

WHAT'S BE HAPPEN?

THE DISCOURSE OF REGGAE LYRICS THIRTY YEARS ON

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses What's Be Happen?, New Zealand's first reggae album, released by the band Herbs in July 1981. The lyrics and adopted 'message music' constitute a nexus that connects, marks and speaks of salient political and social events and issues in the 1970s and early 1980s. These issues divided New Zealand society at the time, and have helped shape both opinion and many New Zealanders' sense of their identity. The lyrics refer in particular to protests against the loss of Māori ancestral lands; the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa; the conflict between loss of Pacific Island roots and material ambitions in New Zealand, as well as the day to day experiences and police treatment of urban Māori and Pacific Island people. Analysis of the lyrics in this discussion draws on Bakhtin's (1981) theories of heteroglossia and the dialogic responsiveness of texts.

Herbs have been described as the 'most prominent and longest-surviving Polynesian reggae group' in New Zealand (Mitchell, 1996: 243) and critic of popular music Graham Reid describes the six songs on their album *What's Be Happen?* (Herbs, 1981) – New Zealand's first reggae album – as a 'watershed' in the history of New Zealand popular music (Reid, 2009). While Herbs was not the first New Zealand reggae band, music historian John Dix describes it as the first to achieve 'a distinctive Polynesian feel' (Dix, 2005: 260). Similarly, Graham Reid places Herbs at the forefront of Pacific reggae, with the multi-ethnic mix of the five musicians¹ representing 'urban Polynesia' and bringing a variety of Pacific influences to bear on the music (Reid, 2009: para. 8). Furthermore, writer Duncan Campbell (1993, cited in Mitchell, 1996: 243) argues that the album set 'a standard for Pacific reggae which has arguably never been surpassed'. The album may have made little impact on the charts (as both Reid and Dix² point out), but the band and the album itself had an important influence on other bands such as Dread Beat and Blood (Dix, 2005), and on the development

of a distinctive Pacific Island reggae sound. Recorded at Mascot Studios in Auckland and issued in July 1981 by Warrior Records, the album was released in the wake of protests against the sale of former Māori land at Bastion Point in Auckland. The front sleeve of the album is dominated by a black and white aerial photograph of the police eviction of Bastion Point occupiers in Auckland in 1978, in which over two hundred protesters were arrested. The album's release was just before the start of the socially divisive South African rugby tour of New Zealand.

John Dix and Graham Reid differ over other aspects of the significance of *What's Be Happen?* Dix argues that Herbs' sole achievement was 'to produce a record that reflected the Polynesian experience through [localised] Jamaican music' with what he describes as a New Zealand 'flavouring' in the lyrics, and that while the cover photograph is a portrayal of the 'clash of Maori mana and pakeha authority, the six songs were far from militant' (Dix, 2005: 261). This view is echoed by Mitchell's description (1996: 243) of Herbs' music as 'a soft brand of politically orientated Polynesian reggae'. Reid, in contrast argues that the lyrics speak 'with a righteous anger' and courage rarely heard from New Zealand musicians (2009: para. 4). It is argued here that in addition to indexing the global adoption of reggae rhythms and reggae ethos as 'message music' (Weber, 2000: 117), the historical and cultural significance of the album lies in the fact that the songs bear popular witness to highly political and significant contemporaneous struggles and conflicts in New Zealand in the 1970s and early 1980s. The album emerged in the wake of the 1970s, the latter part of which in particular was a time of widespread dissent, protest and fierce debate over social issues (Minto, 2009); a period that James Belich has described as one of critical change in New Zealand's recent history (Belich, 2001). Thirty years on, the album provides a culturally valuable, popular nexus that connects, marks and speaks of salient international and domestic events and social issues at that time.

The social and political events and issues so fiercely contested and debated in the 1970s helped to shape opinion and many New Zealanders' sense of their own identity (Belich, 2001; Minto, 2009), as did events that followed in the early 1980s. These include conflict and protest over Māori land losses, and the wider cultural and language losses symbolised by the more tangible loss of land; racism in the form of South African apartheid and racially selected international rugby teams; localised racism in government and police treatment of Polynesian so-called over-stayers, as well as the day to day experiences of newly urban Māori and Pacific Island people.

