

## **WHAT'S BE HAPPEN? A DIALOGIC APPROACH TO THE ANALYSIS OF HERBS' NEW ZEALAND REGGAE LYRICS**

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**ABSTRACT.** This paper extends aspects of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogic relations in the discourse of novels to popular song lyrics. Involving three levels of analysis, it examines the well known New Zealand band Herbs' appropriation of reggae, and the construction of protest in relationships between the music, the lyrics and the performance of their song "Azania (Soon Come)."<sup>1</sup> It argues that Bakhtin's ideas have particular relevance for the analysis of contemporary, creative popular discourse related to ethical and cultural values.

**Keywords:** dialogism; Herbs; New Zealand; reggae; protest; Bakhtin; discourse

### **1. Introduction**

On 13 September 2012 the band Herbs were inducted into the New Zealand Music Hall of Fame at the APRA Silver Scroll Awards in Auckland's Town Hall, to honour their "enormous contribution to the cultural fabric of life" over a period of 30 years.<sup>2</sup> *What's Be Happen?*,<sup>3</sup> the first of the band's total of eight albums and New Zealand's first reggae album, is seen as a musical and political watershed in the history of New Zealand popular music.<sup>4</sup> Herbs' musical fusion of reggae and Pacific sounds produced a new and "distinctive Polynesian feel",<sup>5</sup> and the six songs constituted a new voice for a politically-aware audience.<sup>6</sup>

The period leading up to the release of the album in 1981 is described by historian James Belich as a time of critical change in New Zealand's recent history.<sup>7</sup> Historians and social commentators agree that the social and political events and issues so fiercely contested and debated in the 1970s and early 1980s had a significant influence in shaping opinion and many New Zealanders' sense of their own identity.<sup>8</sup> The conflicts and campaigns were struggles over human rights, associated ethical values, and the kind of

society people wanted New Zealand to be.<sup>9</sup> These included conflict and protest over Māori land losses that had taken place as a consequence of colonisation and its aftermath;<sup>10</sup> over nuclear testing in the Pacific and degradation of the environment; against racism in the form of South African apartheid, racially selected international rugby teams and local racism in police treatment of Pacific Island “over-stayers” as well as urban Māori and Pacific Island people.<sup>11</sup>

Herbs’ lyrics on *What’s Be Happen?* and their appropriation and localisation of Jamaican roots reggae<sup>12</sup> create a historically important and culturally valuable popular nexus that dialogically connects, marks and speaks to some of these significant political and social events and issues in New Zealand during the 1970s and early 1980s. The lyrics of “Azania (Soon Come)” refer to the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa, and in “One Brotherhood” a call for unity in reference to protests against the loss of Māori ancestral lands is discursively linked to the campaign against the South African rugby tour of New Zealand in 1981. The title song “What’s Be Happen?” addresses the loss of Pacific Island roots and the experiences of Pacific Islanders who moved to New Zealand to establish a better future for themselves and their families. The central theme of “Whistling in the Dark” is the everyday experiences and police treatment of urban Māori and Pacific Island people. The final song, “Reggae’s Doing Fine”, pays tribute to Bob Marley, whose music and lyrics resonated with Māori and Pacific Island audiences in particular<sup>13</sup> and who died in May 1981 shortly before the album was released.

The enduring significance of some of these events and issues is evidenced in the continuing circulation of related discourses. There are frequent references for example to the polarising effect of the 1981 South African rugby tour of New Zealand at the time<sup>14</sup> and to the contribution that New Zealanders’ protests against the tour made to the struggle to overthrow apartheid in South Africa.<sup>15</sup> The Bastion Point occupation in Auckland in 1978 in an effort to prevent the sale of Māori land to developers has been revisited in television documentaries.<sup>16</sup> And the experiences of urban Māori and Pacific Island people, including police harassment in the 1970s, have been re-examined in television documentaries.<sup>17</sup> As for Herbs’ album itself, the significance of these songs for the generation that protested in the 1970s and in 1981 is illustrated by the communal singing of “One Brotherhood” at a reception held for Nelson Mandela in Auckland in 1995,<sup>18</sup> and the inclusion of a further song from the album, “Dragons and Demons”, in the sound track of the recent New Zealand film *Boy*.<sup>19</sup> There has, however, been no analysis to date of the “combination[s] of words and music”<sup>20</sup> that constitute the songs on Herbs’ album and their relationship to the New Zealand social and political environment in the early 1980s.

This article presents an analysis and interpretation of the discourse of protest in the first song on *What's Be Happen?*, "Azania (Soon Come)",<sup>21</sup> from the perspective of applied language studies. Protest songs are defined as overt statements of opposition to social, political and economic conditions<sup>22</sup> and I use the term discourse here in Bakhtin's sense of an approach to the use of words<sup>23</sup> or "choice of linguistic means."<sup>24</sup> These include the genre of utterance, choices among heteroglossia and between compositional devices, as well as lexical choices. As part of a larger study that investigates the dialogic construction of social commentary, protest and resistance in the songs on Herbs' album, the analysis draws on Bakhtin's concept of dialogism in discourse. It contributes to the field of discourse analysis by extending aspects of Bakhtin's analysis of dialogic relations in the discourse of novels to such popular song lyrics. I aim to demonstrate the compatibility of certain of Bakhtin's concepts with the study of this form of popular cultural artefact, which was beyond the scope of Bakhtin's literary work, and the relevance of Bakhtin's ideas for analysis of contemporary, creative popular constructions of protest and resistance related to ethical and cultural values. The article will be of interest to scholars of Bakhtin's work, to those who study historically significant artefacts of popular culture and those who have an interest in the popular construction of resistance to social injustice.

