

RICHARD RIVE: A SKEWED BIOGRAPHY

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Abstract

This thesis explores the life and work of Richard Moore Rive, South African writer, educationist and essayist. The primary aim is to create a biography which is also in part a literary biography. As the title of the thesis implies, there is an acknowledged “skewing” of the biography along particular lines of investigation.

The first major focus is on Rive’s non-racialism, which he himself claims is at the heart of his political and personal *Weltanschauung* and the flywheel of his creative and critical work. I also look at what seems to be a contradictory relationship between Rive’s non-racialism with its genesis in anti-colonial struggle and his own self-fashioning which indicates an internalised affinity to the Western and the European. As questions of “race” continue to dominate both national debate and individual consciousness in contemporary South Africa, the examination of Rive’s non-racialism informs, it is hoped, such debate.

A second major focus is on Rive’s homosexuality about which he was almost completely silent in both his life and in his written corpus. The thesis explores these silences and finds what are, I suggest, unintended encodings of homoerotic desire in many of his works. This line of inquiry is prompted by my interest in articulations of sexualised subjectivities. Socially constructed and self-made subjectivities are explored using historical materialist, post-colonial and queer theory paradigms.

The biography is compiled chronologically from slightly before Rive's birth in 1930 to his death in 1989 and the posthumous period thereafter. I have used archival documentation, Rive's own work, and writings on Rive, personal interviews and my own memories of the man to reconstruct his life along the lines outlined above. There is in the thesis a deliberate combination of authorial narration with interlocking narratives by Rive himself and those who remember him, creating a multitude of voices in order to capture a subject who lived many lives simultaneously and who was, to many, a larger-than-life character.

An additional aim in the thesis is to explore elements of the tradition of biographical construction inherited from Western as well as South African pasts, the context within which my biography is located. I argue that there is presently a dearth in biography on South African writers, particularly black writers, and that there is a tension in biographical construction between reification of the individual on the one hand and, on the other, efforts to depict the individual as intimately and dynamically interconnected to the social.

I hope to have demonstrated in the thesis the various contributions to South African letters and civic life made by Rive, to suggest what his legacy has become at present and to have captured, in ways empathetic to him, numerous, complex and contradictory dimensions evidenced in his public and private lives.

Keywords

Richard Rive biography literary biography South African literature African literature black writers non-racialism post-colonial queer studies homosexuality District Six non-racial sport Langston Hughes Es'kia Mphahlele *Drum* magazine

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Shaun Viljoen

_____ day of _____, 2006.

For Kathleen Hauke ...

Kathleen Hauke (1935 – 2004) became interested in Richard Rive after she encountered his name in the course of her work on Langston Hughes and on South African literature. When she visited South Africa in 1988, she met Rive. The idea for a biography of Rive was born after she learnt that he was murdered the year thereafter. Hauke toured South Africa in 1998, interviewing several people who knew Rive, and began serious work on her biography.

She initiated correspondence with me in early 2004 when she found out from archivist Ann Torlesse at the National English Literary Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown that I had also been working on a biography of Rive since 1999. A short but rewarding and invigorating exchange of ideas and material between Arlington, Virginia, and Cape Town followed, revealing her rigour and fine biographer's eye for detail. She felt she was close to publication, but passed away before that could be realised.

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Hatred, even of meanness

Contorts the features.

Anger, even against injustice

Makes the voice hoarse. Oh, we

Who wanted to prepare the ground for friendliness

Could not ourselves be friendly.

But you, when the time comes at last

And man is helper to man

Think of us

With forbearance.

from "To Those Born Later"

Bertolt Brecht

but our discarded parts,

with their uncertain shifts from

inside to outside,

show that definiteness

is only the edge

of desire

from "Mapping"

Gabeba Baderoon

Section 1: Biography and Skewing

1.1 Introduction

There is, to date (May 2006), no full-length biography of the South African writer Richard Rive. My research aims to chart particular aspects of Rive's life (1930 –1989) and work – to write a biography. In the process I will, firstly, identify formative influences on Rive, catalogue and elaborate on his interventions in the literary, educational, social and sporting arenas and reflect on what I see as significant aspects of his personal and private life. Secondly, the thesis aims to make critical commentary on Rive's literary and expository corpus, and on his role in, and impact on, literary life in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. Thus the work becomes a literary biography as well.

In compiling the biography, particular strands I am interested in, for reasons I make explicit later in this introduction and in the course of the research, will be fore-grounded and examined, skewing the biography into idiosyncratic dimensions of interest. The first of these "skewings" is a preoccupation with constructions of the notion of self or with individual subject positions, and the dialectic between this and larger socio-economic contexts. The second area of interest is with regard to notions of becoming and being a "writer" – examining Rive's drive and ambition to be a writer and the interconnectedness of this to the other areas of interest mentioned here. Thirdly, I am most interested in the idea of non-racialism to which Rive not just subscribed, but which I suggest in this work

was what Yeats calls “the deep heart’s core” of his civic and writing life.¹ I will explore the way this belief in non-racialism co-existed, often in tense fashion, with what I call his “angry humanism” and, paradoxically, his own peculiarly racialised self-fashioning. I investigate, alongside the anger against injustice that sometimes made his authorial voice gratingly obvious in his texts, Rive’s remarkable silence, in both life and fiction, on questions of homosexual desire or on his own homosexuality. Related to these preoccupations is also an interest in memory-making – the different ways work by Rive was read in particular contexts and how post-1994 memories of him are constantly being unmade or remade. Finally, I attempt to contextualise the composition of a biography on Rive by exploring, at the outset, aspects of biography and biographical form inherited from Western literary tradition, and as constructed in current global conditions and within contemporary post-colonial settings in South Africa.

Since Rive’s death in 1989 there has been a number of attempts in academic circles, in South Africa and elsewhere, to re-evaluate his literary work and role as a writer, scholar, critic and literary character. Some of these accounts began to reconstitute biographical detail. Foremost among such attempts was the work of Stephen Gray. Gray’s collection of ten biographical pieces called *Free-Lancers and Literary Biography in South Africa* (1999) includes a memoir of Rive. Gray’s exploratory and insightful pieces, as well as his terse but illuminating preface to the collection, begin to draw attention to what he calls “the poorly developed” practice of literary biography in South Africa. He accounts for this paucity by giving two reasons: the first, predictably, is that “apartheid legislation used to discourage thinking about the alternative ways of life these writers represented”

¹ From “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” (44).

(xii); and the second, he suggests somewhat opaquely, is that “uncomplicated nostalgia has to us become inhibited” (xii). He unfortunately does not elaborate on this latter claim but I speculate that he is being critical of the general tendency under the old dispensation, both in local academia and in writing circles themselves, to devalue biography and its place in “high literature”. If Gray is implying that “uncomplicated nostalgia” is the impulse for biography, it is clearly far too narrow and restrictive a notion, as the rationale for writing a biography can be located in such a vast spectrum of motives, ranging, at the extremes, from revenge to reverence. The writers included in Gray’s collection – Charles Maclean, Douglas Blackburn, Beatrice Hastings, Stephen Black, Edward Wolfe, Bessie Head, Etienne Leroux, Mary Renault, Sipho Sepamla and of course Richard Rive – are the subjects of his work because “the motive was to rectify the injustice that figures I admire and emulate should have become relatively forgotten, their works seldom read, their strivings unknown to my uncaring contemporaries” (x).

Gray’s nineteen pages on Rive, the most extensive published sketch on Rive yet, started as an obituary published in the journal *Current Writing* in 1989, four months after Rive’s death. The first half of the piece recreates an account of Rive’s life in vaguely chronological order, but does so recounting very revealing anecdotes or encounters between Gray and Rive. The highlight of the memoir, though, is a remarkably detailed and hilarious description of a meal the two have together in Cape Town harbour in the late 1970s, which portrays Rive as a larger-than-life character, and also as a stingy individual. Gray’s sketch, then, is more memoir and obituary than conventional biographical narrative, lacking the latter’s sense of detailed chronology and reference to

historical fact – the lines along which I have attempted to construct this particular biography. Unlike Gray’s memoir, where he himself appears as a character and the process of remembering is also a subject of the text, in the tradition of A.J.A. Symons, my biography draws more on the tradition of Lytton Strachey. Here the biographer is not a character but nevertheless an omnipresent manipulator who elides the authorial “I” most of the time or relegates it, and the occasional reflections on memory-making, to preface, anecdote or footnote. Unlike Strachey, though, I have avoided freely fictionalising aspects of Rive’s life and instead have resorted to informed speculation about inner life, relationships, motive or emotion where there is no clear textual or oral evidence to account more objectively for these.

Daryl Lee’s doctoral dissertation, *A Rival Protest: The Life and Work of Richard Rive, A South African Writer*, completed in 1998 at Somerville College, Oxford, under the supervision of Robert Young, is the most detailed unpublished account of Rive’s life and work to date. Lee’s work is not a biography but rather a critique of “the aesthetic, political and historical features of the protest genre through the life and work of a prominent exponent of the oeuvre: Richard Rive” (Abstract, n.p.). Lee’s work traces Rive’s development as a “protest writer” from his earliest fiction to his final novel, *Emergency Continued*. His analysis of Rive’s texts as protest writing is often illuminating and convincing and I will draw on his research in section 2. In contextualising Rive’s work, Lee reconstructs literary and social life resulting in fragments of biography which serve his literary analysis. However, Lee tends to make sweeping and questionable claims in places – claims that stem from his lack of knowledge of the nuances of political and

activist positions taken up by Rive within the complexities of resistance politics in the Cape and the country during the writer's lifetime.

Jennifer Johnstone, in her 1991 Master's dissertation at the University of Natal under the supervision of Michael Chapman, focused on Rive's three novels and a selection of short stories. Johnstone, drawing on Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism and the polyglot nature of the novel, argues that

[w]e may see splits in [Rive's] texts between "character creation" and authorial "statement-making" not as simple lapses of art, but as the real strains of Rive's autobiographical position. He remains a fascinating case study of the problematics of being a "coloured" writer in South Africa, with one foot in the university and the other in District Six. (2-3)

Johnstone identifies a tension throughout Rive's work between "his need to impose his authority on social and literary life" (more evident, she claims, in his earlier work) and "his acute awareness of his marginalized status as a 'coloured' writer-intellectual in Apartheid South Africa" (2). The latter she finds to be a hallmark of the later stories and the last two novels. It is interesting that Johnstone corroborates this tension she finds in the texts by consistently drawing on biographical contexts. Johnstone's use of Bakhtin to claim that the texts embed a lived tension with regard to social standing and self-fashioning is also significant for my own exploration of silence in Rive's literary texts. Like Johnstone, it is mainly through a reading of biographical context that my interpretations of silence and queer encodings in Rive's work achieve a measure of corroboration.

A major biography of Rive was being researched in the United States by American scholar Kathleen Hauke from about 1989 till her death in July 2004. Hauke was proposing a more conventional life story rather than a literary biography and was concerned that her work capture the character of a man she thought of as “the best educated ‘coloured’ writer in South Africa with a Ph.D. from Oxford.”² Her death in 2004 has meant that the biography unfortunately remains incomplete and unpublished. Her extensive notes, revealing an astute eye for biographical detail and meaning, were donated by her husband Richard Hauke to the National English Literary Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown in 2005. An electronic copy sent to me by Richard Hauke has been acknowledged in footnotes where I have used her research.