As Marylin Waring (2009) points out, the 1970s also saw the rise of the feminist movement in New Zealand and elsewhere, and significant protest movements in favour of homosexual law reform and women's liberation. There were campaigns against sexual stereotyping and objectification of women (Waring, 2009) and the first university course in Women's Studies – 'Women and Sociology' at the University of Waikato – was established in 1974 as part of the Social Science degree (Ritchie, 1994). Such conflicts and campaigns can be viewed as struggles over human rights and issues of identity, as well as over associated ethical values and the kind of society people wanted New Zealand to be (Phillips as cited in Hubbard, 2010; Phillips, 2006). New Zealanders' experiences and responses to some of these conflicts form the social and political context for the lyrics in the album, and are constituted in the lyrics themselves.

The consequences of colonisation and of the subsequent neglect of Māori interests in the period of post-colonisation had led to a significant loss of Māori culture, language and land (Williams, 2007). Protests against land confiscation and Māori land losses over many years came to the fore in the mid-1970s and are related to a period of considerable increase in Māori radicalism, activism, and cultural and political self-assertion (Belich, 2001). Key events in relation to land losses included the Māori Land March or hikoi in 1975 – the great protest march from the top of the North Island to Wellington – as well as campaigns for the return of the Raglan golf course to Māori ownership and for Bastion Point in Auckland to be returned to Ngāti Whātua (King, 2003; Orakei Māori Committee Action Group, 1978). As Michael King (2003) explains, Prime Minister Robert Muldoon's Government announced in 1976 that the Crown planned to sell Bastion Point for high-income housing development, to the highest corporate bidder. The Orakei Māori Action Committee was formed to prevent this subdivision by organising direct action and occupation of the land. In May 1978, after seventeen months, and in the largest ever police operation in New Zealand (King, 2003) – documented by the late Merata Mita in her film *Bastion Point: Day 507* (Mita & Pohlmann, 1980) – the police and the army were used to eject the occupiers by force and destroy all traces of the occupation. In addition to the depiction of police action at Bastion Point on the album's front sleeve, the lyrics of the song 'One Brotherhood' reference the struggles in Raglan and Orakei (Bastion Point) for the return of Māori land: 'Well they're fighting for land in Raglan / And they're fighting for land in Orakei'. Developers and corporations seeking to capitalise on the opportunities to profit from former Māori land are characterised indirectly as 'Crazy people wanting more, more, more / And they're wrecking the joint / While they take from you and me'.

While King argues that the Bastion Point occupation in particular and use of force to end it played an important part in highlighting injustices against Māori and, in focusing media attention on these, it took a further ten years before the Māori claims to the land were supported by the Waitangi Tribunal, and that finding was endorsed by the New Zealand government. Some argue that the album itself assisted in the return of Bastion Point to Ngāti Whatua, and that it also acted as a catalyst for protests against the South African Springbok tour of New Zealand in 1981 (www.rebelmusic.co.nz/herbs.htm).



Front sleeve of *What's Be Happen?*: aerial view of Bastion Point evictions by police, 15 May 1978

With the exception of particular names – Pretoria, Steve Biko and Nelson Mandela—the first two verses of the song *Azania* are sung by a single vocalist. The chorus: 'Soon come Azania / Power to the freedom fighters / Azania / Liberation soon come / Azania / Power to the brothers and sisters / Azania / Send racists on the run', as well as a final chanted verse, are sung by the three Herbs vocalists and a further four singers identified on the sleeve notes as providing background vocals. Together the combination of the repetitive reggae beat, the rhythmic repetition of 'Azania', the repetition of a single line of chanted lyrics in the final verse ('Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Azania'), combined with

shifts from a single voice to a chorus of voices and increase in the volume of the voices in the final verse create an increasing sense of urgency that reflects the growing momentum of the protests against the Springbok rugby tour in 1981.