The next section provides an overview of Bakhtin's multi-faceted concept of dialogism and highlights aspects that are particularly relevant to the analysis presented here. This is followed by an explanation of the approaches to analysis, which are organised into three levels. The analysis begins by examining Herbs' appropriation of reggae before moving on to focus on the social context and discourse of "Azania (Soon Come)".

## **2. Dialogism in discourse**

The political and ethical dimensions of Bakhtin's theory of dialogic discourse<sup>25</sup> provide a fitting framework for an examination of lyrics that speak of political struggles over human rights and engage with moral values associated with racism and indigenous peoples' loss of rights and land. The scope of Bakhtin's concept of dialogism is broad and operates on a number of different levels. It encompasses at a global level the very nature of being in that "[t]o be means to communicate."<sup>26</sup> It involves a dialogic conceptualisation of meaning and understanding in which meaning is what happens in a particular social environment, at a particular historical time<sup>27</sup> in the inter-subjective space "between expression and understanding."<sup>28</sup> Ken Hirschkop describes dialogism in this sense as a philosophical idea, a

characterisation of the experience of meaning that occurs when something expressed is understood in the social act of communication.<sup>29</sup>

At the level of utterances that is relevant here Bakhtin's theory of dialogic discourse is complex and also operates on a number of levels.<sup>30</sup> It is a theorisation that politicises language and discourse<sup>31</sup> and builds upon Bakhtin's early philosophical concern with inter-subjective relationships<sup>32</sup> in incorporating the social act of speech as an act of position-taking or commitment.<sup>33</sup> It identifies ethics as a dimension of language, viewing utterances as ethical acts<sup>34</sup> and language choices as ethical choices.<sup>35</sup> In his focus on the discourse of the modern novel Bakhtin conceptualises language as embodying dialogic social relations based on different world views and values, and as a site of struggles between centralising authoritative forces and decentralising forces. His notion of heteroglossia signifies the strata of socially determined linguistic forces within a language and in its products; dialects, socio-ideological languages and genres embody different extralinguistic values, conceptualisations and social experience as well as the contingent social and historical forces that form language.<sup>36</sup> Language users, and particularly those involved in creative work, face the necessity to make choices between these different discourses, to "actively orient [themselves] amidst heteroglossia... [to] move in and occupy a position for [themselves] within it."<sup>37</sup>

At a further level, discourse is theorised as inherently dialogic in its addressivity, in its anticipation of a response and in its relationship to previous utterances as part of a "chain of communication."<sup>38</sup> In making use of words populated by the social intentions of others to "serve... new intentions" writers embrace, reject or distance themselves from such previous intentions.<sup>39</sup> In another sense of dialogism utterances are seen as "double-voiced"<sup>40</sup> when they include the cited words of others. The voices of others can be used in different forms of direct and indirect speech, and at different distances between the incorporated voice and that of the author or speaker who cites it, reflecting the aims of the utterance and whether intentions coincide, or conflict.

It has been argued that Bakhtin's ideas involve apparently contradictory elaborations of the concept of dialogism<sup>41</sup> and are at times idealist, ambiguous and flawed.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, Bakhtin built upon the work of other philosophers and theorists<sup>43</sup> to produce an innovative congeries of theories and concepts that have been widely influential across discipline areas.<sup>44</sup> Theresa Lillis points out in the context of student writing and academic literacies that Bakhtin's concept of dialogism in language and discourse has been widely interpreted and applied, but argues that in essence it can be understood at two levels.<sup>45</sup> It is descriptive in its focus on the given nature of discourse, and at a second level it is an ideal to strive for in communication,

in the conflict and tension between centripetal and centrifugal cultural forces and between authoritative and internally-persuasive forces. As Craig Brandist has similarly pointed out, the dialogism and relationality of the modern novel exemplify the ideal form of ethical inter-subjective relations.<sup>46</sup> In this respect, Michael Holquist has argued that Bakhtin's approach to literature is a "metaphor for other aspects of existence."<sup>47</sup>

The great level of interest in Bakhtin is because of the relationship dialogism constructs between literary values and socio-political values, according to Ken Hirschkop: the struggles Bakhtin addresses over the direction and nature of modern languages are not only struggles over the nature and direction of modern social relationships but also over ethical values in modern society.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps for understandable reasons related to the political and ethical pressures he experienced, Bakhtin avoided references to politics and democracy. Nonetheless, Bakhtin posits a culture and language in which all have the right to speak and none has absolute authority or the final word<sup>49</sup> and this, Hirschkop argues, inevitably involves everyday cultural politics and meanings of democracy that include "control over economic life, satisfying relationships, dignity and solidarity, and narratives that make one's life not only prosperous but also meaningful."<sup>50</sup>

