Reverie qua worldliness in the wilderness texts: the autobiographical fiction of Es’kia Mphahlele and N. Chabani Manganyi*

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Abstract: Written from the culmination point of exile in the universities of Denver and Yale, the two fictional autobiographies of Es’kia Mphahlele and Noel Chabani Manganyi mobilize reverie to hold in counterpoise the harsh reality of hostile home and exile. The article argues, through a reading of these texts via ideas of double consciousness and temporality, that we need to interpret reverie at the level of the interpenetration of the subject and object as both counterpoint to and counterpart of the ‘I’ and ‘me’ of fictional autobiography. These fictional autobiographies are framed in the double temporality of the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of exile, the most powerful trope of which is the near-escapism of reverie itself in the course of fantasies of violence. The fictional autobiography of exile – what is here called the wilderness text – becomes a line of flight imbued with a worldliness (a being-in-the-world) that puts the body at stake as it contemplates and solidifies existing reality by doubling its representational time by means of reverie.

Keywords: Es’kia Mphahlele; N. Chabani Manganyi; reverie; Deleuzean virtuality; Jean-Paul Sartre; double temporality; fugitive double consciousness; autobiographical fiction; exile; body without organs

In 1971, the year that marks the publication of Ihab Hassan’s *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (1971a), Es’kia Mphahlele opens his novel of autobiographical fiction with a description of a son’s dismembered black corpse, in the fresh aftermath of its being torn apart in a crocodile-infested river on the border on an African country. Although the two texts may seem unrelated in content, they both address their concerns in the context of existentialism to a greater or lesser extent: Hassan delimits his existential thrust to the ‘interludes’ that serve as a counterpoint to his discussions on Kafka, Genet, Hemingway, and others (Bertens 1995, 39), whilst Mphahlele in his *The Wanderers* (1971) frames such interludes as violent reveries allied to his bold usage throughout of terminology such as ‘the existential dilemma’ – gleaned, as Wehrs (2003,763) demonstrates, from Jean Paul Sartre’s later philosophical texts such as *Orphe´e Noir* (1948) or *Black Orpheus* and his literary oeuvre.

This article will build on insights of scholarship that breaks down the division between fiction and testimony (Murray 2008, 1) but it takes these ideas further. In the making of a multiple autobiographical self in and through reverie, I argue, the leverage of Sartre’s literary stylistic reverie and his philosophical axis is pivotal of the traumatic record of his divided ontological subjectivity in the making of a multiple autobiographical self in and through reverie.

By reverie, then, I specifically mean here an act of imagination by which contemplation of the present hinges on what I have called elsewhere the ‘temporal and spatial deixes that accentuate the difference between the other and its alterity, as well as between the present situation and its alternative’ (Masemola 2010, 113). In one sense, reverie resonates with what Fredric Jameson conceptualizes as an admixture of projection and transference across two conjoined

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temporalities. In another, it is a ‘temporal doubling of the present’ (Jameson 2003, 712) for the ostensible purpose of outlining the scope of choices of political action and inaction in the two fictional autobiographies. Played out at the metaphysical level, reverie solidifies and thickens what easily could have been an escape from political action through fantasy. Reverie aligns the text to the world, turning personal strife into a public issue. Reverie as a spectacle of contemplated personal survival through heroism transmogrifies, through a split between biography and fiction, autobiography and reverie into the dynamic of what has come to be known as ‘a mass or group hero’ (Motsa 2009, 10). The mass hero has to transcend his personal vision and, moreso, translate his abstractions into direct action. Reverie stands creatively between contemplation and the action that confirms his being-in-the world (worldliness) and being-for-others (group hero).

In reverie there is, as Catherine Pickart elucidates in her evaluative essay on Gaston Bachelard’s version of reverie, ‘an aesthetic intentionality providing a metaphysic of the imagination: the aesthetic object, such as fire or water is an object only insofar as it enables/calls forth a subject to enter into a receptive, self-aware and cosmic state of being’ (1997, 59). In the metaphysic of imagination attending *The Wanderers* the river Chinanda as synecdoche of water enables Timi Tabane, the protagonist, to enter into a self-aware, cosmic state of being, where the body of his son Felang is a part of him dismembered. Linked to this is the way Pickart further characterizes reverie, saying that ‘subject-ness and object-ness are intimately and archetypally intertwined’ (1997, 59). This simultaneous dismemberment and attendant intersubjectivity are understood to be a ‘doubling of the present’, a quality best described elsewhere as ‘Deleuzean virtuality’, where existing (or escaping) out of time requires the temporal present to be ‘thickened, solidified, complemented by a rather more metaphysical backing or content’ (Jameson 2003, 712).

It is noteworthy that the doubling of the present is consistent with the multiple self that Lesibana Rafapa observes to be an intersubjectivity that is not limited to Felang and Timi, particularly as it is symptomatic of a progressive intensification of a feeling of frustration ‘taking root among characters in the early work as well as within Mphahlele himself as a participantobserver in the real life which his work echoes’ (2010, 283). The same holds true for Noel Chabani Manganyi’s narrator, Mashangu, in the eponymous *Mashangu’s Reverie* (1977). In both cases reverie is a declaration – commensurate with memory. Reverie brings to view a striking feature: Mashangu and Timi each have an existential dilemma in the order of Duboisian double consciousness, that is, ‘two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder [albeit at a physical, not metaphysical, level]’ (Du Bois 1963, 17). In general, however, I would have preferred to discuss the reverie as a more sophisticated extension of an alternative version of differential representational time expressed in the streams of consciousness. Given the conditions of exile, I marshal a perspective of reverie that endorses David Attwell’s observation of the fugitive’s double consciousness that affirms that he is occupying a subject-position that ‘straddles a boundary between inside and outside’ (Attwell 2002, 307), gleaning a fugal counterpart from Michael Titlestad’s delineation of ‘acoustics of memory’ (2004, 31), especially as I observe that Mphahlele substitutes the jazz of John Coltrane in *The Wanderers* for the classical Mozart, the music of whom formed the chiaroscuro he was painting as he sat on a porch waxing lyrical about his contemplated departure from South Africa towards the end of *Down Second Avenue* (1959). The addition of Coltrane’s jazz to the repertoire of acoustics of memory is as important, even symptomatic, as the augmentation of memory with reverie.

Here I use reverie to underscore the fugal space between the exit from the harshness of a South African home and entry into the African diaspora host. Reverie forms a counterpoint to memory and historicity. It is useful, for purposes of this article, to deliberately meld the existential double bind perspective deployed by Sartre with what has come to be known as a double
temporality elsewhere in the course of explaining how the self is recognisably split in the ‘double time’ of transculturative reconfiguration attending home and exile (for a discussion of this see Masemola 2011, 3). The Saidian ‘worldliness’ of these texts, their being-in-the-world rather than the ‘selfing’ author’s being-in-itself signals multiplicities, responsibilities, and choices that attend texts of autobiographical fiction written outside South Africa. Choices represent, therefore, the split Mphahlele and his alter ego son, or even, the two poles of his divided self are dramatically accentuated by the dismembered corpse. Reverie doubles the representational time of the self, and so represents a crisis of subjectivity as well as ontological security in Mphahlele’s exile in the African diaspora. The Wanderers articulates its situatedness through a representational acknowledgement of the worldliness of the type delineated by Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaux, where they postulate that ‘contrary to a deeply rooted belief, a book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world’ (2000, 7).