In signing the 1977 Gleneagles Agreement every government in the Commonwealth had agreed to ‘vigorously combat the evil of apartheid... by taking every practical step to discourage contact or competition by their nationals with sporting organizations ... from South Africa’ (Sinclair, 1988: 318). Despite the growing international campaign against what Nelson Mandela described as the ‘moral genocide’ of apartheid (Nelson Mandela as cited in Carlin, 2008: 2) in South Africa, the New Zealand government failed to intervene in the Rugby Union’s agreement to another Springbok tour. This fuelled huge protests and demonstrations against the matches – recorded in Merata Mita’s documentary *Patu!* (1983) – which were scheduled to begin in Gisborne on 22 July. The tour resulted in the greatest civil violence since the riots during the Depression in 1932 (Belich, 2001). John Carlin, South Africa bureau chief for the London Independent from 1989 to 1995, is among those who have referred to the polarisation of the New Zealand population³, with the tour taking place in an environment of demonstrations, riot police, soldiers and barbed wire, and at the final game a plane flying low over the stadium dropping flour bombs (Carlin, 2008). A match in Hamilton was cancelled when protesters broke into the grounds; rugby fields were guarded by riot police with batons. These protests pitted New Zealanders against New Zealanders, family members against family members, and for some illustrated the fragility of the fabric of civil society (Williams, 2007). The steady tempo of the reggae beat and lyrics of Herbs’ song ‘Azania’ combine to assert that for Azania (a new South Africa freed from apartheid and white rule) ‘Liberation soon come’.

The lyrics in the title track of *What’s Be Happen?* speak of a sense of loss of homeland and Pacific island roots, and of the miserable realities experienced by many Pacific Island migrants as a consequence of their attempts to achieve greater material well-being for their families. In 1966, almost 50% of the Pacific Island population in New Zealand had right of entry as New Zealand citizens, and by 1976 there were more than 60,000 Pacific Islanders living in New Zealand (Sinclair, 1988). This was a result of larger numbers of people from the Islands arriving in the 1960s with active encouragement by both the New Zealand government and New Zealand businesses (Belich, 2001). Michael King describes ‘a more overt form of materialism’ (King, 2003, p.412) in post-war New Zealand than before, which centred on the desire for more consumer goods – such as refrigerators, washing machines and family cars—and better

homes. It is not surprising that people from the Pacific Islands were attracted by the promise of opportunities to share in New Zealand's material prosperity. However, the gentle reggae rhythms of the title track and its minor key are wistful. Rapid Pacific drum-like sound effects produced by a fragment of reverse recording at the beginning of the song are echoed by a further fragment of Cook Island log drum percussion provided by the Rarotonganui Cultural Club at the end of the song.⁴ Together these evoke the sounds and rhythms of the Pacific island home left behind, which 'grows weak and abandoned, abandoned and forsaken, yeah'. The lyrics highlight the conflicts and contradictions involved in buying a house, but having to work too hard to spend much time in it: 'Say you're alright brada, cause you've just bought a house / Come in to it at eve and in the morning you leave'. Buying a car or consumer goods on hire purchase meant having to slave to maintain the interest payments: 'Say you're alright brada, cause you got hire purchase / No need to pay just slave and slave and slave'. The chorus, repeated a second time in Samoan, asks poignantly 'Whats be happen, when the children turn away / And why for you stay when nothing remains / And why for you laugh when I long for home?'

The treatment of urban Pacific Island and Māori people by police at that time – with random identification (I&D) checks and denial of rights – are invoked by the lyrics of 'Whistling in the Dark': 'I was minding my own floating so free / Carload of D's pulled me up I&D [What's your name boy!] / They put me in chains then asked me my name / They kept me all night ignored all my rights'. For many in New Zealand the overt racist treatment of Pacific Island people in the second half of the 1970s resonated with the racism in South Africa (Sinclair, 1988). Attitudes in New Zealand to Pacific Island immigration, which, according to James Belich (2001) had been relatively unproblematic, deteriorated in the mid-1970s with clear racist overtones. Keith Sinclair's description of the economic conditions in New Zealand during the period offers a material explanation for this change in attitude. New Zealand is described as undergoing the greatest economic difficulties since the 1930s (Sinclair, 1988). The post-war 'materialists' paradise' (Sinclair, 1988: 29) was in trouble, with world oil prices quadrupling in 1973. The economic boom collapsed and New Zealand's balance of payments was at its worst since the 1930s. Overseas borrowing led to a level of external public debt of \$863 million in 1975 (Sinclair, 1988). The National Party, led by Robert Muldoon, won the election in 1975 and the new government continued to borrow overseas; there was a large domestic budget deficit and several devaluations of the dollar. By the mid and late 1970s Sinclair describes New Zealand as undergoing the greatest economic difficulties since the 1930s: inflation averaged 10% and reached 18% in 1976. Perhaps most significantly in terms of what was to follow, unemployment, although modest

compared to levels elsewhere, was increasing.