The growing public awareness in the 1980s of District Six as an iconic space of contestation, memorialisation and reclamation (which I deal with in some detail in section 2.4), a symptom of a larger post-1976 resurgence of resistance in South Africa and in the sub-continent as well, has resulted in popularising narratives on space, memory, rites of passage and return, like Rive’s *‘Buckingham Palace’*, *District Six*. This particular work of Rive’s has played a significant role in exposing him to a new generation of readers, ensuring his continued prominence nationally and internationally as a South African literary figure.³

² From Hauke’s electronic draft piece called “Richard Rive draft”. All Hauke’s electronic files on Rive can only be identified by their titles as there is no numbering or any other form of reference. Hauke uses the British / South African spelling of “coloured”.

³ A comprehensive reading list of recommended books “dealing with multiculturalism and various cultures of our land in apartheid and post-apartheid times” for children and teenagers, compiled by Silvennoinen and published on the website of St Mary’s School in Waverley, Johannesburg (updated in

The novel '*Buckingham Palace*', *District Six* has been on the list of possible prescribed texts for high school learners at various grade levels in the Western Cape since 1997. It has also been used as a text in schools elsewhere in South Africa and in other countries.⁴ Nine years after his death, in 1998, the District Six Museum in Cape Town hosted a retrospective workshop on Richard Rive and District Six for teachers and academics.⁵ These occurrences are symptomatic of the continued or even the upsurge of interest in Rive and his work, particularly as part of a broader national and regional preoccupation with the processes of national reconciliation and reclamation. The memorialisation by the museum of District Six and of Rive, as a writer born in the District and who wrote about it, has attracted thousands of young local students and international visitors to its displays and archives annually. This has played a major role in recreating interest about the life and history of the area, and the associated forced removals. As a result, wide interest in Rive's life and his work has been guaranteed it seems for at least the next few generations, not only in Cape Town and the Western Cape, but also nationally and internationally.

A one-man play on Rive's life and work, *A Writer's Last Word*, written by Sylvia

2005), lists Rive's *Emergency*, *Advance*, *Retreat* and '*Buckingham Palace*', *District Six* as recommended reading for children aged twelve and above. Pupils at San Francisco University High School in the United States have set up a website on South African literature. One of the novels chosen to represent South African literature is Rive's '*Buckingham Palace*', *District Six*.

⁴ Lenasia Muslim School in Gauteng, for example, prescribed the book for Grade 9 English First Language classes in 1998.

⁵ Speakers included writers (James Matthews, Deela Khan, Mark Espin, Gertrude Fester), academics (Crain Soudien, Vivian Bickford-Smith, Shaun Viljoen, Angelo Fick, Rustum Kozain) and publisher David Philip and his wife Marie Philip. A video-recording of interviews with persons who knew Rive was made by André Marais for the District Six Sound Archive.

Vollenhoven and Basil Appollis, was premiered at the Grahamstown Festival in 1998 and was re-staged at the 1999 “One City Many Cultures” festival in Cape Town. Appollis has been talking of making a feature-length film on Rive and, according to him, a Swiss film company has purchased the rights to the film version of ‘*Buckingham Palace*’, *District Six*.⁶ Appollis also directed stage adaptations of ‘*Buckingham Palace*’, *District Six*, scripted jointly by him and myself, for the Drama Department at the University of Cape Town in March 2000, and for Artscape Theatre in Cape Town in 2001. More recently, two high schools and an amateur drama group on the Cape Flats have produced their own stage adaptations of the novel (see section 2.4 for more detail).

A remarkably vivid and humorous vignette of Rive was written by Michael Chitter and published in *Botsotso: Contemporary South African Culture 13* in 2004. I make reference to this piece again in section 2.4. Chitter was a high school athlete when he first met Rive, who was accompanying student athletes from Western Province on a trip to Johannesburg in 1975. Chitter’s observant piece has captured the paradoxical mixtures of selfless dedication and inflated self-importance, of bombast and intellectual insightfulness, of concern and condescension, of arrogance and dignity, of strut and struggle, of loudness and loneliness that constituted Richard Rive.

⁶ Appollis reported this to me during a telephonic discussion on 1 March 2006, stating that the performing rights organisation DALRO had informed him that the rights to the film of Rive’s novel had been taken up by Swiss film producers with a year-long option on the rights to develop a film concept. Appollis is himself keen to script and possibly produce a film based on the novel. He spent the latter quarter of 2005 as a writing participant developing a script based on ‘*Buckingham Palace*’, in the Script Development Programme at the Maurits Binger Film Institute, Amsterdam. He further reported in the conversation referred to above that there has been marked interest in such a film on the part of both local and international film makers who, he says, find the story and characters of the novel fascinating. The success at the Oscars of the South African film *Tsotsi* will no doubt increase such interest.

More recently, in 2005, a collection celebrating “fine writing” which has appeared in the popular magazine *Fair Lady* over the last forty years, was published. Rive’s story “District Six: Christmas 1960”, consisting of reworked extracts from *‘Buckingham Palace’, District Six*, not only appears in the collection, but Rive himself is styled by the editor of the publication, Marianne Thamm, as “one of South Africa’s leading literary voices” (ix). His name is strung together with others like Alan Paton, André Brink, Es’kia Mphahlele, Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee, Sindiwe Magona and Rian Malan.

On the other hand, Rive is disappearing from particular platforms where he had previously been a regular presence. As with other writers emerging in the 1950s – Es’kia Mphahlele, James Matthews, Alex La Guma, Bloke Modisane and Can Themba – it was the short story that put Rive on the map of South African writers. Rive’s own collections of his short stories and his inclusion in numerous anthologies of prose over the decades cemented his reputation as a short story and prose writer. However, a recent compilation, Michael Chapman’s *The New Century of South African Short Stories* (2004), has omitted him. Previous collections of prose by Chapman, an established and significant South African literary and cultural commentator as well as anthologist, had almost always included work by Rive.

Being Here: Modern Short Stories from Southern Africa, an anthology of short stories compiled by Robin Malan, and which included Rive’s “Rain”, was used in the first-year English course at the University of Stellenbosch in 2000 and 2001. However, a collection dedicated for use by these first-year students was then compiled by Rob Gaylard in 2002.

This compilation and subsequent editions of the collection do not carry a story by Rive. According to Gaylard, his exclusion of Rive was not deliberate. He adds that he included only six South African writers in a compilation of short stories from around the world. Gaylard sees Rive as a representative of writers from District Six and from the *Drum* period, and he decided to use a story by Matthews to represent this category of writing. Gaylard adds that he views Rive as an important “high profile representative and promoter of black South African writing in his day.”⁷

These “disappearances” from the literary radar might indicate a diminution of the sense of Rive’s place in the local canon and his relevance to how, from particular current perspectives, we view the past, or, as is evident in Gaylard’s non-inclusion of his work, they might perhaps be for less portentous, more fortuitous reasons. On balance, though, it seems that Rive’s work and life continue to resurface and be reasserted in numerous ways in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. The *Drum* stories and his fiction and essays on District Six have become the mainstay of his reputation in the second decade after his death.

Non-racialism in Life and Literature

Large swathes of the past from which Rive comes, and which he also helped form, are fast disappearing from untextualised memory. Invaluable and luminous moments of personal memory are rapidly fading as his family, associates, colleagues and comrades

⁷ Rob Gaylard. Personal interview.

die or forget.⁸ It is a past that is currently being fiercely contested on a multitude of levels.⁹ Rive, in his educational, civic and literary work, entered the conflicts of apartheid South Africa from a left-humanist and consistently “non-racial” position, to defend people of colour from imposed ignominy and deprivation. In section 2 I will elaborate on his particular approach to the national question. The point for now is that this position is undervalued in South Africa after the 1994 transition because of the current neo-liberal economic and social policies of the South African government and institutions of civil society.¹⁰ While the term “non-racial” has been widely adopted currently as nomenclature for the state’s position and as a description of the ANC policy in the days of struggle, in effect what the state and ANC draw on and practise should be called *multi-racialism* as opposed to what Rive meant by *non-racialism*.

⁸ Three close contemporaries and comrades of Rive, who were rich repositories of fact and memory, have recently passed away. Daphne Wessels (1928 – 2005) taught at South Peninsula High School when Rive started there as a young teacher and through her the friendship between Victor, her husband, and Rive developed. Irwin Combrinc (1926 – 2005) was a medical doctor and was Rive’s doctor at one time. He was an intellectual and activist in the Non-European Unity Movement and like Rive grew up in District Six. Ivan Abrahams (1933 – 2006) met Rive as a fellow student at Hewat College and they became lifelong friends and were colleagues at Hewat for more than a decade as well. Ivan was most generous in sharing his memories about Rive with me but I had not yet interviewed Daphne and Irwin, leaving me with a sense of their having taken aspects of the story of Rive with them to the silence of the grave.

⁹ The workshop of teachers held in 1998, on the ninth anniversary of Rive’s death, at the District Six Museum, focussed on sharing ideas about teaching the novel. In response to a question of whether ‘*Buckingham Palace*’, *District Six* was really “literature”, a debate ensued as to what constituted “literature”. An interesting feature of the debate was the polarisation of views – a few “white” teachers felt that the novel did not qualify as “literature” or, that it was literature but not top-class material, while many teachers from schools in the poorer, “non-white” areas hailed it as a refreshing, valuable piece of literature which was a welcome antidote to all the Eurocentric works normally prescribed. This unexpected polarisation of attitudes and the response of the “non-white” teachers in particular, brought to mind the description by Rive, in his memoir *Writing Black*, of his very similar reaction when discovering works by the Harlem Renaissance writers: “I could break with my literary dependence on White Folks who only describe the Ways of other White Folks” (10).

¹⁰ Since 1994, there has been widespread acceptance within South Africa by intellectuals in the state sector, in the media and in academic institutions of the need to pursue the road of national reconciliation and to building the “rainbow nation”, ideas embodied by Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. Tutu however has on many occasions continued a tradition common in intellectual life in this country of critical irreverence towards aspects of popular national / governmental positions, while nevertheless subscribing to the general pro-capitalist direction of national reconstruction.

Implicit in this dominant ideological position within the state and the ANC is the assumed existence of different “races” or “ethnic groups”, which makes the task in contemporary South Africa, in this view, that of *reconciliation* between groups rather than, as is implicit in Rive’s brand of “non-racialism”, the *abolition* of the very notion of the existence of the categories of race. Even the much-lauded 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, while claiming non-racialism as one of its founding values, does not qualify its use of the concept of race to interrogate the validity of the notion, but instead falls back on a multi-racial position which presupposes the existence of different “races”.¹¹ In addition, the mechanisms of employment equity and redress, particularly the national policy of affirmative action, serve to entrench notions of “race” and of racialised perceptions and consciousness as these operate on the basis of racial profiling, which serves to advance a minority of black middle-class citizens rather than address much more fundamental questions of equity of resources, land and employment of the unskilled. This fairly hegemonic “racialised”, “multicultural” mindset – “we are different but equal” – common in contemporary South Africa and prevalent elsewhere globally, is identified by Cornel West as perpetuating fraught social relations in the United States in recent years. He suggests instead that, unlike the “othering” positions of the American conservatives and liberals, we need “[t]o establish a new framework ... to begin with a frank acknowledgement of the basic humanness and Americanness of each of us” (8).

¹¹ Section 9.3 of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, reads: “The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, *including race*, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth” (my emphasis).

Rive's notion of non-racialism would completely concur with West's emphasis on a human and national commonality rather than primarily on a "racial" distinction and difference.

The prominence of the "race question" in contemporary South Africa has resulted in renewed debate around questions of "race" and racism in our society. This is not peculiar to South Africa, of course: one finds parallel concerns in other parts of the world, especially in North America, Britain and Western Europe. A re-examination of Rive's life and work entails a reflection on the flywheel of his *Weltanschauung* – his fight against racialism and for a well-defined non-racialism. This, and the continued interest in Rive's work and life, provides a rationale for the reconstruction of the particular past contexts – literary, social and ideological – which imbued him and which he helped shape, and which he represents in his fiction, drama and critical essays.