Bakhtin's conceptualisation of the variety of discourses in the heteroglossia of the modern novel is characterised as subversive<sup>51</sup> in the sense that heteroglossia challenges the authority of monologic discourse. As David Lodge explains, a range of discourses in the discursive, literary space of a novel establishes "resistance... to the dominance of any one discourse."<sup>52</sup> Although it is a leap to extend the literary values associated with Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia to the social and political realm, Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese view Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia as offering "a lens through which to view the social, political, and historical implications of language in practice."<sup>53</sup> Hirschkop suggests that Bakhtin's theories have relevance not only for those who are interested in the ways in which texts express the democratic negotiations of an ideal speech community but also for those concerned with the ways that utterances incarnate moral responsibility or represent subordinate voices.<sup>54</sup> It is also argued that Bakhtin's work is important for issues of political resistance.<sup>55</sup>

In another dimension of his concept of dialogism in discourse Bakhtin emphasises the "social life" of discourse beyond the artist's study as well as social context<sup>56</sup> in the construction of meaning, including the words of others, circumstances, and events.<sup>57</sup> Even though in practice Bakhtin's acknowledgement of social and cultural context is largely implicit or no more than generalised<sup>58</sup> (as for example in his analysis of Dickens' *Little Dorritt*<sup>59</sup>), his theoretical emphasis on the effect of the social environment at a particular historical moment is particularly relevant to an analysis of songs

that comment on specific events and social issues. As already implied, the fact that much of Bakhtin's life was lived under conditions of political turmoil and the oppression of Stalinism could explain the absence of more explicit connections between discourse and social forces in his work. What is important is that Bakhtin points to a "sociological stylistics"<sup>60</sup> that considers the ways in which the language of discourse is embedded in and constructs context. Bakhtin provides productive analytical tools for such considerations,<sup>61</sup> and as Brandist points out, contemporary analysts supplement Bakhtin's theories [and practice] by extending the shaping environment to include not only the discursive context of other utterances against which meaning is understood but also historical economic and political events and influences.

This study draws particularly from Bakhtin's theory of dialogism as it relates to utterances as social and ethical acts of position-taking, the notion of heteroglossia and the necessity for language users to make choices, the related concept of double-voiced discourse and of language populated by the intentions of others, as well as the significance of social context in the construction of meaning.

### **3. Approaches to analysis**

Esther Peeren has extended Bakhtin's ideas to other forms of contemporary cultural artefacts that were beyond his sphere of interest and analytic focus. In extending Bakhtin's work beyond itself she describes herself as staging a confrontation between certain of Bakhtin's concepts, selected artefacts and other theoretical frameworks and concepts in relation to intersubjective identity constructions.<sup>62</sup> In the spirit of supplementing his work she produces encounters that are fruitful in "pushing" Bakhtin's concepts into adapting to new circumstances. Similarly, I extend certain of Bakhtin's concepts to the analysis of the construction of meaning in this particular type of popular song lyrics, where they encounter other ideas and theories. Relevant concepts from Bakhtin's work include heteroglossia, polyphony,<sup>63</sup> the notion of the ways in which appropriated language is populated and resignified with new accents and intentions, hybrid cultural forms,<sup>64</sup> narrative forms and double-voiced discourse. These concepts encounter theories related for example to the cultural influences of the African diaspora and Rastafari, the appropriation and localisation of the global genre of reggae music, and the slogan as an utterance of collective assertion.

Like Norman Fairclough's method of critical discourse analysis (CDA) my approaches to analysis of the lyrics in *What's Be Happen?* are grouped into three levels. In brief terms, Fairclough's levels are firstly, linguistic analysis and description of a text, secondly interpretation of discursive

influences implicit in the text, and thirdly, consideration of broader socio-political factors that provide the context for the communicative event of the text.<sup>65</sup> These levels reflect the focus of CDA on the disclosure of power relations<sup>66</sup> and on the ideological effects of discourse,<sup>67</sup> although Fairclough does acknowledge that they can be applied in different order. Bakhtin's interest was not so much in ideology but rather in meaning and understanding, and the evaluative positions and rhetorical aims implied by the invoking of social language and language choices.<sup>68</sup> In line with this focus, and given the referents of Herbs' lyrics and Bakhtin's emphasis on the significance of social context for meaning, my approaches to analysis in the larger study begin at meta-level by identifying key social, political and ethical themes in the lyrics; this is followed by a detailed examination of accounts of relevant historical issues and events in contemporaneous and subsequent texts that relate to these themes. This meta-level also includes data from semi-structured interviews with Herbs' song-writers Toni Fonoti and Phil Toms. The meso-level of analysis focuses predominantly on investigating three areas of dialogic relations in Herbs' songs. These are the relationships between the Jamaican reggae genre and Pacific musical traditions, those embodied in discernible references to specific other texts, such as particular Bob Marley songs, and where significant, further relationships embodied in representations of time and space are examined through the lens of Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope. At the micro-level, analysis includes exploration of choices made among the heteroglossia of the English language, and choices of compositional style such as the use of particular forms of double-voiced discourse. In addition to a consideration of polyphony in the recorded performance of songs, Bakhtin's ideas about the relationship between content and form are supplemented by literary theorist and critic Terry Eagleton's contemporary approach to the analysis of poetic discourse<sup>69</sup> which is extended here to popular song lyrics. As similarly "compressed structures of language"<sup>70</sup> certain sub genres of popular songs can be viewed as sharing some rhetorical purposes as well as a number of the structural and surface features of poems. This approach includes the ways in which the language of poems and song conveys meaning through compression and association, assonance and alliteration, as well as through the form and functions of phonic equivalences in end-rhymes and the effects of parallelism in form and metre.