Racism and prejudice were most obviously expressed in the ‘over-stayer affair’ and the dawn raids on the homes of Pacific Island people between 1976 and 1977. In 1976, many Tongan, Samoan and other ‘over-stayers’, who had stayed on after coming to New Zealand on short-term work or visitors’ permits were rounded up in rough dawn raids in ‘Operation Immigration’ (Carlyon & Morrow, 2008: 267), alongside random checks of Polynesian-looking people on the street. These people were then deported. Police action and attitudes – for example the chief of Auckland police who proposed that ‘people who did not look like New Zealanders should carry passports’ – led to high levels of racial tension (Belich, 2001: 535). These tensions and the experiences of urban Māori and Pacific people are voiced in ‘Whistling in the Dark’: ‘I was walking along just beating the feet / When I chance to meet a pig on the beat / The look that he sent was one of contempt’. The economic downturn had also affected Māori people who had urbanised and taken up industrial employment in large numbers in the post-war period (See for example King, 2003; Williams, 2007). The economic change affected Māori particularly badly with a reduction in the number of unskilled jobs, for which young Māori had been encouraged to leave school early, and high levels of unemployment (Belich, 2001). By 1981, according to James Belich (2001), the overall unemployment rates were 14.1 percent for Māori, and 3.7 percent for Pakeha. Belich describes the social impacts on working class Māori of the new economic situation, including unemployment, poverty, an increase in rates of crime, de-socialisation from kin links and a new alienation from mainstream politics and economics. However, the chorus of ‘Whistling in the Dark’ – ‘They’re whistlin’ in the dark no bite all bark / ’Fraid of young minds one spark all fire / Warriors will rumble blue boys will stumble...’ perhaps also signals the influence of the great increase in radicalism, political activism and self assertion of Māori in particular – described by James Belich as a new form of Māori ‘decolonisation’ (Belich, 2001: 475).

In terms of the musical genre itself, five of the six songs are reggae songs. Herbs’ adoption of reggae in the 1970s and its adoption by other New Zealand musicians can partly be understood in terms of Jamaican cultural studies scholar Carolyn Cooper’s location of reggae within a framework of cultural resistance because of its longstanding associations with cultural domination and suppression of the Jamaican ‘sufferahs’ (Cooper, 1989). The global flow of the genre from its roots in Jamaica to all five continents as an oppositional cultural form and rhetorical critique has been well documented (see for example Alvarez, 2008). Music sociologist and critic Simon Frith has described the use of adopted musical forms as creating and articulating understandings

of group relations, social ideologies and ethical codes (Frith, 1987). While in focusing specifically on reggae rhythms and lyrics, historian Luis Alvarez has described these as constructing and reflecting local economic, social and political histories and struggles, and place-based identities, but also as relating to the struggles of others (Alvarez, 2008). Reggae thus offers the possibility of local identities that draw on shared struggles and convergences. According to Luis Alvarez' analysis, the global spread, production and consumption of reggae have created a diaspora of peoples whose cultural connections or imagined community (Anderson, 1994) are based on 'shared struggles for dignity in the face of the dehumanizing effects of colonisation and globalisation' (Alvarez, 2008: 575). In Thomas Weber's examination of the globalisation of reggae he found that reggae practitioners see reggae as a 'message music' or 'musical weapon' against racism, oppression and injustice that responds to and reflects the social realities of its practitioners (Weber, 2000: 117 & 121). This view of reggae as message music has been reinforced by New Zealand rapper Che Fu, who, describing reggae as 'the biggest music in Polynesia' in the late 1990s, explained: 'It's as if our people invented it... It came from a place of islands, sand, coconut trees and seamanship. So our people could feel what they were singing. But it was the message as well. The Jamaicans talked about struggle... Reggae talked about poverty, hunger ... yep our people could relate to that' ('Che Fu' Che Rauhihi Ness, as cited in Maniapoto, 1999:32). Perhaps particularly relevant here in the discussion of *What's Be Happen?* is the theorisation of the localisation of music as, among other things, a dynamic process of identifications (Pennycook & Mitchell, 2009). The lyrics and music can be viewed as constructing a series of identifications or expressions of solidarity with oppressed peoples, including those in South Africa oppressed by a racist regime and those in New Zealand who struggle for justice in the return of confiscated lands and for just, non-racist treatment by the police.