Renewed interest in notions of "coloured identity", part of an increasing trend in post-1994 South Africa which interrogates and / or affirms particular constructions of personal, "ethnic" and national identity, or what Desiree Lewis eloquently calls "'new' fictions of freedom and selfhood" (157), has, ironically, resulted in a resurgence of interest in Rive's life and work. Rive himself resisted the notion that he was coloured and his non-racialism saw this classification as a creation by colonialism and apartheid, as part of the divide-and-rule politics of European domination. In so far as that this position was a direct ideological retort by a segment of the oppressed intelligentsia to the racist ideology of the ruling classes, Crain Soudien's classification of it as "counter official"

(114) is accurate and useful as his term stresses the oppositional genesis of this stance to the notion of being coloured. If alive, Rive would probably not only have balked at being seen as a “coloured” writer but would in all likelihood have decried attempts to give credence and respectability to this kind of racialised identity, even in its most nuanced and sophisticated forms as explored by Zimitri Erasmus in her work on coloured identity.¹²

Loudness and Silence; Sexuality and Ethics

Rive’s non-racialism, the origins of which I trace in section 2.1 and elsewhere in this work, forms, as I will argue, the bedrock of both his life as an intellectual-activist and as a writer. He loudly proclaimed his opposition to the tyranny of racial oppression. His prose at its worst screeched hoarsely or in spectacular fashion,¹³ his irrepressible anger at, his contempt for and his humiliation by the anti-human impact of racial bigotry; at their best his stories have etched in most memorable fashion the sheer, demeaning pain and violent denigration of the subjects of racism. Yet the narratives have, simultaneously, asserted hopefulness and a common humanity and, as Chapman believes, “granted restorative potential to damaged identities” (*Southern African Literatures* 380). Lee’s summary of what Rive achieves in his fiction concurs that there is a persistent strand of resilience and hope in the body of Rive’s work:

¹² Erasmus’s position would directly counter the position Rive and his political mentors took (more on this later in the work) as she sees “Coloured identity” as determined by more than just white imposition: “Coloured identities cannot be wished or explained away... We have to recognise that constructions of what it means to be ‘coloured’ have shaped particular black experiences in South Africa in a very real way and that these identities are meaningful to many” (23).

¹³ To adapt a phrase from Njabulo Ndebele’s 1984 criticism of protest literature in which he finds that black protest writing in South Africa under apartheid “has largely been the history of the representation of spectacle” (*Rediscovery* 37).

His fiction, for the most, undertakes the realist depiction of the lives of ordinary or marginalised black South Africans in order to expose the horror of apartheid and to reveal the resilience and resistance of the individuals and communities it attempted to destroy. (18)

Lewis Nkosi's (1966) vitriolic criticism best expresses the harshest view of Rive's work from a fellow writer. Nkosi, using literary criteria steeped in the assumptions of practical criticism that underrated the strained and fraught contexts of postcolonial literature, called *Emergency* a "hackneyed" and "third-rate" novel. These criticisms were amplified by Vernon February (1984), who furthermore slated Rive's first novel as "an excellent illustration of the stereotype internalised by a black writer" ("The Stereotype" 323). I will examine these critiques of *Emergency* in some detail in section 2.2. However, despite Nkosi's and February's scathing criticism of *Emergency*, there is clearly an energy and talent in some of the prose in the novel which appeals to the reader. More importantly, the novel further explores the angry humanism that underpins all of Rive's earlier and middle work – his protest fiction. Even from a contemporary, post-1994 perspective when anti-apartheid literature for some, especially younger readers, seems somewhat passé, Rive's early work at its best crafts successful, stirring fictional narratives.

At the other extreme of critical appreciation of Rive's creative prose is the far more measured validation given to it by commentators like Lindfors (1966), Gordimer (1973), Barnett (1983), Mzamane (1985) and Chapman (1996). Nadine Gordimer, despite her evident dislike of Rive the man, sees him and other writers like Mphahlele, Nkosi,

Matthews, Modisane and La Guma as representing authentic voices of the dispossessed proletariat, writing “brilliantly observed” stories in the tradition of critical realism (*Essential Gesture* 30). Much criticism of Rive’s fiction tends to give value primarily, though not solely, to this protesting *cri de coeur*, focussing less critically on the formal, generic aspects of the writing. I will argue that while there are powerful literary moments in Rive’s fiction, particularly some of the short stories and in ‘*Buckingham Palace*’, *District Six*, his creative work is often vitiated by a number of shortcomings in his handling of generic conventions. Nevertheless, the tenor of the protest and intense presence of the performing authorial persona, together with the insistent and uncompromising “angry humanist” vision, make Rive an important literary voice in his time with continuing relevance in contemporary South Africa. The various ideological impulses underpinning his life’s work and divergent assessments of his creative work will be explored in the rest of the study.

The area which presented itself as the most problematic in constructing this biography was the issue of Rive’s sexuality. Human sexuality, like human consciousness, is one of the frontiers of knowledge we are currently entranced by. My own interest in expressions of sexuality entails transgressing the very distinct line between the public and the private which Rive delineated for himself in his lifetime. His sexuality was a significant, albeit clandestine, part of his life, as the nature of his death began to reveal. However, exploring issues of homosexuality in this work raises ethical considerations about making public the private, particularly because of the absence of any direct linkage between Rive’s homosexuality and his creative output, and also because of his own very evident silence

about his homosexuality throughout his life. Alf Wannenburg, who became a close friend, remarks in his memoir of Rive that “[t]here were large areas of his own inner life that he was not prepared to disclose, even to those who knew him well” (*Memories* 34). Opinions about addressing the topic of Rive’s homosexuality canvassed from interviewees vary enormously, from “tell everything” as advocated by Gray¹⁴ to Mphahlele who “had no idea”¹⁵ about Rive’s being gay, implying, it seems, as many have done in interviews, that his sexual preference was never known to them or, by implication, of no consequence as far as they were concerned. Yet others refuse to talk about it and one senses the extent to which for many, even now, homosexuality remains a taboo subject or it remains “irrelevant” – an invasion, it is felt, of the person’s right to privacy.

This study, while cognisant of the need to see the question of Rive’s sexual identity in the greater light of his literary, educational, sporting and social contributions, is also interested in exploring the boundaries between what are perceived to be separate realms of the private and public. As William McFeely insists, “[a]s either the writer or the reader engages in a biography or autobiography, there is a conjunction of the private and the public” (xi). This is often a tense conjunction with competing interests about where the borderline should be, as recognised by Gray when he says that “[a]ll literary biography is a tug-of-wishes between the private being’s will to reticence and the publicist’s to disclosure” (xi). My biography of Rive is curious about the connection or absence of connection between these two realms, particularly with regard to questions of sexuality.

¹⁴ Stephen Gray. Personal interview.

¹⁵ Es’kia Mphahlele. Personal interview.

The taboo forbidding exploration of secret sexual lives, while less intense than in the pre-sexual revolution of the sixties, is still fairly widespread in contemporary society. This research does not “out” Rive – his being gay was either widely suspected, whispered about or guessed at, and even known about, especially in his adult years, and his murder and the subsequent widely reported trial of the two young men accused of killing him finally established his homosexuality as public fact. Rather, my work in this regard attempts to walk a line between being empathetic to Rive’s own desire for privacy and my own research interest in questions of silences, queer literary encodings or readings, and gay identity. The research includes in the construction of the biography facts and speculation about Rive’s sexual life that feed into the larger research questions rather than appearing for their own sake and consequent reader titillation.¹⁶ The exploration of sexuality is done, it is hoped, with contextual and ethical considerations constantly in mind.

Biography: Theory, Method, Form and Motive

Works on the construction of biography and certain key biographies have informed the research. Paula Backscheider’s *Reflections on Biography* (2001) and Mary Rhiel and David Suchoff’s *The Seductions of Biography* (1996) have been central in helping to identify elements of contemporary biography and understanding very specific aspects of biographical construction – for example, the position of the biographer in the

¹⁶ An example of my attempt to avoid mere sensationalising and trivialising of the sexual is the way I have had to decide on the extent to which I share levels of detail about Rive’s clandestine and very marginal sexual practices. With my larger research questions in mind I have tried to make sense of the detail, revealing what is necessary for the argument and exploration, rather than merely describing all that I know unselectively and realistically.

biographical narrative, the reconstruction of social context and the delineation of character. Backscheider, surveying the state of biographical production (in America and Europe largely) at the turn of the twentieth century, has been of particular interest in directing close scrutiny towards aspects of the biographical form. She explores the nature of biographical language, structure and discourse created, as well as considerations like the relationship between subject and biographer, helping to identify and negotiate some of the contrary allegiances facing the biographer – for example, being both deeply empathetic and involved with as well as being simultaneously critical towards and distant from the subject.

While the works of these writers have been helpful, they are limited by their Euro-American centred focus and by the liberal humanist outlook which underpins their analyses and I will, in section 1.2, argue for the need to examine them alongside works by historical materialist, post-colonial and queer theorists mentioned in the course of this work.

In order to create a biography of Rive, the research had to establish a core of fact and a life chronology. “If biography appeals to our curiosity about the human personality, it must as well rest on factual knowledge – what exactly happened, to whom?” Gray correctly asserts (xiii). In this sense my biography subscribes to the positivist and empiricist notions that there are verifiable historical, objective facts that need to be established as part of a biographical project. Michael Holroyd’s critical work on biography, and his own biographies themselves, have been useful benchmarks for this

dimension of my work, as have South African biographers like Stephen Gray.

In section 1.2 that follows, I attempt to locate my work within Western and African traditions of biography, but I combine the approach outlined above with an interrogation of social context, believing the historical materialist insistence on individual life as an expression of socio-economic forces (particularly as articulated by Georgi Plekhanov, the so-called father of Russian Marxism) to have a large measure of usefulness, up to a point.¹⁷ For socio-economic thought on contemporary global culture and society I have often relied on a Marxist perspective in general, as well as on more recent analyses of global politics, society and culture as made by, for example, Jean and John Comaroff. Local commentators with an interest in social biography I draw on in this regard are Neville Alexander, Jonathan Hyslop, John Matshikiza and Mark Gevisser.

To help explore and to a certain extent explain Rive's more eccentric and contradictory individual subjectivities, a point where historical materialist explanations cease to be helpful, I then draw on post-colonial theory and on gender / queer theory, particularly on work by Franz Fanon, Homi Bhaba and Judith Butler, as well as on my own lived experiences in times and spaces which serendipitously intersect with some of the times and spaces inhabited by Rive.¹⁸

¹⁷ Plekhanov founded the first Russian Marxist group in 1883, called the Liberation of Labour Group. *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* claims "he is known as the father of Russian Marxism" (1478).

¹⁸ Mark Gevisser, reflecting on his own interest in documenting the life of Thabo Mbeki, particularly in the latter's intersections with the city of Johannesburg, notes how "we write from where we come from, as much as where our subjects come from" (qtd. in Nuttall, 109).