It is relevant to point out, however, that with the exception of the initial identification of themes and examination of the social and political context, the three-level organisation of approaches is not meant to suggest a rigidly-staged nor hierarchical approach to analysis. Bakhtin was opposed to systems and mechanisms<sup>71</sup> and viewed understanding as a creative response that is dependent on the reader or listener's background of knowledge and

experience.<sup>72</sup> Bakhtin described understanding as “a correlation with other texts and reinterpretation in a new context”;<sup>73</sup> as Peeren points out, the analyst is part of the dialogising background in which meaning is recast in such new contexts of understanding, and new perspectives are brought to bear.<sup>74</sup> While the analysis that follows is an informed response to Herbs’ creative work, choices made are part of a particular response and interpretation in which relationships and features that are seen to contribute significantly to the construction of meaning in one song may not be relevant in another. There are also inevitably changes in focus – sometimes swooping in on a “stray particular and sometimes pull[ing] back to pan the whole.”<sup>75</sup>

The analysis begins at meso-level by examining Herbs’ appropriation of reggae. Five of the six songs on *What’s Be Happen?* are reggae songs while the sixth, which was recorded acoustically immediately after the death of Bob Marley and after the other songs, is a homage to Marley and to reggae. The relationships between reggae and Pacific musical traditions in the adoption and re-accenting of the Jamaican reggae genre are therefore elements in the construction of meaning in each of the songs and the album as a whole. This is followed by a summary of relevant aspects of meta-level analysis that create the context for the subsequent examination of the discourse of the first song on the album, “Azania (Soon Come)”.

#### **4. Herbs’ appropriation of reggae**

Bakhtin argues that the intentions of language users are manifested primarily in their choice of a particular discursive genre.<sup>76</sup> As Jayne White explains, choice of genre is thus “a strategic means” by which participants in dialogue are able to orient themselves in the discursive relationship.<sup>77</sup> By extension, Herbs’ appropriation of reggae as a musical genre is a similar orientation. At the same time it can be understood, according to Stuart Hall, as a positioning in the construction of cultural identity<sup>78</sup> that includes what Theodore Gracyk describes as situating or positioning themselves in relation to other musicians.<sup>79</sup> Reggae carries complex overtones of meaning connected to the cultural domain of the African diaspora, which according to George Lipsitz, possesses an outstanding ability to nurture and sustain cultural and moral “alternatives to dominant values.”<sup>80</sup> It is described as an important source of inspiration for alienated and aggrieved people who may lack other sources or forms of oppositional and resistive practice.<sup>81</sup>

The reggae genre is seen by musicians as a musical weapon against racism, oppression and injustice, and as “message music” which responds to and reflects the social realities of its practitioners.<sup>82</sup> The global spread of the production and the consumption of reggae as a practice of resistance<sup>83</sup> has created a diaspora of peoples whose cultural connections are based, in the



words of Luis Alvarez, on “shared struggles for dignity in the face of the dehumanizing effects of colonisation and globalisation.”<sup>84</sup> In localising reggae musicians refract, reflect, and speak to local economic, social and political histories, struggles and place-based identities. At the same time, through the medium of the music and reggae’s “discourse of dignity”, they enter into a dialogue on shared struggles, resistance and convergences with other peoples and cultures<sup>85</sup> that include struggles to secure control and regain use of historical lands and also over the right to maintain ancestral languages.

In New Zealand Bob Marley’s reggae music resonated with Māori and Pacific Island people in particular. His concert at Auckland’s Western Springs in 1979 led to a flourishing of reggae among musicians and audiences and an increased interest in Rastafari, particularly among Māori.<sup>86</sup> While Marley’s music might be understood as speaking on behalf of the disinherited “sufferahs”<sup>87</sup> in the ghettos of Jamaica, it was seen as equally relevant to struggles with hardship, racism, and rural poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand; it became woven into the fabric of Pacific Islander and Māori post-colonial experience and search for identity.<sup>88</sup>

If the notion of language is extended to include music, Herbs’ songs can be understood as illustrating Bakhtin’s idea of the way in which appropriated language becomes someone’s own when populated with their own intentions and accent.<sup>89</sup> In localising and re-inscribing reggae<sup>90</sup> and in Bakhtin’s terms adapting the music to their particular expressive and semantic intentions, Herbs’ musicians employ Pacific musical accents.<sup>91</sup> The incorporation of elements such as Polynesian guitar strumming style and segments of Pacific Island drumming, for example, can be seen as a means by which the musicians construct and maintain their Pacific cultural identities and affirm their connections with their ancestral island homelands.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, Herbs musician and song-writer Phil Toms explains that while the band’s music on the album incorporates the distinctive reggae beat (1, 2, 3, 4), it is less complex rhythmically;<sup>93</sup> it is “more of a rolling thing” when compared with the snappier, staccato style of Jamaican roots reggae.<sup>94</sup> Phil Toms also highlights the importance of harmonisation in Herbs’ songs: “Polynesians are very strong on harmonies, so the *What’s Be Happen?* album has very strong Pacific sounding harmonies and that really, you could say... was part of [Herbs’] blue print for Pacific reggae”.