While the article suggests the importance of tracing Mphahlele’s reverie to Jean-Paul Sartre’s stream of consciousness in The Reprieve (which, like Mphahlele’s Wanderers, was the second autobiographical instalment in his Chemins de la Liberte trilogy),6 and to Sartre’s late existential concept of ontology in the context of his Black Orpheus contributions, this article makes bold to confirm the intercultural archive of cultural memory. Specifically, the article draws attention to Mphahlele’s entry into the Presence Africaine through Richard Wright, whose influence on Mphahlele’s work is categorically acknowledged through explicit references to his fictional work. However, Wright’s work is shown to be part of diasporic figures of memory whose transculturative repetition in Mphahlele’s exile not only parallels Wright’s own Parisian exile but also reflects his later Nietzschean leanings. These leanings were endorsed by Jean-Paul Sartre for their articulation of an existential double bind perspective that is essential for freedom or ‘escape’. The double temporality of this perspective lay in the split rather than the transference between Timi and his son Felang, between the arborescent corpus of the text’s memoric archive and its rhizomatic alignment with the world, and between history and reverie.

In the scheme of choices it becomes apparent that the man who captures the spirit of the revolution by joining the army of the Congress of Liberation, like Sartre’s Brunet, is his son Felang Tabane. Much earlier in the novel, when Timi Tabane is contemplating his choices, the split between him and Felang is encapsulated by his recognition of the demands of the tyranny of time and place as opposed to a poet’s wasteland:

> time and place demanded the heroism that sent some to jail or to the grave or somewhere beyond the borders as refugees responding to the orders from the Congress of liberation. Eventually, I would have to decide whether I have to stay and try to survive; or stay and pit my heroism against the machine and bear the consequences if I remained alive; or stay and shrivel up with bitterness; or face up to my cowardice, reason with it and leave. . . .
> I did not have the heroism to offer; yet I knew I would sooner or later be driven full tilt against the machine. Then again, my intellect would not let me be; it kept hankering after the outer worlds where it imagined it could function in peace and find self-fulfilment (Mphahlele 1973, 47–8).

Considered in tandem the rhizomatic split, the dismembered body and the divided ontological subjectivity also give dis/content to the ossified and stable truth of official memory and history because the body becomes an enunciatory site of an experiential account. Manganyi’s reverie gives expression to double temporality by deliberately splitting the body and holding its two halves in counterpoise through a deliberative contemplation of personal troubles, on the one hand, and public issues, on the other. According to Manganyi’s Mashangu: ‘[reverie] represents the highest possible integration in the creative act of personal tragedy with public issues. We find dramatised in it the moment of intersection between biography and history’ (1977, 35). Suffice to compare then the impulse of Mphahlele’s Timi with Manganyi’s
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Mashangu, both of whom thicken and double reality by repeating the historical present through reverie. In the Massachusetts university that hosts him, Mashangu the academic does something extraordinary: in the guise of a public lecture on Miller’s *Incident at Vichy*, through which he reviews his existential dilemma and the options offered by fantasy, he follows the path charted by Mphahlele in splitting the contemplative father and the revolutionary son Felang. Mashangu continues: ‘One thing seems clear, ladies and gentlemen, and it is that in making a distinction between [personal] troubles and [public] issues we are dealing with a differential expressivity’ (1977, 35).

The dismemberment of the body constitutes one part of the strangeness of a flashback, and reverie the other: the differential history of an individual is mapped out as a multiple discursive ontology, a part of an unstable double corpus of representation, a part of an assemblage made monumental by a problematized re-memory of an event of dismemberment, an event of violent articulations of attempts at the secret, forgotten self through a double temporality of memory and reverie. We witness here a multiplicity of voices that cannot be reduced to the author or his traditional function as the provider of narrative cohesion. We discern elements of Deleuzean virtuality in splitting, fragmentation, and dismemberment. All this stands in contrast to what Achille Mbembe has rightly lamented as characteristic of an essentialist self-constitution (Mbembe 2002, 241).

Reverie of the violent kind, highlighting a revolutionary impulse, particularly disavows victimhood as it insists on action, intersubjectivity, and freedom. Interestingly, fantasies of violence of the type found in Jean-Paul Sartre’s and Frantz Fanon’s *littérature engagée* treatises on colonial struggle constitute an important aspect of reconfiguring the subject of cultural memory in Es’kia Mphahlele’s *The Wanderers* and Noel Chabani Manganyi’s *Mashangu’s Reverie*. Usher in through cultural memory’s mode of potentiality, where figures of the past are enmeshed with the representational demands of the present, fantasies of violence in The Wanderers and Mashangu’s Reverie represent the obverse side of contemplation. What is also common between the two autobiographies, besides being set primarily outside South Africa, is that they employ reverie to bring to view those fantasies in such a manner that, based on a black-and-white/ home-and-host/present-and-future dialogic, they represent double consciousness and double temporality. They also make manifest intersubjectivity through transference relationships between the individual and a multiplicitous whole in the course of projecting probable solutions to the problem of apartheid repression.

Both Es’kia Mphahlele and his biographer, Chabani Manganyi elect to write separate autobiographical fictions using a reverie to chart their discursive ontology. This shows how rememory simultaneously deterritorializes the representational time of a putative Pan-African assemblage and reterritorializes the inscribing socius of apartheid. In each respective case, the American university contexts of Denver and Yale from which both texts are written could easily suggest an immersion into an imitative order of repetition of Afro-American figures of memory. On the contrary: we find that what could have been a Du Boisian ‘double consciousness intersubjectivity’ is effectively heightened, thickened, doubled, and intensified by an appropriation of Jean-Paul Sartre’s existential thought and the literary style of his fictional autobiography. At the same time, he affirms Richard Wright’s influence by direct reference to his work in the novel, thereby constituting a repetition *outside and within* the archive of what could have been mistaken for a racially exclusive and specific black Atlantic cultural memory. The repetition of Sartre in Mphahlele is aporetic, requiring a symptomatic reading of multiplicity and repetition of an additional time of representation. Repetition inheres in a reverie’s temporality as it straddles daydreaming, reality *as well as the representational time in between*. Specifically, the fantasy of violence and the stream of consciousness culminate in a reverie based on a mode of repetition, foregrounded by the initially dual – but eventually multiple – transferential relationships.
Multiplicity confirms the interracial discursive conditions of becoming within a diasporic assemblage.

However, the fact that the two texts, Mphahlele’s *The Wanderers* and Manganyi’s *Mashangu’s Reverie*, were published six years apart, and that Manganyi’s *Exiles and Homecomings: A Biography* of Es’kia Mphahlele (1983), the biographical project on Mphahlele that followed, discusses the critical reception of *The Wanderers* at great length is a curious matter none the less. The biographer, as well as his subject, brings attention to the place of reverie and its revisionary thrust. But unlike *Mashangu’s Reverie*, a text that acknowledges up-front that it is the reverie as a self-analysis in the form of ‘a psycho-analytically informed imagination grappling with fragments of a stream of consciousness’ that reflect ‘existential dilemmas’ (Manganyi 1983, i) what confront the protagonist, *The Wanderers* seems to get the benefit of clarification through revisiting its critical reception in Manganyi’s *Exiles and Homecomings* biography of Mphahlele later. The review of arguments, rendered as part personal reflection and part clarification, forms one of many other discussions in a biography which, on the one hand, allows Mphahlele to acknowledge that his earlier writing success is attributable to Richard Wright’s influence (Manganyi 1983, 140) and, on the other, gives him the opportunity to conclude the final biographical dialogue with a quotation from Jean-Paul Sartre:

> I have never seen myself as the happy owner of a ‘talent’: my one concern was to save myself – nothing in my hands, nothing in my pockets – through work and faith. Now at last my unadulterated choice did not set me up above anyone: with neither tools nor equipment, I gave my entire self to the task of saving my entire self. If I put away Salvation among the stage properties as impossible, what is left? A whole man, made of all men, worth all of them, and any of them worth him (Manganyi 1983, 297).