The research methodology has had four main strands, combining close reading of texts by Rive and related works, local and international archival research, academic dialogue and collaboration, and formal and informal interviews. Interviews were conducted at various levels of formality. There were what Maykut and Morehouse classify as the “unstructured interview” (82) where a single question like “What are your memories of Richard?” was used to unlock an unpredictable range of “participant perspectives” while I made notes. This method has worked very successfully. At times more structured interviews were conducted with particular questions directed at the interviewee. In certain interviews a tape recorder or digital recording device was used to record responses and I used the transcriptions of these interviews as well as notes taken during the interviews.¹⁹

The nature and import of the research towards a doctoral degree were made clear to interviewees, on the basis of which they chose to participate or decline involvement. If they agreed to participate, they were informed about their choices with regard to participation; that is, they could consent to the use of their information and real names in the research, or choose anonymity and yet be quoted using pseudonyms, or prefer that their contributions not be utilised in any way that identifies them. Where it is deemed that an interviewee’s contribution might have been used in a contentious way, it was submitted to him/her for scrutiny. I was aware of the need to be sensitive with regard to the use of the tape recorder and cognisant of the personal value attached to visual and other material that interviewees might want to share or lend. If so wished, the

¹⁹ Certain of the interviews, particularly the longer ones, have been transcribed and in these instances I have referred to them by the transcript page numbers in the in-text citation.

interviewees could have the tape recording returned to them, or agree to donate the recording to the District Six Sound Archive, where they will be available for public use. The information sheet handed to interviewees who participated in a more formal capacity, as suggested by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, is attached as an appendix to the research.

One of the main considerations when creating a biography is the question of form and narrative voice.²⁰ As I have stated earlier in this introduction, I have opted for an unobtrusive authorial presence, unlike, for example, Gray in his memoir of Rive or Bartlett's postmodern biography of Oscar Wilde in which Bartlett is co-protagonist and equally present with his subject. Perhaps this kind of interactive memoir is possible in these cases as both biographers are established writers and public figures in their own right, and can assume reader interest in their writing lives as well as that of their biographical subject. My approach is akin to the conventional omniscient narrator in the realistic novel or bildungsroman, partly because I have no presence in the published

²⁰ There are of course numerous other considerations. A recent colloquium (May 2003) on biography was held at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER), Johannesburg. The colloquium synopsis claims that biography has become "one of the most popular varieties of non-fiction literature" as well as an "increasingly prominent form of historical writing." The questions proposed for consideration at the colloquium give an idea of the pertinent subsets of current interest in the field of biography, particularly in a South African or non-metropolitan context. These are: 1. Reflections by biographers on their work with questions such as: What counts as biographical evidence? What are the problems of biographical writing? How far can the writer legitimately appear in the biographical story he/she tells? 2. Biography as a method in the Humanities and Social Sciences: What can (and can't) individual life stories tell us about wider societies in which they play out? Can looking at individual lives help change the way we think about what "society" is? What are the connections between oral history, memory and biography? 3. Reflections on biography as literary genre: How does contemporary literary theory change the way we think about biography? Where are the boundaries between biography and autobiography? Where are the boundaries between biography and fiction? 4. Reflections on readership and publishing: What creates a reading public for biography or autobiography? What cultural impact has biographical writing had in South Africa? How do conditions of publishing in South Africa affect the possibilities for the writing of biography?

world of writers and also because I have chosen to give voice to Rive himself and also to the multitude who harbour diverse memories of him. This choice also arises out of my sense that Rive led such a varied life, so often compartmentalised into different social circles that rarely touched, that polyphony rather than counterpoint would be a more appropriate mode of unveiling his life. My work thus oscillates between authorial telling and interpreting on the one hand, and giving the story over to others and becoming merely a conductor of voices at play. However, my role as a character / participant, who also ventures commentary more overtly, becomes more evident in the section on the final decade of Rive's life, the period when I came to know him as fellow activist, friend and colleague.

The nature of Rive's strained relationship with his family, his unspoken homosexuality and proclivity for young men and the violent and mysterious circumstances of his death were matters some interviewees found sensitive and chose to avoid, explain away or refuse to talk about altogether. What are some of the ethical dilemmas facing a biographer of Richard Rive? This was a question I kept asking as I was composing the work. What level of detail is used and to what end? While responses to these questions were formulated and refined and redefined during the actual process of recreation, I kept falling back on the response that, while attempting to maintain empathy with Rive and his assumed sensibilities, I needed to make the story my own, pursuing lines of inquiry I could justify as valid, useful, informed and considered. The research thus attempted a historically accurate account of Rive's life as far as possible, and constantly strived to be empathetic towards not only the sensitivities of Richard Rive himself but also to those

people still alive who are implicated in the story. However, the bias of the researcher in creating particular focal nodes in the biography as outlined at the start of this introduction is made evident throughout the work.

While I have made my particular intellectual preoccupations clear, I have not fully sketched what are perhaps more personal motives for undertaking this project. I came to know Richard in the mid-1970s through his association with Victor Wessels and had met him at discussions and parties at Victor's house and at forums like the Cape Flats Educational Fellowship where he often gave workshops on English and African literature for matriculants. I also encountered him in meetings on civic and sports issues over the next few years, but we were by no means close. In fact, I thought little of his work and disliked his pompous and affected manner; he in turn thought little of me (or so it seemed), sensing perhaps my reservations about his work, my natural reserve generally and my preference for remaining in the shadows, away from public glare. It was only during a meeting in London in 1986, when I was a student at London University and he was passing through to secure a visiting professorship at Harvard, that we really spoke to each other over supper in North London at the home of Maeve Heneke, a friend we had in common. It was then that he recruited me to leave my teaching post at Cathkin High School, where I had been working since graduating in 1977, and take up a post at Hewat College of Education where he was Head of the English Department. From 1987 to his death in 1989 we worked closely together in the department and developed a friendship, but there always remained a measure of distance between us. Tension increased between us at times, like during my participation in a Hewat College production of his novel

'Buckingham Palace', District Six in 1988, when Richard disliked the way I had re-scripted parts of his own script for the play. He remained generous and at times very warm towards me, asking me to house-sit on occasion, and on his last birthday before he died, we had supper together with two other Hewat colleagues. At the time of his death, my admiration for him as a writer and a man had grown, but I remained skeptical of the “literary value” of much of his work.

Ten years after his death I decided to undertake this project while working at the University of the Witwatersrand, primarily because it was a research subject that would mean traveling back home to Cape Town fairly frequently; I often yearned for home during my four years in Johannesburg. Work on Rive started off as an excuse. But then it dawned on me that there was no biography of Rive, especially one which explored the contrast between the public political proclamations and the clandestine sexual life. Only in the course of the research have I rethought some of my harsher and decontextualised judgments about Richard's work and character, realising how courageous he often was, how important his writings have been, how large he loomed as a character with his acerbic wit and humour, how lonely and troubled he was and, above all, what a compelling teller of tales. I also realized how conditioned my own criteria for “great literature” had been, a product of the then still dominant critical practice of close reading in the English Department at the University of Cape Town, and of my own valorizing, at that stage of my life, of the English Canon and of “dense prose”. Added to all of this, there are other uncanny overlaps in my and Richard's lives that make the research manifestly narcissistic when I now look back on it. I realise how much both Rive and I

have in common. We were both classified by apartheid as coloured and styled by liberal academia as “coloured intellectuals”, were the products of the political outlook of the Non-European Unity Movement and felt compelled to assert a very Western cosmopolitanism that stemmed from resistance to the balkanising tribalism and racism being fostered by the South African ruling classes. Also, like Rive, I have ended up being markedly anglophilic in a certain sense (teaching in English departments, for example) and yet, at the same time, we both found ourselves propagating African literature and local writing through our work in English departments at secondary and tertiary educational institutions. Lastly, I would like to assert that we are both gay men, but like Rive, although perhaps for different reasons, I am uneasy with the label, believing with Butler that “[t]o claim that this is what I *am* is to suggest a provisional totalization of this ‘I’ ” (“Imitation” 15), (Butler’s emphasis).

Finally, a biography of Rive needs to capture something of the spirit of the man most of those interviewed remember – his wit, sometimes scathing, sometimes entertaining, sometimes self-parodying; his natural ability as a raconteur making him a memorable teacher, colleague and friend. Reading Ellmann’s biography of Wilde, one wonders to what extent Rive echoes dimensions of Wilde – the dandy, the raconteur, the Magdalen graduate, the aphorisms, the drive to write, the love that dare not speak its name, the changing of dates of birth to make himself a little younger, the tragic ending – were these a strange case of fate, or perhaps a coincidence cultivated by Rive? Lee argues that while Rive typified the black protest writer in South Africa, “his life and work also courted the ascription of artifice, eccentricity and individualism, often through the persona of the

English literary dandy” (6). I raise and explore these questions and contradictions in subsequent sections.

These final thoughts to the introduction serve to point to the belief – one that I have consciously transmuted into the work – that, in the undeniably presumptuous undertaking of re-inventing and refashioning someone’s life along the twisted lines of some biographer’s predetermined helix, it is perhaps at times more productive to raise questions that seem to be revealing themselves and to share assumptions, speculations and hunches, than to offer definitive explanations. And to remind oneself to do all this for a fellow writer “with forbearance.”

In the next section, 1.2, I examine aspects of biography inherited from Western tradition and within contemporary South Africa that are relevant to my approach to generating a biography of Rive as set out in section 2. In the addenda I include a short chronology of events in Rive’s life, the letter of information given to interviewees, and a list of interviewees.



Illustration 1. Kathleen Hauke and Rive, circa 1988. Courtesy of Richard Hauke.

1.2 Reflections on Biography

The main function of the biographer, according to Michael Holroyd, is “to chart illuminating connections between past and present, life and work – that is the biographer’s aesthetic, that is his or her recreative process” (19). Holroyd’s formulation, calling for biography to “*chart* illuminating connections” (my emphasis), typifies the strong and very productive empiricist tradition of British biography. The limitation of Holroyd’s formulation, however, is that the connections he asks the biographer “to chart” are presumed, as the word implies, to be mappings between separate domains, between “life” and “work”. These domains could instead be seen as inextricably entangled and in constant tension, underpinned by the co-existence of hiatus and contraries and marked by the dialectics within and between these modes of existence. In the preface to his biography on Nadine Gordimer, Ronald Suresh Roberts questions the positivist assumption of an unproblematic relationship between fact and fiction, between life and art, and quotes Gordimer’s assertion on the messy relationship between objective and subjective – “the mysterious incest between life and art” (qtd. in Suresh Roberts 16). A more useful and delving formulation of the role of the biographer, I suggest, in the context of the character of current globalised localities, might be, adapting Holroyd, to interrogate and illuminate *interconnectedness* and *disjuncture* between life and work.¹

¹ The danger of making “connections” to the point of insisting only on *connection* in biography is highlighted by Martin Amis, who, when reviewing Andrew Motion’s biography of Philip Larkin, says “[b]iography, besides being a lowly trade, may also be attritional ... and what [biographers] do, or end up doing, is insist on connection” (qtd. in McFeely ix).

In her *Reflections on Biography*, Backscheider notes the popularity of the genre of biography towards the end of the twentieth century:

In England a 1994 survey found that of the people who read one book a month, 19 per cent preferred biography. The biographer Stephen Oates quotes a survey by the Library of Congress that discovered that more people had read a biography in the previous six months than any other kind of book. (xiii)

Backscheider, quoting biographer Richard Holmes, accounts for this fascination with biography by using humanist and universalist paradigms:

Richard Holmes ... says that since Samuel Johnson's life of Richard Savage, 'biography became a rival to the novel ... It began to pose the largest, imaginative questions: how well can we know our fellow human beings; how far can we learn from someone else's struggles about the conditions of our own; what do the intimate circumstances of one particular life tell us about human nature in general?' (xxi)

Such accounts of the fascination we have with biography no doubt capture an aspect of the allure of biography, but they also fail to see how socio-economic imperatives are entwined with this phenomenon and thus reinforce the power and status of the genre. I will argue below that humanism is by itself useful but insufficient as a heuristic paradigm to account more fully for the status and lure of biography in contemporary society.²

The unproblematised "we" in the quotation above by Holmes, and in Backscheider's work as well, assumes a readership sharing common values and, possibly, a sense of

² I use "humanism" here in the more modern, twentieth-century sense as defined by Roger Scruton, as emphasising "the human as the *sole* and *sufficient* source of all values" (244), (Scruton's emphasis).

place in the world. But in fact this readership, while sharing a common humanity, is at the same time multipliciously riven by localised and globalised division and conflict. John Pilger deconstructs the notion of a singular global economy within and around what he calls the “business state”:

The “global economy” is [the business state’s] most important media enterprise. “Global economy” is a modern Orwellian term. On the surface, it is instant financial trading, mobile phones, McDonald’s, Starbucks, holidays booked on the net. Beneath this gloss, it is the globalisation of poverty, a world where most human beings never make a phone call and live on less than two dollars a day, where 6,000 children die every day from diarrhoea because most have no access to clean water.