Extending Bakhtin’s notion of hybridity (as the mixing of at least two languages within a single utterance<sup>95</sup>), the hybrid cultural form of Herbs’ music is a consequence of the dialogic relationship between the mix of the music of Jamaican reggae and Pacific musical traditions. Through the lens of dialogism, complex dimensions of meaning emerge from and between reggae’s roots, associations and rhetorical overtones as a practice of

resistance, and the themes, techniques and referents of the Herbs musicians who appropriated it. Meanings associated with colonisation of New Zealand, and with post-colonial economic and cultural neglect of the interests of the indigenous and other marginalised populations can be seen to be inflected by their dialogic relationship with the struggles of the sufferers of Jamaica and their African cultural traditions. They are inflected too by Rastafari spirituality, with its emphasis on a democracy and freedom that are resistant to centralisation and to constraining and oppressive norms,<sup>96</sup> and Rastafari's dedication to self-esteem and racial pride.<sup>97</sup> These relationships are constituent of the construction of protest, resistance, or social commentary in each of the songs on Herbs' album, including "Azania (Soon Come)".

## **5. Azania (Soon Come)**

This first track on Herb's album is analysed in the following paragraphs in terms of the social and political context at the time it was written and a number of features. These include the incorporation of heteroglossia in the form of double-voiced discourse in the title and in the use of slogans, and heteroglossia in the song's compositional form. Bakhtin's concept of polyphony in literary discourse is mobilised in the examination of vocal performance, and his notion of the internal dialogism of discourse is extended and supplemented in the application of certain aspects of Eagleton's analysis of poetry to internal dialogic relationships in the lyrics.

## **6. Social and Political Context and the Discourse of Others**

As Bakhtin's theory of dialogism suggests, meanings associated with the complex dialogical relationships embedded in and between the lyrics, the music and the recorded performance of "Azania (Soon Come)" need to be considered in the historical and political context at that time. "Azania" was written by Ross France just before the controversial South African Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand, as a tribute to Bantu Steve Biko and to Nelson Mandela,<sup>98</sup> and according to Phil Toms, became an unofficial anthem for the protest movement against the tour.<sup>99</sup> As in many other countries there was widespread outrage in New Zealand at what Nelson Mandela had called the "moral genocide" of apartheid.<sup>100</sup> In 1981 Mandela was still incarcerated on Robben Island, and New Zealand was about to host a government-sanctioned rugby tour by the South African national rugby team. This was despite the United Nations' call to end sporting contacts with the apartheid regime, and contrary to the Gleneagles Agreement, in which every Commonwealth government had agreed to discourage contact with

South African sporting organizations in order to “combat the evil of apartheid.”<sup>101</sup> The conservative National government also ignored advice by groups such as the Catholic Bishops of New Zealand to stop the tour.<sup>102</sup> The South African team would include a sole black player, Errol Tobias, seen as “a token black player” in an otherwise racially selected team<sup>103</sup> and a gesture of “multi-racialism” in response to the sporting boycotts of South Africa. The reality was that in an oppressive legal framework of 317 apartheid laws at that time Tobias was “not allowed to vote, to be in any other than his own pass area for over 72 hours, [nor] to have a relationship with a white [person]”.<sup>104</sup> The team would be touring a country riven by conflict between opponents and supporters of the tour. Furthermore, the tour was to take place in a country where Pacific Island people in Auckland had had their homes raided on the suspicion they might be “over-stayers”, and where a cultural resurgence among Māori saw renewed attempts to reclaim the lands they had lost under colonial rule.

In the light of this context, Bakhtin’s conceptualisation of words marked by their social and political context and history<sup>105</sup> is particularly apposite in considering the title of this song. John Hilton traces the etymology of the name Azania, which has been used to designate North-East Africa since at least the first century CE.<sup>106</sup> Hilton summarises more recent usages and interpretations of the name by African nationalist movements, beginning with a proposal to replace the name South Africa with Azania at the All-African Peoples Conference in Accra in December 1958. The implication is that this proposal to replace a European name imposed on an African country by a white minority, with an African name, was an act of political support for the Black Nationalist cause in South Africa by the All-African movement, which sought the liberation of all African countries from colonial rule, and unification of Africa. The name Azania is in effect a symbol of decolonization and of a future free from racist laws and political and economic minority control.

Evelyn Waugh had used the name for a fictional island off the coast of Somaliland in his satirical novel on British colonial rule in Africa, *Black Mischief*.<sup>107</sup> According to Hilton, Waugh’s use of the name caught the attention of members of the Pan-African Congress (PAC) in 1965, and it was later publicised as the name for a new South Africa; although subsequently the ANC rejected the name because of its connotations of slavery and associations with the oppression of black people. In 1977 Steve Biko’s coffin carried the words: “One Azania / One Nation”, as does the headstone that marks his grave. In that context, the name Azania can be understood as embodying opposition and resistance to the idea of a divided nation based on racial segregation and inequality, but at the same time it offers a vision of what this African nation could and must become.

As Bakhtin points out, words we choose are found not in the dictionary, but in the discourse of others, serving particular intentions and points of view in particular contexts. The choice of a particular name (and by implication and extension, the rejection of another) can be seen in Bakhtin's approach to understanding as expressing an evaluative intonation.<sup>108</sup> It signals an author's semantic position and expressive intention in using a term "populated... with the intentions of others."<sup>109</sup> In choosing the name Azania for Herbs' song, it remains "half someone else's" in the history, intentions and associations it carries,<sup>110</sup> such as those of the Black Consciousness Movement that Steve Biko led. But its appropriation in a new context, sung by different voices, also conveys additional intentions and meanings. This choice of a name that symbolises a set of particular social beliefs can be seen as an ethical choice,<sup>111</sup> and as politically performative in expressing an alignment and solidarity with the suffering of black and coloured people under the apartheid regime, and with Black Nationalist and multi-racial ambitions for a new and just society, with a new name. At the same time it performs and signifies a rejection of the English language name, South Africa. As such, it can be seen as an ethical act of refusal in discourse to identify with or implicitly condone the colonial history and forces that led to its imposition.