By marshalling a Deleuzean notion of the assemblage in the constitution of the autobiographical self as this article progresses, it becomes easier to show how through the reverie Mphahlele is ‘saving’ himself through a protagonist who is ‘made of all men, worthy all of them, and any worth of him’ (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, 69). Accordingly, I proceed to reveal that, in terms of intertextual influence and philosophy, he is a multiplicity – an assemblage made of Wright and Sartre at the textual level, of the philosophically ambivalent father and his politically radical son Felang on the affective domain, of his liberal humanist white friend Steve Cartwright, and even of his grandmother as the provenance of African humanism in the assertion of positive values. Yet these values, carried forward in the multiple temporality of reverie, require the bodied self of Timi Tabane to be at stake, transmogrifying into this or that part of the assemblage. Fredric Jameson sees this as ‘a problem with the body as a positive slogan’ (Jameson 2003, 713), particularly when it is conceived of as a unified entity:

> [the body] is what Deleuze calls a ‘body without organs’, an empty totality that organizes the world without participating in it. We experience the body through our experience of the world and of other people, so that it is perhaps a misnomer to speak of the body at all as a substantive with a definite article, unless we have in mind the bodies of others, rather than our own phenomenological referent (Jameson 2003, 713 – emphasis added).

It is therefore apt to frame speaking of the one body as the body of others, and to do this via Mphahlele’s endorsement of Sartre’s main concern within this autobiographical project – to give what he says is ‘my entire self to save myself’ through work and faith (Manganyi 1983, 297). This work involves extending Mphahlele’s ontological self into his son as a continuity of his corporeal self: as part of a recognition of ‘the interpenetration between subject and object made possible in reverie’ that enables enhancement and confirmation ‘through the mutual necessity of/for subject and object’ (Pickart 1997, 68). After all, Timi and his son are but part of the same assemblage, played out as one set amongst many relations in a multiplicity. Thus, to open a diaspora novel of autobiographical fiction with a father’s reverie about a son’s
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death, through the image of a corpse thrown into a crocodile-infested river is to reveal the extent to which the autobiographical pull towards the unified entity is deliberately abjured through terms of symbiotic co-functioning between Timi and Felang. As the crocodiles ‘were seen to toss some of the bodies up and, two or three at a time, tear corpses apart above the water’ (Mphahlele 1973, 7), Felang’s corpse seems readily to attest, almost literally, to a body without organs. As Manganyi in Mashangu’s Reverie explains it:

There should be no doubt about the fact that the double who creates in the psyche of the hero the conditions essential for the flourishing of a false consciousness (inauthenticity) is an offshoot of violence to the self. This means that under conditions of subordinacy, the self that is projected in everyday life is false an inauthentic since it is a mask protecting its double – an unnatural division which does violence to the integrity of the self (1977, ii).

In The Wanderers Mphahlele does not seek to fashion Felang into Timi’s double in order to protect him; instead, he always makes him aware of the possibility of the painful pathways to a humanistic self-discovery. Growing up black in exile demands that Timi must dispel false consciousness by making him understand that ‘the cruelty of the times demands that I must recognise the limitations of my traditional humanism, that if the white world reminds me that I’m black I must reserve my humanism for those of my colour and fight power with the instruments of its enthronement’ (1973, 282). The image that captures the cruelty of times is that of Felang’s corpse in the crocodile-infested river, leading him to move away from traditional humanism in a flight that sees him placing Felang on the receiving end of ‘the instruments of enthronement’ – violence. Here is a flight that sees the double taking a role contemplated by the hero.

What at first appears to be confined to the father and son is merely to restrict, to subject to an ordering principle, to imbue a semblance of autobiographical ‘selfing’ or ‘self-saving’ to the heterogenous terms of fragmentary transference dimensions of a reverie. This becomes glaringly obvious later on in the novel when, after being rebuked by his parents for his indolence regarding his studies, despite the privilege of benefiting from their exemplary achievements as educated and hard working exiles, Felang retorts: ‘Why don’t you admit you came out in order to save yourselves?’ (1973, 243).

Besides the priority of ‘self-saving’ or ‘selfing’ as it were, there is an apparent similarity between the characters of Mphahlele’s Felang, the irresponsible boy who does not leverage the possibilities of his family’s privilege, and Sartre’s spoiled and equally irresponsible Phillipe, the son of the socialist teacher Matheu in The Reprieve. Felang loves theatre, while Phillipe loves the poetry of Rimbaud.11 This theme of flight from responsibility in childhood is important because in Mphahlele’s novel Timi exhorts Felang to make an effort at being better than his parents ‘rather than quarrelling with your privileges?’ (1973, 244). Unlike his father’s apparently purposeful odyssey into exile earlier, and his son-becoming later, Felang’s is a line of flight best described by Deleuze as theft that manifests a double betrayal:

The movement of betrayal has been defined as a double turning-away: man turns his way from God, who also turns his face away from man. It is in this double turning-away, in the divergence of faces, that the line of flight – that is, the determinitialization of man – is traced. Betrayal is like theft, it is always double (Deleuze and Parnet 1997, 40 – emphasis added).

It would seem as if Timi’s heroic turning way from the inscribing socius of apartheid South Africa is accompanied by Felang’s turning away from the familial proscriptions and prescriptions about responsibility. Both forms of betrayal are necessary for becoming, and both form the basis of determiniticalization, as when Felang crosses the border to join the military wing of the Congress of Liberation in Tanzania with the aim of crossing yet more borders to return to South Africa in military triumph. But Felang’s childhood, deliberately ushered in through reverie, becomes even more significant: childhood is the focus of Mphahlele’s reverie for an important reason, namely, that ‘I [that is Mphahlele] think in South Africa the black man
misses the joys of childhood, and the love of a father and a mother under pressure is a desperate love, one that seems to scorch its path through the child’ (1973, 158). On one occasion Felang steals from his mother’s purse apparently for unknown reasons (1973, 258) and on another steals three of his father’s new shirts in order to give charitably to three desperately needy exiles, as a ‘do-gooder’ (1973, 260). In one sense betrayal marks ambivalence, to the extent that his existential acts of theft represent an ontological assertion of sympathy for poor refugees. In another, betrayal is a turning away that, in its double articulation, reflects his shift from responsibility to others rather than himself. Felang is slowly moving away from his parents in order to turn towards collective action as opposed to being something in life for himself through the pursuit of education or reason. The double turning-away characterizes two states of ontological existence, or rather evasion, that are actually experienced by both Felang and Timi through the sympathy of the assemblage to which they belong. In his exile Timi has to decide whether or not to dwell on the philosophical abstractions about what counts as responsible heroism without having to take up arms as a member of the Congress of Liberation. In Mashangu’s Reverie, the fantasy of violent revenge turns a pilgrim’s deep sense of alienation into aggressive assault: ‘A pilgrim turned refugee is exiled from history and participation – an apology. What remained of the pilgrim embraced a double-edged dagger . . . ’ (1977, 6). Interestingly, both The Wanderers and Sartre’s The Reprieve offer what seems an accretion of events moving toward a spectacular conflagration on continents where the prospect of war looms large. The technique by which the setting of events is rendered, that is, rapid – if not sudden – movement from one city or country to the next, clearly reflects the influence of Sartre’s Reprieve on Mphahlele’s use of the reverie. Sudden shifts of setting from Milan to Prague to Paris to London are similarly replicated in the movement from Sogali to Kambani to Tirong to Dar es Salaam (1973, 279–80). This becomes patently clear when the responsibility requires contemplation as to the course of action the protagonist ought to follow, given the setting of anticipated war in Europe as well as the expected violent liberation of South Africa by a united front of countries on the African continent.