In this world, unseen by most of us in the global north, a sophisticated system of plunder has [widened] the divide between rich and poor as never before. (2)

While Pilger has emphasised the primary north-south divide in the world today, the discrepancies he speaks of are becoming more evident within cities and towns all around the world as well. What are the implications of this global context for analysing and creating biography?

This macro socio-economic context holds multiple and complex implications for the field of literary and cultural studies in general, and biography in particular. For example, the

tendency of biography to focus on “the lives of famous persons”³ (called “the biographical impulse” by historian of biography Waldo Dunn), a tradition since the biographical works of Plutarch and continued again from Boswell’s *Life of Johnson* through biographies of the nineteenth century, has persisted to the present (Dunn 1). But the notion of the proper subject for biography has also expanded, with the contemporary emphasis not only on prominent men but also on female and ordinary individual achievement. This democratic spreading of the net of biography and its attendant popularity is nevertheless, wittingly or unwittingly, also potentially a contributor to the cultural correlative of millennial capitalism – rampant individualism.

The predominant notion of biography we have inherited in particular from Western thought is that of biography as an “account of *someone*’s life written by *someone* else”⁴ (my emphasis) – as the story of an individual by an individual. This notion of biography is the product of humanist thought developed initially in classical Greece and then Renaissance Europe, and encoded by Locke in his liberal humanist philosophy with its propagation of the inalienable rights of the individual. Advancing capitalist relations not only made possible the further development of humanist thought but also adopted liberal humanism as, Terry Eagleton claims, “the ‘official’ ideology of such society” (199), making individualism an increasingly prominent and even dominant component of the self-consciousness of modern being. Eagleton is dismissive of liberal humanism, calling it “impotent” (199) and “largely ineffectual” (200), pointing to its contradictory

³ According to Dunn’s *English Biography* (1916), “Plutarch set before himself the task of ‘*writing the lives of famous persons,*’ of ‘*comparing the lives of the greatest men with one another*’” (xi) (italics in the original).

⁴ This is the definition given in *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1998 edition.

relationship to modern capitalism whereby it is propounded and funded as the “humanities” but simultaneously deprives individuals of their rights in ways described by Pilger above. Eagleton’s position, however, while serving to highlight the economic underbelly of liberal humanism, underestimates the manner in which readers are able to read across contexts and inscribe themselves into the most disparate texts. For example, Natasha Distiller argues that humanism, in the South African context, despite being linked to a liberal tradition that was seen as racist and serving white privilege, contributed to a critique of the apartheid order and radical appropriation of English culture on the part of black writers.⁵ In my biography I will examine the way Rive’s own articulation of humanism, what I call “angry humanism”, co-existed at times uneasily and at times comfortably with a political radicalism stemming from mentors who were more clearly Marxist in their critique of the apartheid state. As a biographer, I am myself attempting to combine a humanist view of literary work and life, including the fore-grounding of the subject’s individual consciousness, with a historical-materialist analysis of the social context which skews the biography into directions that seek interconnectedness with the macro socio-economic setting. In short, there are impulses attempting to reinsert but not completely subsume the individual within the matrix of the social.

By the latter half of the twentieth century, a pervasive individualism, a caricature perhaps of the humanism that was its forbear, appeared to have taken root particularly in cities around the globe. This hyper-individualism, defining itself by its ability to consume, is

⁵ This is argued in Distiller’s unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cape Town. Distiller’s position on the role of humanism is guided by post-colonial theory, in particular that of Bhabha’s idea of a “Third Space” – a notion which allows for fluid re-definition and self-definition in hybrid interactions between hegemonic and resistant cultural impulses in terms which are not Manichaeian.

one of the critical ideological elements perpetuating mass retail markets for branded, glamourised, highly visible commodities. Jean and John Comaroff, interrogating the notion of consumption in the twenty-first century, claim that “the (post)modern person is a subject made with objects” (4). Theroux makes this same claim in more poetic terms, describing the times we live in as “this age of intense peddling” (8). Hyper-consumerism and object fetishism, combined with a fixation on “real” mega-stars in the world of entertainment and culture, mark the millennium. Biography fits the millennial bill, more ideally than even the novel, as biography has the added attraction of being “a true story”, of being “real”. But like every other literary genre or artistic or human mode of expression, biography is also simultaneously the site for resistant and emergent meanings of what constitutes the notion of the human in the face of such anti-social individualism. I illustrate this point later in the section.

Biography then, as conventionally defined, or even biography as fictional transformation in the form of creative non-fiction or transmuted into a novel, can be constructed or interpreted as reification of the individual. This is especially the case if there is a focus on individual sexual lives, with the consequent eliding, diminishing or even denying of historical and social communalities that continually constitute both the individual protagonist as well as the supposedly “singular” author of the biographical narrative. Consequently biography, the manufactured, textualised “I”, the Comaroffs’ “subject made with objects” sells, and sells well. It is an ideal commodity as it is both commodity-in-demand and simultaneously an ideological affirmation of commodification, of the anti-communitarian values underpinning capitalist economy. Even when the individual life

being reconstructed, like that of Nelson Mandela for example, has been dedicated to the exposure or demise of parasitic economic and social relations, biography can diminish the sense of the individual as expression of a larger corporate and portray the subject as merely individual martyr or genius. I examine this dimension again later in this section.

Since the advent of the printing press, the development of the publishing industry and the notion of authorship, texts have become more and more conceived of as the product of *individual* authority. More recently in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the copyrighted, profit-bearing, legislated condition of intellectual property rights has entrenched this notion of individual authorship as coterminous with ownership. The publicly-debated tension between Nadine Gordimer and her at-one-time authorised biographer, Ronald Suresh Roberts, is symptomatic of the vigour of our battles for authorship / authority over texts and, consequently, *who* makes the meaning of a life and what meanings are textualised and publicised.

In the creation of my biography of Rive I am constantly mindful of the fact that I am recasting his life as my story, fitting his public and private worlds into my moulds. However, I attempt to identify my bias and assumptions and continually engage with them in a spirit of critical disbelief (Comaroffs 46); but I am also cognisant of the fact that my story should be empathetic to his sense of himself, to others' senses of him, and be particularly alive to the obvious as well as liminal contradictions inherent in and between all of these points of view. I am also intent on seeing Rive as concomitantly both individual, and also as he saw himself – as product and producer of wider social,

historical and communal encounters, as iconic of something broader – a broadly historical-materialist view of the individual-social nexus.

Marxism provides a productive way of scrutinising the role of the individual in history – a view that assists in identifying and even explaining the interconnectedness between individual and society, but that ultimately is insufficient for accounting for the fullness of the human subject, as the inner life and peculiar individual consciousness have traditionally fallen outside of the bounds of the inquiry. Plekhanov, whose work influenced both Lenin and Trotsky, outlined what he saw as the dialectic between the individual and history. He argues that human action is the product of general social trends, emphasising the conventional Marxist position that individual human consciousness is determined by larger socio-economic forces. However, Plekhanov also stresses the fact that “individuals can influence the fate of society” (37) but only in so far as “they are themselves the product of this trend; were it not for that trend they would never have crossed the threshold that divides the potential from the real” (49). This dialectical conception seems helpful in my reconstruction of Rive’s life in later sections, particularly on the level of portraying his formation by and his contribution to the anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggle.

Establishing this dialectic between subject and context is often easier when scrutinising the life and work of writers. Backscheider, thinking especially of the work of the English language biographer she regards as supreme, Richard Ellmann, attests to the aesthetic lure attending this unravelling of a “fit” between art and life and life and art:

The awareness that events *first* “command present attention”, shape the man, and form the fabric of the life even as they are transformed into artistic sources, into single lines or extended episodes or striking characters, gives [Ellmann’s] biographies a narrative unity unusual in literary lives. (12) (*italics in the original*)

The “narrative unity” which Backscheider speaks of arises from the additional archive, available to the biographer, in the re-imagined inflections of their lives and times created by writers in their work.

It is post-colonial and queer theory rather than Marxism that I draw on when investigating the interstitial and contradictory elements of Rive’s more personal and private life. My thesis is that, beneath the more engaged public persona and manifestos of political positioning, Rive had a fraught, vacillating and ambivalent relationship to what I call the “cosmopolitan” on the one hand, and the “hetero-normative” on the other. Bhabha, drawing on Franz Fanon’s notion of “the zone of occult instability where people dwell,” postulates the existence of the “Third Space” which is a hybrid space for the creation of new self-fashioning and meaning other than what is mirrored in homogenising ways by the colonial, and which he characterises as follows:

It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this “Third Space”, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (209)

Bhabha’s notion of this Third Space has been helpful only in that it allows for a way of understanding, to a degree, the more clearly “hybridised” aspects of the way Rive fashioned himself, like his claim of cosmopolitanism. However, the persistence of the

old, the conservative, the colonial on the one hand, and, on the other, the emergence of the resistant, the new and the alternative remain polarised within Rive. The creativity, the hope and the sense of new meaning which mark Bhabha's Third Space do not capture these fraught and unresolved combinations that I suggest mark the man.

I utilise the term "queer" in a fairly expansive manner, going beyond what Butler sees as its possible associations with "gay" and "lesbian", and with "a predominantly white movement" (*Bodies* 228). Instead, I use it not only to capture an analytical angle that privileges articulations of non-heteronormative sexuality, but also to read texts in a manner that foregrounds social and human configurations which challenge the institutionalised, the conventional and the hegemonic. Like Butler, I see the term as "a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings ... never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes" (*Bodies* 228).

In making queer readings of Rive's texts I draw on the work of Judith Butler to help understand the visible and more covert markers of homosexuality that I read as being performed or being silenced, intentionally and unintentionally, by Rive in his life and in his work. My queer readings are also guided by the work of Allon White, *The Uses of Obscurity* (1981). Although not a queer theorist as such, White's work has helped in making close readings of the silences about homosexuality I argue are prevalent in Rive's work.

Biography in South Africa: Contexts

After a decade of the “new” South Africa it is evident that the old economic disparities between the racialised categories of rich (white) and poor (black) persist, except for a segment of black middle-class professionals and entrepreneurs who have now acquired access to privilege. These disparities are being entrenched and replicated by present state neo-liberal economic policies and practices which are in line with the dictates of “millennial capitalism”. The existing and widening gap between rich and poor in South Africa is a localised inflection of what Pilger and others are arguing occurs on a global level. Jean and John Comaroff contextualise and characterise this tendency as follows:

Whether it be in post-Soviet central Europe or postcolonial Africa ... the world-historical process that came to be symbolized by the events of 1989 held out the prospect that everyone would be set free to accumulate and speculate, to consume and to indulge repressed cravings in a universe of less government, greater privatization, more opulence, infinite enterprise. For the vast majority, however, the millennial moment passed without visible enrichment. (25)

In terms of the present global world order, Neville Alexander’s formulation that “in South Africa after the abolition of apartheid ... we are in fact dealing with a very ordinary country” (1) stresses the extent to which the “new” South African state has become a full and largely (though not completely) compliant and productive member of

the hegemonic millennial capitalist order.⁶ Martin Legassick sums up what many social analysts (Sampie Terreblanche for example)⁷ are saying about the nature of contemporary South African society when, in a 2003 article, he claims “South Africa is not merely the most unequal society in the world (along with Brazil and Guatemala) but inequality is increasing” (n.p.). If one accepts this reading of the trajectory of social development in South Africa, and accepts that it has a bearing on the cultural domain, what then are the implications for the consumption and production of biography?