Additional dialogic overtones and meanings emerge in the juxtaposition of "Azania" with the idiom "soon come", which carries overtones from its meaning in Jamaican Patois<sup>112</sup> and its use as a song title by Bob Marley and the Wailers.<sup>113</sup> These serve here to express the conviction that Azania, a South Africa freed from monologic and racist white-minority control, will be achieved, and at the same time a sense of willing its arrival: may it come soon, let it come soon. This stylisation of another discourse style, in this case the style of speakers of Jamaican Patois, is an exemplification of Bakhtin's notion of double-voiced discourse.<sup>114</sup> It can be understood as an incorporation of the discourse of people who have been historically abused, marginalised and discriminated against. At the same time it is orientated towards the speech acts and intentions of other musicians who have employed the discourse of reggae for sufferers of colonisation and its consequences. The appropriation and positioning of the idiom by this multi-racial band in Aotearoa New Zealand creates a nexus that is the focus of a complex of inter-connected, dialogic relationships. These involve New Zealand's own history of colonisation and Māori and Pacific Islanders' own experiences of racism; the struggle for liberation of marginalised, abused and oppressed peoples from colonial domination in South Africa; the historic and contemporary struggles of similarly marginalised peoples in Jamaica, as well as other locally-orientated intentions voiced through the music and lyrics of reggae. In this case the appropriation of the discourse of others is employed

in achieving the particular rhetorical goals of expressing support for and solidarity with the struggle for liberation in South Africa, and the polyphonic conviction that it will “soon come”.

## 7. Call and Response: Compositional Form and Content

For Bakhtin "form and content in discourse are one"<sup>115</sup> and Eagleton similarly stresses the inseparable relationship between meaning and verbal form, which in poetry are interwoven so intimately that form becomes constitutive of content.<sup>116</sup> It is useful to extend Eagleton's point to the discourse of Herbs' song "Azania" in considering implications for meaning in the relationships between compositional form, lyrical form and lyrical content.

(Call) What you say, what you say,  
 what you say, what you say  
 What you say, what you say, what you  
 say, what you say...

(Verse 1) **PRETORIA** we see through  
 all your lies  
 Hiding your evil system under multi-  
 racial disguise  
 White racists holding power  
 through the barrel of a gun  
 Soon come the liberation war  
 Send racists on the run

(Chorus) **Now come Azania**  
*Power to the freedom fighters*

**Azania**

*Liberation soon come*

**Azania**

*Power to the brothers and sisters*

**Azania**

*Send racists on the run*

(Verse 2) **STEVE BIKO**, murdered in  
 your jails  
 While spreading the word to all black  
 men  
 You'll win when you know you can  
**NELSON MANDELA**, languishing on  
 Robben Island  
 But you can't keep 'em no you can't  
 keep 'em down  
 (Chorus) **Soon come Azania...**

(Call) What you say, what you say,  
 what you say, what you say  
 What you say, what you say, what you  
 say, what you say

ANGOLA, MOZAMBIQUE,  
 ZIMBABWE, AZANIA  
 ANGOLA, MOZAMBIQUE,  
 ZIMBABWE, AZANIA  
 ANGOLA, MOZAMBIQUE,  
ZIMBABWE, AZANIA  
 ANGOLA, MOZAMBIQUE,  
 ZIMBABWE, AZANIA  
 ANGOLA, MOZAMBIQUE,  
 ZIMBABWE, AZANIA  
 Azania, Azania Azania, Azania.../  
 Azania,  
 Azania, Azania, Azania, Azania

Figure 1: Lyrics of “Azania (Soon Come)”. Non-italic text signifies a single lead vocalist; italics signify multiple voices; text in bold indicates that these words are sung loudly and forcefully by multiple voices.

Figure 1 is adapted from the song lyrics printed on the back sleeve of Herbs’ album. I have added words in parenthesis (Call, Chorus and so on) as well as the use of bold and italics in places. The figure illustrates the overall structure of the lyrics which follow the verse and chorus form common in popular song lyrics.<sup>117</sup> However, more unusually, the repeated vocal line “What you say, what you say, what you say, what you say” follows an instrumental introduction, suggesting an opening “call” before the first verse in a call and response dialogue.<sup>118</sup> In an inversion of the more common balance between call and response, where brief responses punctuate or emphasise longer statements in the call,<sup>119</sup> verses one and two and the chorus together can be interpreted here as a lengthy, declarative response to the opening call. The first verse, for example, includes the lines “Soon come the liberation war / Send racists on the run” followed by “Now come Azania” in the chorus. The opening call is repeated after the second chorus, and in this case the response is a repeated chant of “Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Azania” (capitalised in the printed lyrics on the album sleeve). This is joined by a parallel chant of “Azania”, with the implicit affirmation that South Africa will join the list of newly-independent African nations. In this way there is a merging of form and content in that both are in a sense a call and response and draw from the heteroglossia that includes that traditional African communicative genre.<sup>120</sup>

The initial lines of the response in verse one also exemplify the ways in which the condensed structures of song lyrics influence the construction of meaning. As Eagleton illustrates with poetry,<sup>121</sup> meaning is constructed through compression rather than the fully articulated connections typical of prose. For example, in the lines “Pretoria we see through all your lies / Hiding your evil system under multi-racial disguise / White racists holding power...” the administrative capital of South Africa is formulated in the compressed form of the iambic pentameter as the embodiment of the mendacious, “evil system” of the apartheid regime. The lyrics address “white racists” indirectly by means of personification of Pretoria in the phrases “your lies” and “your evil system”. As the next section explains, in a further dimension the structure and content of the lyrics also evoke the calls and responses typical of protest demonstrations.