Thomas Weber's analysis offers a response to John Dix's comment that the lyrics of the album *What's Be Happen?* are 'far from militant' (Dix, 2005: 261). He argues that in its response to social realities, reggae promotes collective action related to issues of equality, social change and justice. In a view that is similar to Simon Frith's – that adopted musical forms create and articulate ethical codes – for Weber the globalisation of reggae has led to a new form of cultural politics, based on the shared common values and ideals of its practitioners. The key focus is on changing values, 'offering visions and models of meaning and identity which can be consciously chosen' (Weber, 2000: 217) rather than on (militantly) achieving particular political goals. Such visions, of social solidarity, shared values and interests – as well as resistance to injustice – are evoked particularly by the lyrics of 'Azania' and 'One Brotherhood', as well as by the

adoption of reggae itself.

The growing popularity of reggae in the late 1970s among Māori and Pacific Island people in particular was greatly influenced by resonations with Bob Marley's message music and lyrics, which speak of equal rights, justice, resistance and liberation. Bob Marley's concert at Western Springs in April 1979 as part of the 'Babylon by Bus' tour reinforced this influence (Mitchell, 1996), and the development of a flourishing reggae scene with Herbs at the forefront of Pacific reggae (Dix, 2005; Reid, 2009). The final track 'Reggae's Doing Fine' is a ballad-like song that pays tribute to Bob Marley, who died on 11th May 1981, just before the album was released. It is also a wider tribute to reggae. An extract from these lyrics illustrates the influences of the growing and related interest in Rastafari at that time (Dix, 2005). These include adopted elements of Dread Talk (Rastafari modes of speech and language use) such as Biblical references and terminology (Cattermole, 2004; Weber, 2000): 'The lion with the lamb you reign in Zion / For the love of man you shall sing... You got no rivals just us survivors / Fill the cup lively up light up... Reggae's doing fine'.

Other language choices in the discourse of the lyrics are meaningful. The twentieth century Russian language theorist and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin used the term 'heteroglossia' for the incorporation in texts of different languages and of socially or politically marked lexical items (Bakhtin, 1981). Heteroglossia represents the way in which a language is diversified and stratified by historical processes into linguistic dialects and socio-ideological languages (Bakhtin, 1981). In relation to the language of New Zealand reggae lyrics, Jennifer Cattermole points out that, while reggae artists generally sing in English (in the case of Herbs, the use of Māori is generally limited to interjections such as 'haere mai!'), the title track of *What's Be Happen?* is an exception (Cattermole, 2011: 53). The predominantly English lyrics of the title track include a repetition of the full chorus in Samoan, as well as interjections in Samoan, Tongan, and Māori. The use of all four languages in this song can be seen as strengthening 'the band's kaupapa (philosophy) of Pacific unity' and reinforcing the construction and expression of Pacific identity in the song (Cattermole, 2011: 53).

The use of the term 'Azania' for South Africa is an example of a politically marked lexical item. Azania was originally a name for North-East Africa – more recently used in the 1940s in the context of African nationalism – and from the late 1960s was used by members of the Pan-African National Congress as the name for a new South Africa (Hilton, 1993). The choice of this name in place of 'South Africa' exemplifies Bakhtin's view of the role of lan-

guage in embodying ethical choices (Nielsen, 1995) which align the language user with a particular 'side' in the dialogic negotiations and conflicts that are constituted in language (Dentith, 1995). The choice of the term can be seen as a marker of identification with the anti-apartheid cause and Black liberation in South Africa, as well as having a rhetorical purpose in encouraging support in New Zealand for the struggle for liberation. As for other language choices, the album title itself evokes Jamaican patois and its associations with roots reggae (Weber, 2000),⁵ and the use of the Biblical terminology of Rastafari has already been noted.