The plethora and popularity of biography and autobiography in the first decade of the post-apartheid order in South Africa, especially of political leaders like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Bram Fischer, Patricia De Lille and others, serve to celebrate victory of nationalist humanism over apartheid tyranny and the role therein of remarkable individual agency. Works such as these often, in their more scintillating moments, “illuminate interconnectedness” between individual and social, even though political biographies more often than not tend to valorise a partisan view of the past. To what extent the biography-in-progress of Thabo Mbeki being drafted by Mark Gevisser will walk the expected tightrope between praise and criticism or will slip into hagiography is yet to be seen. On the other hand, William Gumede’s *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC* managed to be critical of Mbeki and current ANC policies, recognising the way

⁶ Jean and John Comaroff illustrate the kind of resistance to globalising demands effected by a nation state like the new South Africa by pointing to the continued protection of workers’ rights through new labour legislation, but also question whether such laws will continue to exist in the future (34).

⁷ Terreblanche claims that “[a]fter 10 years of market fundamentalism and globalisation, more people are living in poverty, while unemployment has increased from 30% to 42% of the potential labour force” (*Cape Times* 11 Sept. 2004).

these serve only the new ruling elite. But it did so without examining this phenomenon as a function of a neo-liberal global order.

In comparison with biographies of political or civic leaders in the last decade, literary biography in English of South African writers, unlike that of Afrikaans writers, has not been a well-developed genre. This is possibly a reflection of the undervalued status of the writer, particularly in this present period of political transition. Afrikaans, as the language fostered by the old regime, and the one South African language besides English with a head-start in the post-1994 South Africa because of its institutional and economic backing, has been able to continue and even extend a tradition of documenting its writers. Gray praises Leon Rousseau's biography of Eugène Marais (*Free-Lancers* xii) and Afrikaans biographies of writers produced post-1994 include those by J.C. Kannemeyer of Uys Krige (2002) and Jan Rabie (2004). The recent biography of Ingrid Jonker by Petrovna Metelerkamp is an attractive compilation of documents rather than a narrative biography, and claims "to present the facts as objectively as possible" (qtd. in Muller n.p.). Metelerkamp's biographical collage of textual fragments and visual pieces is an alternative option open to the biographer keen to act as editor / medium rather than author / creator of a subject. In English, Peter Alexander has produced biographies of Roy Campbell (1982), William Plomer (1989) and Alan Paton (1994). Stephen Gray has produced recent biographies of Beatrice Hastings (2004) and Herman Charles Bosman (2005), the latter representing the fourth major biography of Bosman.⁸ Gray has also

⁸ Information on the existing biographies of writers has been taken from the comprehensive listings in Scanlon's *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. The other full-length biographies of Bosman are listed as being by Valerie Rosenberg (1976 and 1991), and Aegidius Jean Blignaut (1980). A fourth one, not listed in Scanlon's work, has been the short biography by Bernard Sachs (1971).

produced a number of biographical sketches of South African writers. The American-authored and published *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Vol. 225 South African Writers* (2000), David Killam and Ruth Rowe's *The Companion to African Literatures* (2000) and the earlier (1986) *Companion to South African Literature* compiled by David Adey, Ridley Beeton, Michael Chapman and Ernest Pereira, all list short biographical entries of South African writers.

There are a handful of full-length biographies or literary biographies on female and black South African writers, clearly a result of the hostility of the old regime to black writers and the Calvinist male chauvinism that was a foundation stone of Afrikaner Christian nationalism. There are biographies of Sarah Gertrude Millin by Martin Rubin (1977), Mary Renault by David Sweetman (1993) and of Bessie Head by Virginia Ola (1994) and Gillian Eilersen (1995). There are also biographies of Sol Plaatje by Brian Willan (1984), of Alex La Guma by S.O. Asein (1981), and lastly of Es'kia Mphahlele by N. Chabani Manganyi (1983). Besides the biographies on Head, no major biographies on black South African writers have been published since 1994. Referring to work by Alexander, Willan and Sweetman, Gray notes about biographies on South African writers that "[o]ften, rather than *by us*, the job has been done *for us*" (*Free-Lancers* xii), claiming that "South Africans have protected themselves in their reticence" (xii).

The paucity of biography on South African writers, and on black writers specifically, is in the first instance the direct result of colonial and apartheid material and cultural distortion and repression. The "reticence" mentioned by Gray must stem from a suspicion of the

artist in general and particularly of the black writer and intellectual – always dangerously critical or potentially subversive voices in a repressive society. As Gray notes, “[b]iography, it seems, is also always destined to have a corrective bias” (xiii), pointing to the critical impulse that often impels biography. In post-1994 South Africa, we have, in all probability, been in a gestation period for the last decade or so, with biographies of writers starting to emerge and many more in all likelihood under consideration or construction, and these will begin to surface within the next decade.

The 2005 biography of Nadine Gordimer by Ronald Suresh Roberts, *No Cold Kitchen*, was initially sanctioned by the writer herself but, after tensions about content with Suresh Roberts, Gordimer decided to withdraw her authorisation. In a throwaway line in his acknowledgements page, Suresh Roberts implies that Gordimer tried to tell him what to write and that his refusal to do so ended her authorisation of his work.⁹ But perhaps that is exactly what an authorised biography is – one which implicitly, even though not necessarily contractually, carries the subject’s approval which could entail negotiation, intervention and compromise around questions of coverage and interpretation at certain points. Despite Gordimer’s put-down of biography as being “like seashells; not much can be learned from them about the mollusc that once lived inside them,”¹⁰ the spat between her and Suresh Roberts does however bear testimony to the power of biography to author meaning, and to fix in a very public manner a particular imagined life of the subject.

⁹ “Nevertheless, as has been fully (if sometimes crudely) ventilated in newspapers, this book is no authorised biography. ‘His integrity as a writer goes the moment he begins to write what he is told he ought to write,’ Gordimer wrote in 1975 in an essay called ‘A Writer’s Freedom’ ” (Suresh Roberts 8).

¹⁰ Qtd. in Suresh Roberts, 17.

Biography in South Africa: “Messy and Complicated Mixings”

Western thought, Achebe claims, tends to emphasise the primacy of the individual over the social (“I think therefore I am”) as opposed to African tradition (“A human is human because of other humans”) which emphasises the communal constitution of the individual (“Steve Biko Memorial Lecture” 7). While his broad claim delineates contrasting emphases in the modes of thought within Euro-American and African / Eastern constructions of self, this sweeping distinction of Achebe is more useful when translated into local contemporary cultural domains. For within every contemporary site-specific cultural instant, individualised and communalised constructions of self continually co-exist, with differing degrees of comfort and tension, no matter what the socio-historic context. But this is particularly the case in contemporary post-colonial society because pervasive capitalist modernity co-exists and transmutes simultaneously with persistent, residual or even decaying traditional practices, themselves transmuted, adapting and forming a messy instant, fraught with hostility and enchantment and fragile co-existences. Bhabha, commenting again on Fanon’s “zone of occult instability” and rethinking Fanon’s ideas into a theory of culture, illustrates this idea of co-existence and transmutation as follows:

The [Algerian] people are now the very principle of ‘dialectical reorganisation’ and they construct their culture from the national text translated into modern Western forms of information technology, language, dress. (209)

Similarly, within such an instant of complex co-existences and transmutations, biography could, possibly, be constructed or read as entrenchment of distorted or decontextualised individualism, as an ideal and ideological capitalist commodity.¹¹ Contrary to this, however, because of the ambivalences inherent in the tensions of the instant of co-existences, biography could also, possibly, and even simultaneously, be designed or read as an affirmation of overt, or understated, or implied social and socialising context within which the construction of a particular self is entangled. In the latter kind of reading / construction, individual and embracing instants become textualised or interpreted in ways that rekindle messy and complex interconnectedness. In this way biography consciously becomes constructed or read as not just assertive, intentional, definitive and conventional, but also as integrative, interconnective and interrogative – aware of doubts, gaps, distortions and tensions. Let me illustrate this argument by examining two biographies of Nelson Mandela.

Mary Benson's 1980 biography *Nelson Mandela* is intent on constructing Mandela as individually unique but primarily as iconic of the larger struggle for liberation. Benson, writing under the most difficult of circumstances because of censorship and the danger to lives that biography could entail at that stage, gives us a Mandela who is an almost mythologised cipher for an unquestionably noble social cause, the other protagonist of her text. The context understandably looms larger than the individual, making it

¹¹ Biography by definition investigates contexts for lives. What I mean here by “decontextualised individualism” is the downplaying in either construction or interpretation of the influence of the overarching “times” – the broader social, historical hallmarks of an era. For example, Robert Gittings' much-lauded biography *John Keats* gives richly detailed accounts of a multiplicity of contexts that shaped the life of the Romantic poet – family, finance, love, literature. But it disappoints in terms of the larger social, historical sweep of national and international events and how these translated into the life and work of the subject.

ultimately courageous but unsatisfactory, an understandably stilted biography. In Anthony Sampson's 1999 *Mandela: The Authorised Biography*, however, Sampson is freed from the need to propagate overtly the ideology of national liberation and concentrates on portraying Mandela the man in a way quite contrary to Benson: "I try to penetrate the Mandela icon, to show sometimes harsh realities of his long and adventurous journey, stripped of the gloss of mythology" (*Mandela* xxviii).

Sampson, writing in a period during which the ANC has victoriously secured political power and Mandela has gracefully relinquished the presidency to Mbeki, is able to compose a much more detailed, empathetic and yet gently critical biography that interrogates both Mandela the politico and Mandela the individual within the muddled interconnectedness of strengths, weaknesses and contradictions embroiled within shifting historical instances. Sampson had since the early 1950s been sympathetic to and supportive of the ANC while yet maintaining some of the critical distance that his position as editor of *Drum* demanded. His biography of Mandela is critical in the sense that it examines ANC policies from different perspectives, internal and external to the organisation, while being supportive of the ANC policies and practices on the whole. With Mandela's blessing, he is also able to portray weak traits and questionable actions of his subject, something Benson merely mentions and never explores. Perhaps in the future a biography from a different, more radical political perspective might paint Mandela in less heroic and more condemnatory terms, considering his role as complicit with, rather than defiant of, the forces of millennial economic power. Nevertheless Sampson's biography remains an illustration of the interrogative and interconnective

biography I suggest is more dynamic than Benson's transgressive yet venerating and lopsided work.