## 8. Heteroglossia and Double-Voiced Discourse

Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia serves to frame consideration of the implications of double voiced discourse in the response. Organisations such as the ANC and anti-apartheid activists in New Zealand and elsewhere frequently used the traditional Zulu/Xhosa call "Amandla" ("Power") and the response "Ngawethu!" ("to the people" or "to the brothers and sisters") in protest demonstrations, and carried placards that read "Power to the People."<sup>122</sup> In the 1960s the American civil rights Black Power Party used the same slogan and had borrowed Mao Tse Tung's creed, "Political power comes through the barrel of a gun."<sup>123</sup> In part the incorporation of the phrases "Power to the freedom fighters... Power to the brothers and sisters" in the chorus reflects the gnomic function of reggae in its expression of truths and convictions by the incorporation of short succinct sayings.<sup>124</sup> But these incorporations are also dialogic references to the specific language of other discourse communities involved with the struggle for liberation in South Africa, represented in what David Brackett describes as the creative re-use of formulaic phrases and slogans.<sup>125</sup> The slogan, according to Graham Pechey is a micro-genre of the collective that is an utterance of collective assertion.<sup>126</sup> As modernity's distant echoes of ancient rallying calls in battle, the slogan is embedded with the "residual magic"<sup>127</sup> of optatives (speech acts that express wishes or desires), and of performatives. However, at the same time, slogans have an instrumental quality in celebrating the "certainties of the collective" and in playing a role in achieving a particular result or goal. They function as representations of a "civil-society-in-the-making" that feed the desired identity of that society.<sup>128</sup>

In a new link in the chain of related utterances, the incorporation of these liberation slogans in Herbs' lyrics is an expression both of the wish and the conviction that "liberation soon come". At the same time the song is a musical and lyrical celebration of that collective assertion. The form of inclusion in this double-voiced discourse, with no markers to distinguish these as the words of others, signifies a particular form of inter-subjective relationship. It is one that aligns the singers' values and intentions with the intentions of earlier voices, which in New Zealand may be understood to have included their own. The positioning of these slogans in the form of a call and response creates dialogic dimensions that fittingly associate the lyrics with the communal, dialogic and democratic cultural traditions of Sub-Saharan Africa and the music and discourse of the African diaspora described by Kevin Hickey.<sup>129</sup> It also creates a dialogic connection between the protest against racism and oppression constructed in this song and the slogans and protests voiced by the anti-apartheid and civil rights movements.

## 9. Polyphony and Dialogic Interplay in Vocal Performance

Bakhtin's notion of polyphony as the artistic "will to combine many wills"<sup>130</sup> is relevant to considerations of forms of dialogic interplay between the lead vocalist and backing voices in the vocal performance of "Azania". As Kwame Dawes notes in relation to Bob Marley's song "Concrete Jungle,"<sup>131</sup> such interplay can be as complex and pivotal to meaning as any other aspect of a song.<sup>132</sup> The two verses of the song are sung by the lead vocalist, Toni Fonoti. However there are exceptions in which Fonoti is joined by the other Herbs vocalists in the singing of particular words and names. For example there is a polyphonic harmonisation in the final repetition of "say" in the call "What you say, what you say, what you say, what you say". This interplay between a single vocalist and polyphony has the effect of emphasising the call for a response, making way for a clear, single-voiced narrative in the verse response. There is multiple vocalisation of "Pretoria" but this is in contrast to a polyphonic harmonisation of the names "Steve Biko" and "Nelson Mandela". These multi-voiced connections can be understood in the first case as highlighting and sonically emphasising the significance of Pretoria's role in the fates of Biko and Mandela, and in the second as a performative honouring of these figures in the use of harmonised voices for the sounding of their names.

There is a further example of dialogic interplay in the polyphonic chorus as well as in the chanting that follows the second call at the end of the song. Additional voices accompany the four Herbs vocalists for the line "Now come/Soon come Azania" and the repetitions of "Azania" in the chorus, underscoring meaning by adding to the intensity of sound. Extra voices also combine in calling out the names of the three recently-liberated countries "Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe", followed by "Azania" in the response to the second call towards the end of the song.<sup>133</sup> Each country's name is highlighted in turn over four repetitions of rhythmic chanting, underscored by further accompanying voices which repeat the name "Azania" in an extended call. The sonically dramatic form of response follows a crash of a cymbal and performs the optative function of willing and wishing South Africa (Azania) into becoming another name in the list of newly-liberated countries. At the same time it asserts that it will.