There is no doubt that the ontological struggle relates to the resolution of the existential dilemma, namely, that of choosing between ponderously contemplating the struggle for freedom at an individual level and enabling freedom for others as obverse sides of the same effigy of responsibility through armed conflict. The textual representation of that difficult choice is captured in the double temporality of reverie which corresponds with each of them in a ‘radical transformation from the being-for-itself to being-for-other-people (to use Sartrean terminology), from personal consciousness to the alienation of destiny’ (Jameson 2003, 708). It is in this sense that the reverie effects a ‘stripping of illusion in the consciousness of the narrator himself’ (Attwell 2002, 310) through the spectacle of a physical dismemberment of his son Felang in a way that is symptomatic of his own psychic dismemberment. The reconstitutive impulse of reverie underscores the cultural memory of Mphahlele’s exile in the African diaspora: it works through images that bring forth ‘the bitterness and sense of futility that accumulate in the life of the intellectual as refugee in Africa’ (Attwell 2002, 308). The politics of unbelonging in one’s home country and an African host country remain inextricably intertwined with the novel’s account of becoming since leaving the South African home country.

The post-independence African setting of Mphahlele’s The Wanderers entwines memory and reverie: it agonisingly attempts to reconcile the reverie about the son’s death with the actual death later, in the same way that it stresses how difficulties in South Africa herald the bitterness of exile, and how the factual antecedents of his autobiography lay in fiction and vice versa. The reverie’s rendition of the father–son assemblage of transference (via an image of the river as a site of violence) holds even greater significance actualized through the body of his own son in the crocodile-infested Chinanda River. It underlines the impact of the cruelty
of his life in the African diaspora. What began as a reverie at the beginning of the novel projects its aesthetic intentionality at the very moment when it appears at a later juncture that Felang actually dies at the hands of South African mercenaries. It would seem like the shifts from the atemporal events of a reverie are imbued with a fictive quality, which turns out to repeat itself in historical time, as when fiction turns to reality. However, this order of repetition – indeed this event in a process of becoming – seems to constitute the rubric of a novel whose autobiographical thrust is masked by fiction and memory, reconstituted by reverie. Understood in this way, the novel’s apparent status as ‘autobiographical fiction/fictional autobiography’ suggests the dialogical hyphenation of two terms apparently locked in a discursive opposition that, in turn, is symptomatic of ‘a creative fracturing of surface cultural representations’, as Roger Bromley writes of diasporic cultural fictions in his Narratives for a New Belonging: Diasporic Cultural Fictions (2000, 97) in the African diaspora. The repetition that underlines the representational time of diasporic selfhood is thus based on a creative ‘temporal doubling of the present’ which ironically finds its correlates in the narrator’s becoming, on the one level, and Africa’s double standards, on the other. Creative fracturing underscores the ontological conditions of becoming in the African diaspora beyond the surface representation of the unity of either the African diaspora or the exiled self. Acutely aware of such fracturing, Attwell is certainly correct that Mphahlele is dismayed at the failure of the African continent ‘to provide a sense of belonging to an African on the run from apartheid’ (Attwell 2002, 308), resulting in his interrogation of commonly held political statements about African unity and, perhaps, of his own cultural romanticization of life in West Africa, as well as his own personal relationship with others:

. . . Mphahlele is offering a self-vindication, but since The Wanderers deals with the years of exile on the African continent itself, the emphasis falls not on ne’gritude but on the assumption, held no doubt partly by Mphahlele himself, but held, too, by all those united by a loosely conceived pan-Africanism namely, that Africa ought to be able to embrace the refugee brother from the South (Attwell 2002, 307).

This self-vindication finds pronounced expression in the reverie-based fracturing of the representation of Timi through an exploration of relations of multiplicity between and across age, race, and gender. Yet, given that outside fiction Mphahlele’s son Anthony does not actually die, and true to autobiography the characters explored in The Wanderers are his contemporaries, Lewis Nkosi (1981) is quick to accuse Mphahlele of ‘symbolic infanticide’, missing the divided subjectivity of Mphahlele as embodied in the autobiographer’s simultaneous doubling of the self into Timi and Felang: being-in-itself and being-for-others, contemplative self and agential alter ego. If ever there is any obliteration on Mphahlele’s part, it is, to be sure, the disavowal of the stable, unified, and secure self. Perhaps in Nkosi’s enthusiasm for a psychological explanation for the death of the son there is something more positively suggestive: the purpose of that metaphorical death – ‘saving the entire self’ through its radical doubling and splitting.

What Nkosi stops short of observing is the continuous process of doubling and splitting beyond the son as a mere psychological extension of Timi: he is the other half that completes ontological security. Suspicious of reverie or its phenomenological aspects, Nkosi proceeds to scribe the image of the son’s death ‘to a hidden reality’.13 The change of the narratorial voice into that of Steve Cartwright in Book Four is quite significant in this regard, not to mention his conscious adoption of the Uncle Tom role, in what seems to be a ‘campaign against the centred self’.14

This stance somewhat echoes the postmodern and/or post-structuralist critiques of representation that have generally thrown scepticism at the linguistic capacity to unproblematically signify the factual existence of a stable autobiographical subject. Yet, in this case, the fictionalization of this subject is neither tautological nor accidental in Noel Chabani Manganyi’s
Mashangu’s Reverie and Es’kia Mphahlele’s autobiographical fiction, primarily because the contemplation of violence as a solution to the problems of the present remains a prominent fantasy feature. The fictionalization is actually inherent in the constitution of a unified subject in both texts; for, in all respects, and indeed through several, multiple permutations of becoming enacted through an array of other characters, the secured unity of the narrator’s self is not guaranteed. In fact, there is a deliberate disavowal of such security of unified autobiographical entity. In these two texts the reverie is crucial to both explaining and resolving the ontological status of the writer through problematized disclosure. The interwoven representation of the reverie and autobiographical realism of violence usher in a double perspective that extends itself into a narrative polyvocality that underscores the continuous, active recasting of the self in history on the one hand and a reconfiguration of cultural memory on the other. Therefore, the fracturing of surface cultural representations corresponds with the said continuous recasting that is concomitant with a reconfiguration that in itself allows Mphahlele to explore several options for revolutionary action in exile through a polyvocality discursively constructed on the basis of a series of characters. He fictionalizes himself as Timi Tabane, the journalist; he radicalizes himself as his son Felang, the revolutionary; he pacifies himself as Steve Cartwright, the sympathetic white liberal editor and friend. These different multiple positions bear testimony to the shifting self, each of these a marker of polyvocality and multiplicity.

In Mphahlele’s text the Sartrean bent is much in evidence, although at times arrived at through Richard Wright’s ‘double vision’ (Wright 1965, 129). In Manganyi’s case the double perspective is also an ordering principle that subtly introduces the ambivalence that accompanies the impulse to violence. Dis/located outside the nation-space, though, where belonging and becoming coincide, the discursive project of inscribing themselves against the nation and racist socius evidences historical contingencies of struggles and a keen awareness of the particularity of textual images attending writing from the margins of both the African host nation and the South African ‘home’ nation. On account of the particularity of reverie in exile, the river is both synecdoche of metaphysical water and a figure of memory transmogrifying itself into a receptacle of death, into an image of the futility of love between a parent and a child, and so becomes apt at describing parents’ unavailing attempts at rekindling that love as being ‘like a dead river, unnecessary’ (1977, 8). Attention to a black Atlantic figure of memory here provides the hint of a possible memoric transculturation of a father’s lament over the loss of a son a la W.E.B. Du Bois in The Souls of Black Folk looms large in The Wanderers. It is also not possible to discount either the radical re-inauguration of the problematic relationship between a father and son as belaboured in the three autobiographies of Frederick Douglass nor the pathos of the Uncle Tom farm slave figure who, in the fashion of Richard Wright’s fiction, develops beyond being a fear-stricken Bigger Thomas as his rebellion charts flight, pursuit, and capture in Native Son (1940).