The biographies I have been mentioning up to now are what can be considered more conventional "book" biographies, on eminent and influential persons, in a tradition traceable back to what Donald Stauffer considers to be the earliest English biographies that use the term "biography" without an explanatory synonym, namely the anonymous *Life of ... Dr. Thomas Fuller* (1661) and *Life and Death ... of O. Cromwell* (1663) (219). If one accepts Stauffer's claim about the origins of the genre, biography then has its genesis in the seventeenth century – the time of the birth of the novel as well. While Bakscheider argues that biography "resists a poetics" (15), eluding attempts to establish the essential qualities of the form, I argue that there are nevertheless distinct traits of what I call traditional "book" biography. Social prominence or notoriety made eligible subjects for biography since its inception and the form of biography has closely resembled that of the novel, particularly the realist novel or bildungsroman – a largely absent and omniscient narrator, a chronological plot, and character located in historical time and geographical space. Bakscheider's assertion that Bakhtin's definition of the novel applies equally to biography reminds us, though, of the permanent state of transmutation that biography shares with the novel form:

Bakhtin begins 'Epic and Novel': 'The novel is the sole genre that continues to develop, that is yet uncompleted ... the birth and development of the novel as a genre takes place in the full light of the historical day' ... These things – with the

same kinds of literary, cultural, and social ramifications – are equally true of biography. (16)

Concurrent with this more traditional form of biography, one sees, as if in a dynamic contradistinction and illustrative of Bakhtin's claim of incompleteness, a flourishing of alternative life writing which profiles the lives of the ordinary, the communal and the indigent, using a multiplicity of conventional as well as alternative media. These are captured orally, textually, visually, in performance and, more recently, on the Internet and as conceptual art.¹²

¹² Conceptual artists in South Africa have also been foregrounding the lives of underclasses or erased pasts. For example, Sue Williamson's installation *Messages from the Moat?* consists of 1 400 bottles on which the name of a slave shipped to the early Cape Colony has been hand-engraved, accompanied by the stencilled details of the deed of sale for the slave. Contemporary Cape Town artist Berni Searle's work, while using her own body in her conceptual art, insists through various symbolic, contrastive and parallel devices, that the figure is iconic of a heritage linked to relatives and to slavery. Searle's work is, as Emma Bedford explains below when examining Searle's *Relative*, insistent upon being read as wider life writing that delves into a shared, neglected or erased past:

Searle shift[s] attention away from her own body ... towards investigating the lives and histories of relatives in order to piece together strands of a complex heritage that is simultaneously unique and typical of many citizens at the Cape. *Relative* investigates the artist's position in relation to her extended family and relative to particular histories of this region, including the importation by early Dutch settlers of slaves from the Indian sub-continent, Arabia as well as the east coast islands of Africa and the consequent introduction and establishment of Islam as a religion and culture at the Cape. (6)

Like Rive, Searle was influenced by the ideology of the Non-European Unity Movement, particularly by the movement's ideas of non-racialism which rejected the notion of race in general and of the existence of a "coloured" race in particular. She was taught at Harold Cressy High School in Cape Town by Helen Kies, the wife of Ben Kies, who in turn was Rive's teacher at Trafalgar High and who was a leading thinker in the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) and its affiliate, the Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA). As will be demonstrated in the next section of this work, Kies and the movements he belonged to were profound influences on the values and ideas propounded by Rive throughout his life. Searle also joined the NEUM-affiliated civic structure, Ward 16, in her parents' residential area of Fairways, Cape Town, during her student years at the University of Cape Town. That both Rive and Searle problematise received and dominant notions of identity in the way they do stems in large part from their exposure to NEUM ideas.

A striking example of alternative forms of biography / autobiography, and one that exists primarily in oral form but that has been documented, is the oral poetry of Basotho migrant mine workers called *Lifela tsa Litsamaea-naha*. Particular economic, social, political and cultural forces have given rise to *Lifela* and the mine artists who perform them. These poems reflect the life stories of the migrant workers, focusing on the struggles of particular individuals against poverty and exploitation, and on cultural rituals. Mokitimi (1998), who has written about the *Lifela*, comments that the *Lifela* resemble the industrial folk ballads of miners in Britain with their focus on toil, poverty and hunger.

Capturing oral legacy and stories, and finding ways of memorialising these, poses an enormous challenge in the area of heritage studies and life writing, particularly in post-colonial contexts where there is a greater reliance on the oral to transmute memory, tradition and history of the marginalised, neglected and silenced. Symptomatic of the recognition this process is receiving, and of its crucial role in memorialising subjects that have been outside of the dominant systems of textual encrypting, is the establishment of the Cape Town Memory Project in 2005. The project aims to honour ordinary people's day to day struggles during apartheid. While there is the danger that projects such as these are short-lived and that they begin to reconstruct histories and memories in ways that are dictated by current political bias, there will no doubt be contestation within the project about the standpoints and mediation of the stories being generated and memorialised. This upsurge of life writing with alternative foci and in newer forms might, however, peak at a particular point rather than become a widespread phenomenon

as the South African state continues to resist populist or socialist trajectories of development.

The biography of Richard Rive that follows is in many ways located within the conventional tradition of “book” biographies mentioned above – it focuses on a writer who has established prominence, who is dead, and it is constructed along chronological lines, mainly, but not always, in the past tense and with the biographer largely absent from the narrative, in the initial sections at least. Yet in other ways it is unconventional, locating itself deliberately within what is described above as an emergent phenomenon. For Rive, like most prominent black writers, has not been the subject of a biography. Also, the skewing outlined in the previous section, particularly the queer focus, is itself transgressive given the silence on Rive’s sexuality and the still fairly widespread hostility towards homosexuality in South Africa. Added to this, there is my reliance on and frequent use of oral memories of those who have stories about Rive, creating a biography that is not only authored by an individual but is a play of voices, attempting to re-encrypt the oral dimension in which much memory of Rive is extant. Lastly, there is an attempt in the biography to raise questions over and above the declamations and speculations, erasing the certitude that could so easily inhabit an authored account of another’s life.

I attempt the kind of biography outlined above on Richard Rive in subsequent sections 2.1 to 2.4. I aim to interrogate and illuminate interconnectedness and disjuncture in life and work, with regard to particular elements which were and are crucial in constituting Rive’s life – “race”, writing, and sense of self. The deliberate focus on these nodes within

a larger life story results in what I call the skewing of the literary / political biography, created in subsequent sections of this work. All biography, even that which locates itself within the empirical paradigm of imagining only the facts, is inevitably a skewing of the subject's life, because of the inescapable bias and assumptions of the biographer and biographer's idiosyncratic context. "Skewing" is also, of course, a reference to my preoccupation with questions of Rive's sexuality. In short, the research attempts to establish and record verifiable, accurate, historical facts that relate to these angles of specific concern with which I view the subject.

What Annie Coombes says about the work of contemporary South African artist Berni Searle applies equally to the life and work of Rive – or, rather, to a way of seeing these nodal instances of his life and work:

Unlike many artists who authenticate their work with claims to one or other originary identity, Searle's work is about the limitations of such essentializing positions and about the necessarily messy and complicated mixings that have produced all contemporary societies. At a time in South African history when various constituencies are making competing claims to originary status, it is important that those with a public voice are seen to resist the temptation of buying into an all too appealing identity politics as a means of justifying their practice.

(250)

As a form of public voice that continually reconfigures memory, biography has a role to play in disrupting the tendency to be tidy and categorical, forgetful and straight.

In section 2.1 I look at the period from 1930 to roughly 1960 – from Rive’s formative childhood years and his early adulthood, to a time when he was on the cusp of becoming both a national and international representative of black writers who exposed apartheid’s innards. In section 2.2 the decade from roughly 1960 to about 1970 is covered. In the first four years Rive reaches an apogee in his writing life, but with the reign of terror in South Africa deepening, he reaches the most barren and dispirited period in his creative life in the late 1960s. Section 2.3, 1970 to 1980, sees his achievement as an academic and lecturer rather than a writer, in a context characterised by the resurgence of resistance to oppression in the country. The final section, 2.4, looks at the last decade in Rive’s life, from 1980 to his death in 1989, but also discusses the posthumous period to the present (2006).



Illustration 2. Eaton Place, District Six. Photograph by Jan Greshoff.



Illustration 3. Es'kia Mphahlele and Rive, Champs Élysées, 1963. In *Writing Black*.

Section 2: Reinventing Richard Rive

2.1 Becoming a Writer: 1930 – 1960

The great influenza pandemic, which is thought to have started in 1918 in Kansas, America, and rapidly spread to the rest of the world killing millions of people, reached South Africa within months. In Cape Town, a young married working-class couple classified as “coloured” by the ruling South African Nationalist Party, Nancy and Joseph Rive, had made a modest, spartan home in the cosmopolitan area of District Six. In 1918 their seventh child, a girl called Georgina, was born.¹ Soon after her birth tragedy struck the family and Joseph Rive died, a victim of the epidemic that was, quite strangely for influenza, afflicting mainly younger people in their twenties and thirties.² In the wake of her husband’s death, in a world ravaged by war, a country ruled by white supremacists and with seven mouths to feed, the young widow was in for a long, hard haul.

Twelve years later, in 1930, on the first of March, when Nancy Rive was thirty-eight years old and Georgina almost a teenager, Richard Rive was born.³ The sizable age gap between Richard and his siblings was to contribute to the young boy’s acute sense of alienation from

¹ The Rive children were Joseph, the eldest boy, then came David (known also as Davey), Arthur, Harold, Douglas, Lucy and the youngest at that stage, Georgina.

² Details about the pandemic have been sourced from J.M. Barry, *The Great Influenza*. Barry claims that in South African cities, “those between the ages of twenty and forty accounted for 60 percent of the deaths” (239).

³ In his memoir *Writing Black* (1981), Rive gives his date of birth as 1931. His birth certificate, however, gives it as 1 March 1930. There is wide discrepancy in published texts about the date of birth – 1930, 1931, 1932 and 1933 are all given as dates of birth. 1931 is the most common date of birth found on websites discussing Rive. The University of Cape Town Manuscripts and Archives collection, in a list of holdings for the “Richard Rive Papers”, compiled by Jill Gribble, gives his date of birth as 1932 in its biographical description. Stephen Gray gives 1931 as Rive’s date of birth (*Freelancers* 160). Even at the time of his death, the first article to appear on the murder in the *Cape Times* by Malcolm Fried, gives 1931 as his date of birth. At Hewat College, where Rive worked, it was rumoured that he gave a false (later) date to make himself appear slightly younger. It is strange that, for someone as fastidious as Rive, so many dates of birth prevailed even while he lived. He often got dates wrong, as my research reveals, for no apparent reason.

the family as he grew up. America was the source of the tragedy that robbed Nancy of her husband; it was also the place of origin of the man with whom she had a fleeting affair and who was to father her last child. Richard's father was an American ship's hand called Richardson Moore, who abandoned him and the mother after only three months of cohabitation. The only concrete trace of his father was in Richard's name, for his mother had listed the name "Richard Moore Rive" on his birth certificate.⁴ In *Writing Black* Rive says of his father: "About my father and his family I know almost nothing. He died soon after I was born and was seldom mentioned in family circles. Perhaps a dark secret lurks somewhere" (3). He must be using "died" here metaphorically or it is meant to be read as the perception of the young boy Richard who seems to have been spun this story to account for the absent father. As is clear from Rive's correspondence to Langston Hughes in the late 1950s, the father disappeared rather than died. In the same paragraph in *Writing Black*, Rive circuitously suggests that his father was a black American by recounting an incident at an athletics meeting at which he had performed particularly well, when a black American lady, an intimate friend of his mother, commented to him: "'[T]hey can't beat an American boy, can they? ... So possibly the Black strain came from my father and came from far over the Atlantic" (3).