Bakhtin viewed language and discourse both as constructions of social relationships embedded in particular historical and social conditions, and as dialogic. Texts are dialogic in that they assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate previous utterances (Bakhtin, 1981) and the dialogic responsiveness⁶ of texts to other historical, contemporaneous and anticipated future texts is evident in content and textual form. Such dialogic responsiveness can be identified in 'intertextual'⁷ references to other songs. The album title *What's Be Happen?* as a significant example resonates strongly with Marvin Gaye's highly influential song and album entitled *What's Going On?*, which was released ten years earlier in May 1971. Soul musician Marvin Gaye's politically-charged album includes songs that are linked around the central theme of social commentary on injustice, suffering, brutality and conflict in the United States (from the generalised point of view of a soldier returning from the war in Vietnam). The lyrics of the title track highlight the need for change – 'We've got to find a way to bring some understanding' – and the album is described by singer-song-writer and record producer Smokey Robinson as a direct reflection of the social and political problems in the United States at that time and as 'music that defined a decade' (Window on the World, 2011). Smokey Robinson argues that *What's Going On?* has provided inspiration for generations of musicians to produce music that highlights social problems. The Jamaican patois-influenced reworking of Gaye's seminal album title for the Herbs' album can be seen as intertextual evidence of this influence. *What's Be Happen?* references both Gaye's album title and a gently repeated refrain at the end of Gaye's title track: 'What's happening, brother?' The title of the Herbs' album therefore can be seen as an identification with Afro-American soul music and the social conflicts highlighted by the lyrics of Marvin Gaye's songs, and at the same time constructing an identification with the ethical values associated with Jamaican roots reggae as message music.

Further dialogic relationships in the form of overt intertextuality can be identified in the lyrics of *What's Be Happen?* These are most evident in a line from

'Reggae's Doing Fine' cited earlier: 'Fill the cup lively up light up'. This appears to reference Bob Marley's song 'My Cup' (1970), which mourns the death of a friend: 'my cup is running over and I don't know what to do /... I've lost the best friend that I ever knew'. Marley's lyrics, and indirectly their own historical Biblical source, are fittingly referenced in Herbs' song 'Reggae's Doing Fine'. The same line from 'Reggae's Doing Fine' also cites a further Bob Marley song, 'Lively Up Yourself' (1974). In Marley's song the full phrase is 'Lively up yourself and don't be no drag'. Its uplifting message or encouragement not to be down-hearted is echoed by the words of the Herbs' song in which, in spite of Bob Marley's death, the chorus ends with the line: 'Good times, good times, Reggae's doing fine'.

Finally, it is relevant to consider the relationship between the musical localisation of reggae as expressions of place-based and cultural identity. Jennifer Cattermole's (2004; 2011) analysis of reggae in New Zealand has demonstrated that, while it has stylistic similarities with international roots reggae, the localisation of reggae by New Zealand musicians has been achieved by drawing on and incorporating elements of traditional music styles from their own Pacific cultures to create a distinctive New Zealand style of roots reggae. The inclusion of such elements is seen as a means by which Herbs and other New Zealand musicians have constructed and maintained 'their cultural identities and ... affirm[ed] their ties with ancestral homelands' (Cattermole, 2004: 51). In *What's Be Happen?* these traditional musical elements include the incorporation of Cook Island log drums and rhythms in the title track (Cattermole, 2011); particular patterns of Pacific guitar strums which emphasise the 2nd and 4th beats (Cattermole, 2011), illustrated particularly in 'Reggae's Doing Fine'; and a more legato or smoother style. Cattermole also illustrates that the discourses of local reggae critics and musicians indicate their view that there is a distinctive style of reggae in New Zealand. For example, Herbs' music has been described as 'a reggae of the streets of Ponsonby, Newton and Otara ... a reggae set against the gentle roll of Polynesia' (Reid, 1982, cited in Cattermole, 2011: 54). Herbs member Charlie Tumahai, who joined the band in 1985, reinforces this view of localised reggae as evocative of the rolling Pacific Ocean. Tumahai describes the band's music as having 'more of a roll. The [Jamaican] roots reggae is more of a staccato style; they leave holes, take things away... Whereas the Herbs rhythm is more of a rolling thing, quite smooth.' (Tumahai as cited in Cattermole, 2011: 54)

In conclusion, *What's Be Happen?* is a significant historic artefact that marks an important period in New Zealand's modern history. The 'righteous anger' of the lyrics, the just and justifiable anger of the messages and the experiences

of prejudice and loss constructed in the lyrics, are reinforced by Herbs' adoption of reggae. As Herbs lyric writer Toni Fonoti explains there are analogies between contemporaneous influences and events: 'The time is 1981 in NZ converging Polynesian cultures and tones of overstayer policies ... and South African white policy of Apartheid served as parallels with Maori Bastion Point [the] Land March [and the] emergence of Poly Reggae.' (Fonoti, 2010).