Nor can it be ignored that when the journalist hero of the novel, Timi Tabane, takes two books with him on his undercover investigative mission these books are given significance by the fact of their being possibly considered, on the one hand, as incendiary by farmers and, on the other, as articles of faith by the hero:

After Van Zyl had looked at my papers, he told me to open my bundle of clothes. I was glad I had given Dzivane the cameras and my books – Elspeth Huxley’s A Thing to Love and Richard Wright’s Uncle Tom’s Children. He also had my diary and my lunch. All I had in my briefcase were my wallet, a pencil, and a Goshen farmer’s broadsheet (1973, 75).

Considering that the hero of Huxley’s novel, Gitau, is a teacher who leads a secret movement against the settler-farmers at the beginning of the Mau Mau in Kenya, it is easy to see how Mphahlele, himself a teacher before joining Drum, finds it relevant for Timi Tabane of Bongo magazine to draw political inspiration from, and draw historical parallels with, the story of the rebel behind the Mau Mau. Notably, Katusi Shuping, the teacher who features as closest
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to the farmer’s situation in *The Wanderers*, neither suffers from the internal conflicts that plague Gitau for a time nor does he die by the bullet. The only role that he plays is to give Timi Tabane the necessary support in his covert mission to find a prisoner in one of the racist settler’s farms. Timi learns lessons as he reads Huxley’s novel. Learning, however, takes the form of cultural memory’s mode of actuality whereby each contemporary context puts the objectivized meaning of archival figures of memory into its own perspective (Assman 1995, 130). When such figures of memory as Huxley’s novel are concretized and made reusable in the present temporality of Timi’s situation, they confer the status and responsibilities of a *littré rature engage’e*, that is, to act in and on history by using the word as it ‘tears the writer of prose away from himself and throws him into the world’ (Sartre 1988, 31–2) to enact a revolutionary praxis.

At the very moment when Timi prepares himself to go to the prison farms of Glendale the options for political action are framed as he subtly suggests that the decision to leave Tirong for Goshen is parallel to his road to exile in Iboyoru: he re-evaluates his role as a writer in the context of its commitment to changing the political landscape:

> It was not the poet’s wasteland: the kind that can only be grasped in the mind. The kind that stretches outward in ever-widening circles, so far as the poetic imagination can lead us. It did not seem to be the wasteland that can only be understood in terms of a universal catastrophe. . . It was a land corroded by power, power that one felt directly through its various tentacles. At the point and time one felt the clutch, or its menace, the limbs of power were right there, holding sten guns, driving tanks that spat fire to keep a riot area under control. . .

> Perhaps that was why it became irksome to the man whom education had given the capacity to comprehend the outer reaches of the poet’s wasteland, to see things in a universal context. Because he realised this perspective was irrelevant, even a luxury, while things mattered only in relation to the time and place that contained them; while time and place demanded the heroism that sent some to ail or to the grave or somewhere beyond the borders as refugees responding to orders from the National Congress of Liberation. . .(1973, 46–7).

A heroism demanded by time and place leads him to the prison potato farms from where he would, on one level, exercise his journalism as a strength – a *littré rature engage’e* – to pit against the menace of apartheid state power; on another level, there is an anticipation of his difficult travel to Iboyoru as well as a sort of a dress rehearsal of cross-border military activities undertaken by his son Felang later, patterned on the theme of flight, pursuit, and capture in Wright’s *Native Son*. Accordingly, two separate comments that Timi makes at Glendale farm show the importance of Richard Wright’s writing to his situation at the farm. The first occurs at a point when he admits that the mission is no longer a journalistic mission but a mission that calls for a definite change in his perspective and self-conduct:

> I was acting an Uncle Tom’s role. What was there to prevent me from acting it until I lived it, until it became part of me, so that I was protected against hurt? And yet was there not always an Achilles heel, whatever armour we wrapped around ourselves, black or white? Because of all this, coming to Ha-Kau, to Naledi to Shuping, was a homecoming in every relative sense of the word (Mphahlele 1973, 95).

Here it becomes all the more obvious that the importance he attaches to reading from the archive of memory’s cultural formation, as well as to writing as a form of commitment, drives him to respond to present demands by gleaning from the literature of the past. Taking as he does the figure of Uncle Tom from Wright’s book and living, as it were, his role allows Timi to change, survive, and experience a homecoming, all in the form of an odyssey which is best understood as being very much like that of Orpheus in character. Timi’s symbolic enactments of Uncle Tom’s role within autobiographical fiction’s narrative is quite deliberate in its literary manifestation; for this establishes a connection between literature and action or, even truer to the commitment thrust of *littré rature engage’e*, a commitment of literature as action:
Instead of sleeping, I took up *Uncle Tom’s Children*. I could not finish the story I had chosen to re-read. When I had first read the book, the stories had struck a chord inside me which had been waiting for a situation to echo it and thus release all over again the emotions that sat in me. They were stories of arson, scalding anti-black deeds, rape, lynching, and the hatred and bitterness that go side by side with these acts. What an angry Negro man the writer was, I mused. Several years after writing *Uncle Tom’s Children* he was still burning with emotions that had driven him into exile in Europe, away from the Deep South, away from the country of his birth. *I wondered if I should continue to hate and curse and burn with the same anger and all those feelings that had become reflexes amongst us blacks: would I continue even after leaving South Africa? (1973, ’97–8, emphasis added).*

The answer lies not so much in the continuation of the bitterness attending blackness than in the equivocation of the discursive conditions of possibility in exile. When Timi goes beyond *Uncle Tom’s Children* and observes the life of Wright, the writer in exile, he does so without providing the reader with the evidential field from which ‘still burning with emotions’ could be understood. I want to argue here that Timi is not just privy to information about Wright’s exile but also aware of his subsequent work, its critical appraisal and, to a greater or lesser extent, his philosophical inclinations. In this I would like to emphasize the importance of the worldliness of the novel at the very moment it acknowledges Mphahlele’s influences in exile. The first, pointed out by David Attwell, is when he entered the literary renaissance represented by Mbari Writer’s Club and *Black Orpheus* in Nigeria (2002, 303). Here it was not only his collaboration with Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe in the formation of the writer’s club but also his co-editorship of *Black Orpheus*, a journal whose committee had associations with important proponents of the négritude movement as well as contributions from Jean-Paul Sartre. Interestingly, the latter’s remarks about Richard Wright’s novels are noteworthy for indicating another possible entry to both Sartre and Wright:

> . . .each of Wright’s work contains what Baudelaire would have called a ‘double simultaneous postulation’; each word refers to two contexts; two forces are applied simultaneously to each phrase and determine the parable of his tale. Had he spoken to the whites alone, he could have turned out to be more prolix, more didactic and more abusive; to the Negroes alone, still more elliptical, more of a confederate, and more elegiac. In the first case, his work might have come close to satire; in the second, to prophetic lamentations. Jeremiah spoke only to the Jews. But Wright, a writer for the split public, has been able both to maintain and go beyond this split. He has made it the pretext for the work of art (quoted in Gilroy 1993, 146).

It is hard to imagine how Sartre’s validation of Wright’s work could escape Mphahlele’s attention, especially since he was aware of Wright’s *The Outsider*, a book published in 1953 which clearly articulates the position of Negroes as ‘gifted with a double vision’, as ‘being inside and outside of our culture at the same time’, becoming like the Jews – centres of knowing (Wright 1965, 129). The third entry, really a crystallization of the first two, is to be found in Attwell’s explanation of the circumstance surrounding *The Wanderers* as a thesis component of his PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Denver:

> The unpublished thesis carries a curious subtitle: ‘a novel of Africa’. The preposition is ambiguous, pointing both to the subject matter of the novel and to its source, fictional setting, and the condition from which it springs. Africa is, indeed, both subject and object, implying the subject position from which it is written straddles a boundary between inside and outside. But the complexities multiply: certainly, Mphahlele is the insider who is outside, the African in the West, but more crucially – as he had been in The African Image – he is the South African in American reaches of the diaspora (Attwell 2002, 307).