## 10. Internal Dialogic Relations

As Eagleton points out, end-rhymes create sound (phonic) equivalences between words, which can have the effect of yoking their meanings together or alternatively can serve to highlight differences between them.<sup>134</sup> The rhyming scheme in the first verse follows an aa/bc/bc pattern and in the



initial rhyming couplet discussed above there is a phonic relationship between “lies”/ “disguise”, which in this case connects their meanings. A semantic connection is thus created that highlights the relationship between the “lies” of Pretoria and its attempt to hide the realities of apartheid through “disguise”. It is likely in this context that “multi-racial disguise” references in part the selection of a single black player for the Springbok rugby team that was about to tour New Zealand. The semantic and phonic connection is also suggestive of the notion that a disguise is a form of lie, and that in this case lies are intended to mask the realities of apartheid practices.

Further internal phonic connections in the first verse create semantic links that similarly highlight dialogic relationships<sup>135</sup> and suggest a reinforcement of meaning. For example, in the end-rhymes “gun”/ “run”, and the par-rhyme “power” / “war”, the power held by “white racists” “through the barrel of a gun” is connected but “mis-matched” to the answering “liberation war”. The mis-match suggests an unequal struggle through which the liberation war will triumph and racists will be “on the run”. Repetition and interweaving of sounds serve to create and emphasise internal lyrical and musical rhythms and to create semantic connections. For example, internal textual relations are created throughout the verse by means of the repetition and interweaving of “l” sounds (“all” / “evil” / “multi-racial” / “holding” / “barrel”) related to Pretoria and the phonic connection but semantic contrast between the stronger initial consonant in “lies” and “liberation”.

In contrast to the first verse, the second employs blank verse form. It is possible that the absence of any attempt to rhyme line endings or to create internal rhymes reflects the song-writer’s intention to express particular and significant information (such as “murdered in your jails” and “languishing on Robben Island”) that was not easily (or readily) manipulated to suit the demands of creative language use.

In a further internal dialogic relationship between the first verse and chorus, the sixth line “Send racists on the run” is repeated at the end of the chorus. Other themes introduced in the first verse are repeated in a different context and more forceful form, in the chorus. The word “power” is transferred from “white racists” to “the freedom fighters” and to “the brothers and sisters”, and the lyrics assert that “liberation soon come”. With each main line consisting of three metric feet or units of rhythm (for example, “pówer to the fréedom fighters” / Líberation sóon cóme”), the rhythmic form parallels and reinforces the assertive lyrical content.

## 11. Conclusion

This article has presented an analysis and interpretation of Herbs' construction of protest in the discourse of their song "Azania (Soon Come)". It has located this analysis in the philosophical and theoretical framework of Bakhtin's concept of dialogism in discourse, in which "[e]verything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole".<sup>136</sup> The analysis focuses particularly on discernible and implicit dialogic relations in discourse, on what Lillis describes as dialogism at a descriptive level.<sup>137</sup> It reveals that "the creative verbal [and musical] whole"<sup>138</sup> of this reggae song of protest is a broad, diverse, and complex network of semantic relations and dimensions of meaning. These include relationships between the discourse and the political and social context at that time, those between the appropriated reggae genre and Pacific musical traditions, and others created by double-voiced discourse. Words from the discourse of others, marked by their social history and associated values, are juxtaposed in the title to construct a sense of solidarity with those others and both an assertion and a will that a South Africa free of racism "soon come". The compositional structure draws from heteroglossia in the generic form of the traditional sub-Saharan African call and response. Assertions that liberation "soon come" are reinforced by the voices, values and intentions of others embodied in civil rights and anti-apartheid movements slogans. Dialogic relations in the interplay between a single voice, multiple voices and polyphonic harmonisation in the performance of the song are seen to contribute to highlighting the administrative centre of the apartheid regime and to emphasising and localising the tribute to Steve Biko and Nelson Mandela. Similarly, end-rhymes and phonic repetition create semantic connections that contribute to the construction of protest.

The localisation of forms of popular music is conceptualised as a dynamic process of identifications.<sup>139</sup> On this view, Herbs' appropriation of reggae can be seen as an identification with the roots, musical and lyrical values and rhetorical strategies associated with reggae as a practice of resistance.<sup>140</sup> As such it signals Herbs' expressive intentions and a political and ethical position. At the same time it is an identification with Pacific culture and musical traditions. Through the lens of dialogism, complex dimensions of meaning – those that I have suggested are created in the hybrid form of Herbs' Pacific reggae – are brought to bear in the protest constructed in this song.

Bakhtin's theories that relate to the discourse of the modern novel have been extended in this analysis to the discourse of popular song lyrics. It has illustrated the particular relevance of Bakhtin's emphasis on the relationship between discourse and social and historical context, as well as his

theorisation of heteroglossia and double-voiced discourse and of language choices as ethical choices. I have demonstrated the flexibility of Bakhtin's theory of the appropriation of language by extending it to Herbs' music, as well as the relevance of the notion of polyphony for a recorded performance that is strategically polyphonic in its vocalisation.

In doing this the article has shown the compatibility between Bakhtin's theorisation of popular culture as "the privileged bearer of democratic and progressive values"<sup>141</sup> and the analysis of this important cultural artefact. It has demonstrated further that when supplemented by more recent theories relating to cultural products that were beyond the scope of Bakhtin's work, Bakhtin's ideas and tools for analysis provoke a productive examination of dialogic relations that contribute to the construction of meaning, and have particular relevance for the analysis of contemporary, creative popular discourse related to ethical and cultural values.

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