Mikhail Bakhtin's theorisation of language and discourse is valuable for a close analysis of the lyrics of the album. Bakhtin argues that living utterances take meaning and shape in a specific social environment at a particular moment in history. In brushing up against 'thousands of living dialogic threads' (Bakhtin, 1981: 276) the words of these songs become active participants in social dialogue. The threads interwoven in these songs include those that stretch from the racist rhetoric and realities of apartheid in South Africa to the streets and rugby fields of New Zealand, to historical protests and conflicts over lost Māori land and cultural losses. There are threads of cultural identity and loss stretching between Pacific Island roots and the realities of life in urban New Zealand, interlinked with Pacific Island and Māori experiences of racism and prejudice. From its roots in Jamaica, the global thread of reggae meets in its localisation the strands of rhythm and sounds of the Pacific. Furthermore, the lyrics involve language choices that reinforce the construction and expression of Pacific unity and identity, while in the choice of specific lexical items or references to other texts, they position the utterances in terms of the dialogic threads of social and cultural history.

POSTSCRIPT

On 13 September 2012 Herbs were inducted into the New Zealand Music Hall of Fame at the APRA Silver Scrolls awards ceremony in Auckland Town Hall. The induction recognises 'legendary' musicians who have had a particular influence and have helped shape popular music in New Zealand.

NOTES

- 1 The band at that time consisted of Māori guitarist Dilworth Karaka, Pacific Islanders Toni Fonoti (vocals and lyrics), Spencer Fusimalohi (guitar) and Fred Faleauto (drums), and Pakeha bassist and lyric writer Phil Toms. Their manager was former president of the Polynesian Panthers, Will 'Ilohahia.
- 2 While Campbell, Dix and Reid are not academic sources, the latter two in particular are commonly cited by academic writers in the field of New Zealand

popular music. It therefore seems appropriate to draw on such sources in a discussion of the cultural significance of this album. All three are referred to by Tony Mitchell (1996), a prominent academic in the field of cultural studies and New Zealand popular music and by Jennifer Cattermole (2011) in her examination of the localisation of reggae in New Zealand. Although Mitchell regarded the historical updates in the second edition of music historian John Dix's book 'Stranded in Paradise' (2005) as 'largely perfunctory overviews of an admittedly diverse and complex range of musical history' (Mitchell, 2006: 12), he describes the first edition as 'an extraordinary achievement, not just in musical history but in social history' (p.11).

- 3 In a reference to the same events, a 2010 Māori TV *Native Affairs* documentary (June 14; directed by Jason Rameka), includes an interview with Wynard Claasson, captain of the 1981 Springboks touring team. Claasson describes his shock at witnessing the splitting of New Zealand families and the violence that occurred 'because of us'.
- 4 Polynesian percussion units were provided by the Rarotonganui Cultural Club. See back sleeve notes of *What's Be Happen?*
- 5 Roots reggae as defined by Weber (2000: 9) is the form popularised internationally by Bob Marley and others, featuring full instrumentation and harmonised vocals.
- 6 Bakhtin (1986: 91) argued that 'Any concrete utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere. ... Utterances are not indifferent to one another, and are not self-sufficient; they are aware of and mutually reflect one another... Every utterance must be regarded as primarily a *response* to preceding utterances of the given sphere (we understand the word 'response' here in the broadest sense). Each utterance refutes affirms, supplements, and relies upon the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account... Therefore, each kind of utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances of the given sphere of speech communication.'
- 7 Drawing particularly from Mikhail Bakhtin's 'Discourse in the Novel', 1981, intertextuality is used here in a restricted sense within the overall framework of dialogism to refer to explicit references to other texts; in other words intertextual references represent identifiable interactions between texts and other discourse events.

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