If Attwell’s explanation is anything to go by, Mphahlele fits the mould of both Sartre’s description of the Baudelairean ‘double simultaneous postulation’ (Gilroy 1993, 146) as well as Wright’s own description of the Negro who is gifted with a double vision on account of being ‘inside and outside of our culture at the same time’(1965, 129). There is no doubt,
then, that Wright’s *The Outsider* has even greater significance relative to *Uncle Tom’s Children*; for the latter lends depth to the bitterness that permeates Timi’s account of exile in general and the death of his son in particular, whilst the former proffers the rubric of a divided subjectivity to the protagonist in the form of a double vision. In *The Wanderers* Timi’s double vision is at some point brought to view by the narrating voice of Steve Cartwright, his white friend and editor. In this first person narrator, he invests a second omniscient voice in order not to speak exclusively to one racial constituency. He is committed, like Wright, to ‘the split public’ (Gilroy 1993, 146). At the same time, Cartwright’s voice is arguably yet another extension of Mphahlele’s character in a polyvocal multiplicity already anticipated by the ability ‘to maintain and go beyond the split’ (Gilroy 1993, 146). It is amenable to continuous splitting and doubling, especially in the sense that Mphahlele repeats himself mimetically through Timi the journalist at *Bongo* Magazine and then through a split double of ‘Felang the radical political hero’ who violently acts in history with the Liberation Congress and Steve the liberal political observer whose ‘action’ in history is within the programme of *litte rature engage’e* in its enactment of a revolutionary praxis of disclosing and conferring meaning on historical events. In between there are many other subject positions that double and split into a projection of several aspects of himself as when he describes a teacher or journalist writer through characters other than Timi Tabane. Although the said doubling, or indeed ‘going beyond the split’ is significant for understanding agency, Paul Gilroy has recently revealed that Wright’s *The Outsider* from which the ‘double vision’ model is drawn is not philosophically innocent. Gilroy calls our attention to the fact that Wright has specifically drawn the idea of perspectival ways of knowing from Nietzsche, citing Wright’s elaboration in *White Man Listen!* (1964) of ‘Frog Perspectives’.

This is a phrase I’ve borrowed from Nietzsche to describe someone looking from below upward, a sense of someone who feels himself lower than others. The concept involved here is not physical; it is psychological. It involves a situation in which for moral or social reasons, a person or a group feels that there is another group above it. Yet physically they all live on the same general, material plane. A certain degree of hate combined with love (ambivalence) is always involved in this looking from below upward and the object against which the subject is measuring himself undergoes constant change. He loves the object because he would like to resemble it; he hates the object because his chances of resembling it are remote, slight (Gilroy 1993, 161).

The question as to whether or not Mphahlele was *au fait* with the Nietzschean stirrings in Wright might seem rhetorical, given the fact that in the novel the trajectory of relations of power that corrodes the land begins in South Africa, where his belonging is unmade by racial oppression, and continues into the African diaspora, where his becoming is trammeled by the constant reminder that he is a refugee, a stateless African in Africa. Almost as if in South Africa, where discrimination took the form of the blatant racism on the potato farms, in liberated Lao-Kiku (in reality, Kenya) he has to resign himself to the fact of discrimination: ‘I was an alien’ (1973, 253). This fact gathers great significance when the appointments committee of the University College of Nairobi does not renew his lecturing contract in the English Department because, the fact that he is an African, he is an alien. The news of this ironic situation is best understood through the following dialogue with his Head of Department, George Wingdon:

‘Africanisation, as they call it. They want to employ a fellow finishing his Master’s at Leeds. They can’t approve an additional post in my department, so you’re the easiest target.’

‘I don’t want to sound racist, but why not sacrifice a white man?’

‘Do you think I’ve not thought of that and even suggested it – after all you’re the only African in the department, and I’d like to have more. Instead these idiots will – you see the whole thing, Timi. The blacks on the committee echo the Minister’s voice and he echoes his English adviser’s – so where are we?’ (1973, 277).
The alienation from Africanization readily gives occasion to recall Robert Young’s description of a similarly profound sense of un-belonging that Jacques Derrida experiences when excluded from a lycee in France after his French citizenship was revoked because he was a Jew: ‘That moment exists like a precarious primal scene of ressentiment in your writing, the moment of not belonging, of being both inside and outside’ (quoted in Young 2001, 424). Manganyi’s Mashangu’s unbelonging in and out of South Africa is similar to that that of Derrida’s; for Mashangu, though not a Jew, reveals: ‘A pilgrim turned refugee is exiled from history and participation – an apology. What remained of the pilgrim embraced a double-edged dagger’ (1977, 6). Taking into account Wright’s borrowing of the frog perspective from Nietzsche in White Man Listen! as well as his emphasis on the benefit of ‘being inside and outside of our culture at the same time’, becoming like the Jews – centres of knowing’ (Wright 1965, 129), then the notion of the triumphant slave or the man of ressentiment finds resonance in Timi’s travails in the potato farm of Goshen; for the master/slave relationships were described in comparison to Wright’s Uncle Tom’s Children. What is now significant is how, if at all, the Nietzschean frog perspective whereby he feels himself lower than others manifests itself psychologically in the novel, especially amidst the alienation of exile. I propose here that the double vision within the splitting structure of which Mphahlele introduces Steve Cartwright as his new split double is quite articulate, particularly in the sense that Timi’s bitterness is voiced by Steve’s letter warning him and his wife about Kenya: ‘Kambani is no African city at all in spite of an African government and all’ (Mphahlele 1973, 255). Even if Timi could not really live with the guilty thought of physical exile as ‘a bit of cowardice’ (1973, 173), a departure from the heroism he was supposed to offer the South African wasteland, in Nigeria (or Iboyoru) Timi had initially found as sense of freedom about which he waxed lyrical when he wrote his friends in South Africa:

“You need to be here”, he wrote to Kush, Karabo and Steve, to Arthur and Trevor, ‘to know what it feels like – this freedom. I think it’s a lot of crap for some people to say one needs oppression to be able to go ahead. Nor do people need to be poor in order to appreciate a good livelihood when they get to it. A situation of challenge is needed, yes, but not when it’s threatening to flatten you out, to crush you. I think in South Africa the black man misses the joys of childhood, and the love of a father and a mother under pressure is desperate love, one that seems to scorch its path through the child. Out here, I feel I am out of the reach of the bloodhounds even though I often seem to hear them pant and then I know it’s a fancy – the fancy that my freedom may not be real...’ (1973, 158).

His fear of South African agents who might see to it that his freedom is short-lived are real, yet he overestimates his African hosts who end up planting the seeds of ambivalence about the realness of freedom in Iboyoru. For instance, he gets a rude shock from his employer Bakare, a fellow African who seems to find it justified not treat him on equal terms as his white expatriate colleagues. Let us turn to the incident:

Timi thought politics would not matter. But Bakare made them matter. He always remembered how after he had a poor mud-wall house Bakare said, ‘I am sorry you don’t want that house, of course you come from a country that has superior housing.’

The irony stung deep.

Timi said, ‘We’ve good and bad houses in my country just as you have, Mr Bakare. But I don’t see why white expatriates should enjoy better housing than I, once you’ve employed me as an expatriate’ (1973, 234).

