphones performed a contrapuntal singing which was introduced from the *kwaia* church chorus from Samoa and Fiji. As the power band took it over, rigid musical structure was sacrificed for the effort to envelop various factors of noise. Today, it is languages that weave out polyphony to induce the audiences to tune into the part most standing out in the overall verse. Unlike musical polyphony these voices are laid in syntagm; however, Yabob, Tok Pisin and English in broken fragments can be put together to form a separate verse and compose a voice of its own, as it has been observed in the cases of *Pasin Nau Yu Mekim*, *Webia Pe*, and *If I Ever Say Good-Bye*. In this very sense, the polyglot become an assemblage in that each language as well as its body of text contain levels of concrete and complex reality loaded with sentiment, each of them specially singular yet deeply inter relating. Therefore, there actually two levels of polyphony: Yabob text being polyphonic itself in terms of time-space as previously discussed, and an assemblage of the multiple languages.

Lastly, indexicality of polyglot songs unleashes the power of fragment-hearing in intensity of addressing vocalised. As the words being enounced non-referentiality of index leaves room for imagination, iconicity of their own *wantok* emerges. Obscure and opaque wording of polyglot texts premises vivid images. Fragment-hearing in fact makes the linguistic activity as a musical one, as it creates an assemblage that embeds orality in everyday life. As it seems, non-referentiality and obscurity which weaves out allusion makes indexicality another yet deeper look. The nature of indexicality is non-referentiality, in the very sense that something point toward somewhere, invoking imaginations; at this moment the referent of index does not have to be discovered or perhaps better not so that the index would not lose the power of movement, as in the etymology of metaphor is not signifying something but movement: *μεταφορ* (to transfer). What means to whom in what way is situated in *wantok's* imagination, and the cognitive condition of *salim tingting*, or 'sending out' of feelings, is indispensable for the musical space of *lokol singsing*; in this regard, non-referentiality of index does not mean that it lacks a referent but generates a manifold space with almost infinite possibility of referents. An intense image evoked is the intercorporeal sense of "the flesh of world" (Merleau-Ponty 1968) which embeds the imagination of artists and audience in everyday reality. The evocativeness of the *lokol*

singsing, the power of addressing, indeed rests upon this indexical non-referentiality that is incessantly shifting alterity. The indexicality of the *lokol singsing* is equal to its performativeness.

Notes

1. In this paper, 2 songs are identified to contain overlapping lyrics and left out from the initial sample data (Suwa 2005).
2. Bigabeg used to mean a hostage or a kidnapped in the precolonial times.
3. The word *padal* here can mean a number of conditions of disappearance; the canoe might have been gone paddling or sailing or it is simply “lost” or “forgotten”. My Yabob friend chose *seil* (sail) to suggest a long voyage beyond the horizon. The large, masted canoe built by the Siar people, were used. *Nimor Wag* evokes a Yabob speaker an archetypal image of leaving, reminiscent of eternal return.
4. Addressing often takes from a filial point of view. In this case, the daughter of the old man had children.
5. The words *mama* and *papa* appear in opposite order in Tok Pisin.
6. “Why are you leaving me alone? I wish you a good luck” is a joke from Sandie who was marrying a wife and can no longer seek a mate with his bachelor friends.
7. *War* is a kind of vine and somehow used as a nickname here.
8. Supposedly, *Webip e* = Hold [me]!
9. This was perhaps due to the phonology in Bel: *fatu* (village) versus *panu* (island). In Yabob, /f/ in Bel corresponds to /h/: *hotu* (village, surroundings).

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List of Cassette Recordings

CHM Supersound

CHM1014 *Old Dog and Off Beats*

CHM1136 *Stray Dog*

Tumbuna Traks

TT21 *Kales of Pari*

TT37 *Old Dog and the Off-Beats*

TT42 *Sandie Gabriel: Kale Gadagad*

TT73 *Old Dog and the Ofbeats* [sic]

TT66 *Kales*

TT67 *Mesi Gauns*