Somehow the despair shows that, unlike his friend Awoonor, Bakare reintroduces the same kind of discrimination that he fled from back in South Africa. He finds it difficult to accept that in an independent African country he has to suffer the condescension he felt earlier on when he was addressed as an inferior citizen by the racist white farmer Makatona and his wife at Glendale. What makes it even harder for Timi is that it comes from a Nigerian ‘brother’. Perhaps this is to signal the ambivalence of the double vision’s frog perspective, particularly when Timi
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aspires to share the same perspective as Iboyorus on the removal of Dr Komo Batsia through a military coup d’ état; but he seems neither to share the sentiments of Awoonor nor to be as free as he is. It might well be that he loves the Iboyoru expression of Africanness because he would like to resemble it and yet he hates it because, as Gilroy would put it elsewhere, ‘his chances of resembling it are remote, slight’ (Gilroy 1993, 161). For Attwell this hatred manifests itself in the bitterness resulting from the sheer impossibility of belonging, of being united to some degree by ‘a loosely defined Pan-Africanism’:

_The Wanderers_ is essentially about the bitterness and sense of futility that accumulate in the life of the intellectual as refugee in Africa. Implicitly, it provides a retrospective explanation for Mphahlele’s departure from Africa, having spent 1957–1966 working as a cultural activist and teacher in Nigeria and Kenya, and his venturing into what would be ordinarily considered a state of more severe exile in the United States. That the continent should fail to provide a sense of belonging to a South African on the run from apartheid, was something that needed explaining, both before the court of the diaspora and... before the court of Mphahlele himself (Attwell 2002, 308).

If indeed there are, in this sense, two courts, there is no doubt that in his bitterness Mphahlele manages to address himself to the double perspective about his _unbelonging_ in West Africa. He does not set out to demonize Iboyoru. Instead, he foregrounds it through descriptions of a freedom granted as temporary respite from the oppression of South Africa. His conflicting attitudes to the respective characters of Awoonor and Bakare, opposites that these are, attest to the love/hate axis of his ambivalence to West Africa. There is something quite telling when Timi contemplates an answer to the question by another of his Nigerian friends, Ladi, as to why he does not become a citizen and serve Nigeria simply because he is black like they are. At this moment he sees mixed marriages as representing ‘fissures in an otherwise impenetrable wall of tradition, of culture’ (1973, 186). The ambivalence carried through the motif of mixed marriages is spread out across several contexts of approval and disapproval, love and hate. He does not approve of South African white men forcing themselves on black women, ‘dragging our girls to their flats’ (1973, 157) in private while hypocritically decrying mixed marriages in public; he approves when his white friend Steve Cartwright courts Naledi the young black widow he also pined for; he loves his circle of Iboyoru friends who are in mixed marriages (1973, 161), yet remains doubtful as regards the marriage of Prime Minister Batsia to a daughter of ‘an Arab oil potentate in the Middle East’ (1973, 166).

Manganyi’s double, Mashangu, also enjoys the Ivy League setting of a circle of friends and associates in mixed marriages. He, however, finds himself in a tryst with Okike, a Nigerian woman who has a white husband who works for the World Health Organisation, and spends a lot of time in Geneva (1977, 27). The enjoyment is accompanied by his deep-seated hatred by the social impotence of black partners who should be acting out the violent impulse to vanquish the oppressor politically rather than sexually:

‘Watch out: the system will kill you’ people say and the murderous impulse is transformed into a sexual perversion of one kind or another. You know what I mean. . .Look at my black brothers in Harlem or anyway in this country for that matter. It’s as if they were saying: I can’t beat him at the stock exchange and the pentagon. . .Congress? No! I’ll hit below the belt – at a most primitive level – and will make him choke with anger.” I am afraid that is not the African solution. . .my solution. There must be other alternatives. Something more creative. . .less primitive than a sexual offensive (1977, 46).

In electing the motif of mixed marriage to capture the difficulty of love within a ‘double vision’ that straddles racial divides, Mphahlele’s Timi exemplifies one of the ways in which one cannot approach the African diaspora romantically or, more precisely, without ambivalence. The perspectival approach he consciously or unconsciously gleans from Nietzsche through Wright provides a narrative strategy by which he fractures both the autobiographical ‘I’ of the differential histories of the African diaspora as well as a totalized unified Africa-as-subject.
These fractures are clearly symptomatic of the historical contingency of the novel’s ‘worldliness’. In other words, the novel’s fractures allude to historical location of the moment of African unity in a way that ushers in an interpretation of the unity of the subject of that purported unity. Unlike in Book One, when Timi Tabane’s authority and control of events resided in the omniscient power of the speaking self, the ‘I’, he is now one amongst others in the temporality of the narrative as well as the problematic unity of the diaspora text. Bitterness is therefore connected to the conditions under which he questions his own perception of unified subjectivity through fractures. In the course of providing answers to what seem to be vexed questions, fractured and as split as they come, a question ineluctably emerges from Timi:

And what about us from South Africa? No use in assuming an immediate common heritage among Negroes everywhere. No use. You’re an expatriate. Take your chances, tread softly, human cultures have stonewalls. Find the crevice and dig your way through that and don’t try to go farther than it allows you. Africa has several enclaves with walls around them and several crevices in the walls. Take your chances. But what are we seeking when we enter through the crevices? How can we be sure? Maybe humanity must flow like water that cannot leave a crevice unflooded (1973, 202).

By suggesting that one should take a change through a crevice, and proceeding with the ambivalence which occasions moments of knowing when not to try going through farther than the crevice, it seems to me Mphahlele anticipates the interstitial ideology and praxis that permeates much of colonial discourse theory today. For him this interstitial praxis begins when it is clear he has an object aim: freedom hitherto denied in South Africa. From earlier on, prior to his ambivalence, the period of meeting freedom is cultivated in memory. During those six months, Timi enjoyed the freedom of the day, of the night, void of tensions, of emotional upheavals or outbursts, free of the need to please the white man for a living or give an account of himself. He had the freedom of the streets, which he walked night and day, as if to tell himself that he was never going to surrender such freedom to anyone (1973, 158). Whilst Timi feels himself free from pleasing the white man in Nigeria, his resoluteness about hanging on to that freedom highlights a new kind of responsibility. He finds himself entering a space where he is no longer a body without organs: he uses the street to inscribe his presence in the freedom offered by the diaspora. As he walks night and day he is reversing the apartheid effects of territorialization.

The only time Timi and Mashangu are free is when each is a unity born of multiplicity, when the autobiographical self and fictional other go further than providing the double: the function of the split is to articulate a divided subjectivity. At the level of enunciation, the pronoun ‘we’ replaces the ‘I’ to be more inclusive when he speaks of expatriates in and at the same time state a South African case, then his family’s case, then his own case. In this way, in the manner in which Mphahlele’s life is articulated through a projected otherness that nevertheless resists sameness, he stresses the polyvocality of the text (graphe) and the multiplicity of the self (auto). More crucially, though, the powerlessness of the migrant is highlighted at the point of contestation with the disjunctive forces of Iboyoru nationalist discourse. Properly speaking, he is writing from the margins, reconfiguring the subject of cultural discourse through an articulation of selfhood that is connected to the assemblage of the expatriate community through cultural memory’s texts of becoming in exile such as Wright’s. Over and above this, there is a way in which the memory informing the text writes back to Wright, or transculturates his figures of memory, thus suggesting that the assemblage to which his writing belongs is one that allows for lines of flight, as in Deleuzean simultaneous territorialization and deterritorialization or disallows, as I shall argue hereunder, existential *Being-In-itself* and *Being-for-Others* a la Sartre. Whereas the case for freedom in *The Wanderers* has been explained in terms of Deleuzean lines of flight, the beginnings of which were signposted by the perspectival approach as used by Wright, the same case for freedom is expressed by a negation of another kind of flight: existential refuge, or escapism in *Mashanga’s Reverie*. 
Following Attwell (2002, 318–19), I would like to begin my conclusion by qualifying Mphahlele’s attitude to Sartre and situating his remarks in the context of Voices in the Whirlwind and Other Essays (1972), where Mphahlele revisits Sartre’s position when he states: ‘The image of Black Orpheus conceived by Sartre in which he dramatizes the black man searching for his Eurydice. . .is only part of the story. Because not only is the African present seeking out the past, but the past is seeking out the present’ (Mphahlele 1972, 151). Indeed, as the dream of his pursuit by a gang of apartheid thugs persists over a nine-year period of the setting of The Wanderers, we witness a past seeking out the present. We also gain a repetition, a mimicry, of the representational time of Richard Wright’s Bigger Thomas: his is a constant flight, fearing pursuit and capture in Native Son (1940). In reverie past and present are melded into a redoubtable admixture that, as I said before, becomes a counterpoint to the irresolution and futility attending the contexts of the two texts of autobiographical fiction.

This article concludes that the double consciousness arising from being-in-itself and for itself, tied to the responsibility of being-for-others by virtue of being-in-the-world in its attendant impulse to violence, has been explored by Manganyi who also directly grew disenchanted with the Eliotian wasteland and wanted to be involved in the realm of action, inspired as he was by a revolutionary – indeed Sartrean-Fanonist – commitment to liberation by violent means if necessary. Through the double temporality of Deleuzean virtuality, the text of exile, what I call ‘the wilderness text’ – as supplementary to the ‘worldliness’ – attests how The Wanderers repeats mimetically a text outside the archive of the African diaspora or black Atlantic in order to speak beyond the split public. This is where the split between Mphahlele-as-Timi Tabane and his son Felang is given greater resonance in history through a psychic split disguised as a reverie. The irresolution of the dilemma is consonant with the insistence that continuous nomadism boldly asserted in the title of the novel: wanderers. In this respect Timi chose the selective repetition of Uncle Tom’s mask, choosing self-saving over death. The nomos of the wanderer is an affirmation of life, a matter he deftly handles at the end of the novel: instead of writing about the death of Felang, as he set himself out to do, he finds himself writing about John Coltrane, a significant index of what Titlestad identifies as the ‘acoustics of memory’ (2004, 32), as well the fugue between classical Mozart and jazz blues, signifying what Attwell aptly describes as ‘fugitive double consciousness’ (2002, 307).

Notes

1. The Wanderers, Macmillan: London, 1971, was first published three years after it was successfully submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the PhD in creative writing at the University of Denver, Colorado. Since then, it has been re-issued by Fontana Books in association with Collins: London and Glasgow. Throughout this article I use the 1973 Fontana edition.
2. Wehrs notes: ‘From Orphé e Noir (1948) to his preface to Fanon’s Les Damnes de la Terre (1961), Sartre depicted colonialism as emblematic of all forms of human violence and struggle against colonialism as paradigmatic of all resistance. . .Sartre’s thought helped shape, and was shaped by, an intellectual climate in which ethical reflection was displaced onto a politics governed by the assumption that since Marxist revolution would bring justice, whatever promoted revolution was ethical’ (2003, 763).
3. The use of reverie in autobiographical fiction lends itself to Jessica Murray’s use of the Derridian model of testimony to the extent that it breaks down the distinction between fiction and testimony, especially where testimonial engagement of past traumas benefits from literary fiction owing to ‘the intertwined nature of fiction and testimony’ (2008, 1).
4. In this article the reverie and its sense of endless futility give metaphysical content to the escape from the apartheid past in South Africa and the infelicitous future in the West and East African diaspora, inasmuch as it crystallizes the contemplation of private and political choices.
5. These are the kind of texts that Edward Said in The World, The Text, The Critic has described as texts that are ‘events and by that very fact what goes on in texts is affiliated to the circumstances that represent the text’s interest’ (1983, 4).
6. For Sartre, freedom is an inescapable ontological condition, an argument he philosophically expounded through his famous *Being and Nothingness* and the trilogy of novels called *Les chemins de la Liberte*’ (*Ways to Freedom*). It is here that the double vision of which Sartre speaks in relation to Wright’s fiction is everywhere evident in his own, notably but not exclusively in the representation of two forms of escapism, that is, *Being-In-itself* and *Being-for-Others*, through two central characters: Mathieu Delarue and the communist Brunet. The former, born in 1905 and a philosophy teacher like Sartre, lacks political commitment; the latter, bogged down by communist discipline, loses himself in the political crowd and ironically becomes alienated from the self. There is no doubt that Timi Tabane, who is born in the same place and time as Mphahlele and, like him, teaches in schools and universities, is a version of Mphahlele in the fashion of Sartre’s Mathieu Delarue (by the way, the French name Delarue translates into ‘Of the road’ and loosely into ‘Wanderer’).

7. This article follows the delineation of Gaston Bachelard’s metaphysics of reverie, as traced by Catherine J.S. Pickart (1997) in Bachelard’s phenomenological approaches, especially in his *Poetics of Reverie* (1969), the English translation of which appears in the United States a year before Mphahlele submits his PhD thesis. According to Pickart, Bachelard’s is an increasingly subjective method that disavows ‘strong’ ontology and prefers ‘differential’ ontology, where the latter signals a recognition of the interpenetration between subject and object made possible in reverie, thus enabling enhancement and confirmation ‘through the mutual necessity of/for subject and object’ (1997, 68). This is crucial for my analysis, given its argument for reverie as symptomatic of multiplicity in its fragmented transferential relationships between subject and object, between man and nature, father and son, black and white races, male and female elements, etc., singularity and generality, as in an aporia.

8. Lewis Nkosi, in his *Tasks and Masks* (1981, 94), dismisses *The Wanderers* as an autobiographical novel that fails to recast its characters in a new light such that it is able to ‘reveal some imaginative purpose or central design’. Nkosi is obviously oblivious to, or fails to appreciate the significance of, the centrality of the reverie as a disordering principle in the novel.

9. The self-conscious use of terminology usually associated with existentialism in the Preface is important with regard to the Sartrean-Fanonist signposts of Manganyi’s philosophical orientation.

10. According to Deleuze: ‘What is an assemblage? It is a multiplicity made up of many heterogenous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures. Thus, the assemblage’s only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a “sympathy”’ (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, 69).

11. In his illuminating Introduction to the 1986 edition of Jean-Paul Sartre’s *The Age of Reason* (1947), David Caute notes that in Sartrean drama and fiction there is a recurrent theme of pseudo-revolt of ‘the wealthy boy who loves the poetry of Rimbaud and regards himself as the privileged spirit among the common herd’ (1986, xii).

12. Roger Bromley argues: ‘Diasporic cultural fictions produce an endless series of flexible cultural translations, arcs or bridges of new possibility, brought about by a creative fracturing of surface cultural representations’ (2000, 97).

13. The accusation of symbolic infanticide unfortunately missed the benefit of depth psychology, according to which the image of death expressed ‘the need for “an absolute sublimation” couched in “an idealized transformation of imagined reality”’ (Pickart 1997, 66).

14. Jameson acknowledges this campaign as the central theme of Deleuze’s philosophy and, in the same breath, notes that Deleuze — and latterly Jean-François Lyotard — ‘acknowledges the priority of Sartre’s early *Transcendence of the Ego*’ (2003, 10).

15. In Mphahlele’s 1974 edition of *The African Image* (1974, 12), he refers to the riots and the circumstances that led to them as vindicating a rhetoric of revolt in Wright, especially in the latter’s insistence that Bigger Thomas is not ‘conceived merely as a black man: he is the universal rebel’.

References


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