By the time Rive comes to write this, he undoubtedly knows with more certainty particular facts about his father but chooses to embed these in circumspect and suggestive narrative in his memoir. In a letter to Hughes in as early as 1962, almost twenty years before the publication of *Writing Black*, he is more candid about the silence that attended the question of

⁴ The unabridged copy of the birth certificate issued by the Department of Home Affairs, Wynberg, in 2004.

his paternity in their District Six home, a silence clearly stemming from the mother's deep sense of shame and of class prejudice overlaid as well, perhaps, by colour prejudice:

A very interesting feature of my life is that my father is an American Negro, but he left home when I was a mere 3 months old. I never saw him. I believe that he might still be frequenting the New York waterfront. He was apparently a ships [sic] cook. Name Richardson Moore. Interesting if we should ever meet again. My mother is from an upper class family, and the subject of my father is never brought up. (15 Mar. 1962)

The question of paternity with all its unarticulated proscriptions and disgust was perhaps the first instance where the equation between shame and silence was branded on the psyche of the young boy. But he is clearly reluctant to reveal the full extent of this “dark secret” in his memoir. Was it too shameful? Was it too private? In the very first line of *Writing Black*, Rive insists on the selective nature of his autobiography when he writes that “[s]ome [incidents] are locked away in that private part of my world which belongs only to myself and perhaps one or two intimates” (1). Perhaps the conscious silence Rive acknowledges as “locking away” particular incidents and emotions is a multiple and complex silence – silence about both the world of his family and, later, the very private and closeted world of his sexuality.

The young Richard grew up in a “huge, dirty-grey, forbidding, double-storied” tenement building called Eaton Place, at number 201 in Caledon Street, District Six, Cape Town (*Writing Black* 5). Rive's detailed, almost filmic description of the place is reminiscent of Dickens's inner city settings:

[It] housed over twelve family units...with a rickety wooden balcony that ran its entire length. There were three main entrances, numbered 201, 203 and 205. All faced

Caledon Street. Behind it and much lower, running alongside, was a concrete enclosed area called The Big Yard into which all occupants of the tenement threw their slops, refuse and dirty water. (5)

Eaton Place was, fifty years later, transformed by Rive's memory and fictional invention into the row of five co-joined, bustling homes called "Buckingham Place", the locus of communal life portrayed in his novel '*Buckingham Palace*', *District Six*. But for a more realistic and possibly more accurate picture of the interior life of the family in their unit, the description by Andrew Dreyer, the protagonist in the strongly autobiographical novel *Emergency*, reflects the cramped, overcrowded, Victorian conditions in which the working-class family with middle-class aspirations lived:

They occupied three dingy rooms on the first floor of a double-storied tenement flat at 302. ... One first entered a landing which smelt damp and musty and echoed eerily when the wind blew through it. ... Then up a pitch-dark staircase till one fumbled at the knob at No. 3 and entered a shabby bed-sitting room grandiloquently called the dining-room. This was dominated by a huge four-poster bed with brass railings, an old-fashioned couch with chairs to match, and a side-board cluttered with Victorian bric-à-brac. A cheap but highly polished table was squeezed between the bed and the sideboard. A bedroom led off this, occupied by James and Peter-boy. Here another four-poster bed was situated in the centre, with an ancient tallboy leaning against the wall, adorned with a pink and white basin and picture (sic). Two broken French doors led to an unsafe, wooden balcony. One had to go back to the upstairs landing to reach the Boys' Room which Andrew, Danny and Philip occupied. It contained two beds

and a chest of drawers and had the musty smell of stale air and perspiration. (Collier edition 37)

Growing up in these conditions, in a home he felt was decrepit and loveless, undoubtedly made the young boy determined to escape it all. Like many other youngsters with talent entrapped by circumstance, Rive retreated into the world of the mind – to books – and sought the company of neighbourhood boys on the street who accepted and admired his way with words.

Rive's brother-in-law, Freddie Josias, husband to Georgina Rive, describes Rive's family as existing in circumstances that forced them "to live from hand to mouth"⁵ and a schoolmate of Rive's, Gilbert Reines, remembers Rive not having shoes at one time and that he came from "a really poor family" (27).⁶ Rive himself talks of their living "in an atmosphere of shabby respectability" (*Writing Black* 6), playing down somewhat the level of poverty in the home. As a single mother, Nancy struggled to make ends meet, but the cost of keeping the household going by the time Richard was growing up and going to school was supplemented from the wages of older siblings like Georgina and Davey. While never completely penniless, the large family, like very many urbanised coloured families with a modicum of skills and a primary education at least, managed to sustain itself in a frugal but not destitute lifestyle and had aspirations to the greater comforts and standing imagined to exist in the white community.

As a church-going Anglican, Nancy Rive had her baby boy baptised and later, in his early teens, confirmed at St Mark's Church on Clifton Hill in the District. One of the few fleeting

⁵ This and subsequent information attributed to Josias is derived from an interview with Freddie Josias, husband of Rive's now deceased sister Georgina. Hanover Park, Cape Town.

⁶ Gilbert Reines and Ursula Reines. Transcribed personal interview.

references to his mother in Rive's memoir is prompted by a visit in 1963 to the Piazza San Marco in Venice. There he is reminded of accompanying his mother to present the family Bible to the church and remembers St Mark's in terms that suggest it was a refuge for the young boy from the hostilities of the outside world:

And the cosily lit warm interior on a Sunday evening when the south-easter howled outside ... I was a boy in St Mark's on the Hill, comfortably dozing through the warm monotony of Evensong. (*Writing Black* 65-66)

While St Mark's Church was to feature prominently as a site of communal ritual and resistance in Rive's work, he turned his back on religion in his adult life, becoming an atheist – as were many of his left-wing mentors and friends who defended their atheism by, for example, quoting Marx's dictum about religion being the opium of the people and circulating Bertrand Russell's polemical essay attacking Christian hypocrisy and mystification, "Why I am not a Christian". The fact that the policies of segregation pre-1948 and those of apartheid after that were rationalised using Christian doctrine increased the alienation of some non-white intellectuals from Christianity in particular and religion in general. One of Rive's early short stories, "No Room at Solitaire" (1963), exposes the hypocrisy of the Afrikaner characters who profess to be Christian but rudely turn away a sick and pregnant black woman and her husband from their inn. Although a jarringly obvious allegory on the plight of Mary and Joseph on Christmas Eve, the story ends with the racist Afrikaner men having an epiphany of the import of their inhumanity – an ending that reflects Rive's persistent humanist belief in the possibility for good in all, a quality present in all his creative work.

Surrounded by “dirty, narrow streets in a beaten-up neighbourhood” (*Writing Black* 6), his family, Rive claims, was marked by an obsessive hankering after respectability: “We always felt we were intended for better things” (*Writing Black* 6). The gently ironic tone in which this is said in his memoir (written forty years after this period of childhood), indicates a measure of distancing from these aspirations. As a young man in his twenties, though, Rive still identified with this sense of self-fashioning as needing to be respectable and civilised, able to transcend the signifiers of the place he inhabited. He would write with youthful self-assertiveness in his second letter to Langston Hughes in 1954, excitedly introducing himself to this icon of black literature: “Age 23 years. I was born in District Six (one of the most terrible slums in Cape Town, although I come from a cultured family)” (30 July 1954). The early letters to Hughes are clearly trying to impress the older, internationally acclaimed figure with the young writer’s knowledge of place and his sense of being “cultured”. In the quotation above Rive interestingly distances himself from District Six, calling his birthplace a “terrible slum” when writing about it in the 1950s, unlike his more affirmative portrayal in his later novel ‘*Buckingham Place*’, *District Six*, written when he was in his mid-fifties. In his description above of the District and of himself it is also noteworthy that the qualifier “although” is used to disentangle the District from the notion of being “cultured”. “Culture” was elsewhere and Rive himself left the District and his family when in his early teens; like his sister Lucy and his brother Joseph, Richard “fled the District as soon as possible” (*Writing Black* 5). Thirty years later, however, when the resistance to forced removals had reached a pitch in the struggles of the oppressed, District Six, together with places like Sophiatown in Johannesburg and South End in Port Elizabeth, had become an iconic space of unjust displacement, of justified reclamation and of reinvented pasts both real and heroic.

The young Richard sensed himself on the margins of the family – not only was he so much younger than the other siblings, but he was darker and he had a different father. This sense of estrangement from family is only fleetingly dealt with in his memoir where he says that “in [his] loneliness” (*Writing Black* 6) he cultivated friendships with down-and-out working-class boys whom his family derogatorily called his “skollie friends” (gangster friends) (*Writing Black* 6). Rive’s memoir is particularly silent on family and fashions his young self as a reader, budding writer and metonymic voice against racism, an individual who simultaneously represents and transcends the oppressed condition. Above all, Rive’s memoir is a protest, an indictment against racial tyranny and its attempts to categorise, to confine and silence him, and erase the spaces that define him. But of his inner life as a child in a family, the memoir itself is remarkably silent. There is no mention, for example, of the death of his mother or what that meant to him. There is in fact more descriptive detail in the portrayal of the character of Mary, proprietor of the local brothel that the four-year-old Rive stumbles upon in his neighbourhood. As in the later fictional work (as will be argued in section 2.4), the memoir is marked by the invocation of alternative familial constructions – fellow writers, work colleagues, a few friends and young men he befriends become the relations that signify the intimacy conventionally associated with the family. The pages of twenty-four photographs that open *Writing Black* carry not a single image of the family – there is one of the District and the rest are images of Rive himself in the company of, or, through the mechanism of photographic collage, associated with prominent South African and African writers.

Writing Black recounts Rive’s childhood primarily through eyes which see the racial conflicts and dilemmas, ubiquitous in the South Africa into which he was born, as pervasive. His father’s side provided “the Black strain” (3), the “strain” Rive insisted in his adult life on

proclaiming and defending in contrast to the marked silence about it within his family. Nancy Rive, who was born into the Ward family, proudly displayed her father, whose mounted photograph (showing him in a cheesecutter with a droopy moustache next to his champion racehorse) had a special place on the dining-room wall. He is described by Rive as “unmistakably white” (3). Gray, through his description of Rive’s hair as “Saint Helenan kinky” (159), suggests that some of his forebears, most likely his mother’s father’s, came from the island. Gray must have heard this fact from Rive himself, for nowhere is there any textual reference by Rive to these origins. But of the grandmother, whom it is assumed was dark-skinned as Nancy turned out to be “beautifully bronze”, “[I]ittle was ever mentioned ... other than that she came from the Klapmuts district” (3). As must have been the case with vast numbers of South African families living with the intensely colour-conscious and hierarchical legacy of a colonial and segregationist history, darker-skinned relatives were regarded as shameful and were *personae non grata* – marginalised or excised from memory or at best relegated to the realm of taboo and silence.

If the events narrated about the childhood of Andrew Dreyer in District Six can be taken to reflect on Rive’s actual life – and the evidence is of a strong correlation between the fiction and biography – then Rive had a tensely ambivalent relationship with his mother, feeling both intimacy and alienation at the same time. The novel accounts for the estrangement from the mother because of colour:

She had always been strange in her attitude towards him. Sometimes gay and maternal and then suddenly cold and impulsive. He wondered whether it had anything to do with colour. She was fair, like James and Annette, whereas he was dark, the darkest in

the family. Sometimes when they walked together in the street, he had a feeling that she was ashamed of him, even in District Six. (Collier edition 45)

Added to this, the young boy in *Emergency* gets blamed for his mother's death from a stroke after she has to brave the wind and cold as Andrew refused to run an errand for her. His elder brother accuses him of being a lying "black bastard" (51) and a murderer, violently beating up the young Andrew who then runs away from home, never to return. While this scenario was not what literally happened, the harsh and strained relationships between the characters in the fiction are in all likelihood very close to what Rive experienced in the home.

Freddie Josias, Georgina's husband, remembers Richard as a clever, even brilliant boy at school. One of the teachers at St Mark's Primary, Ursula Reines, remembers that "in those days there was the famous old composition that you had to write. Give you a title and sit down and write a composition. And Richard just excelled. I think he had a gift for words" (28). As noted earlier, the family, while never desperately poor, struggled financially and it was really the earnings from the work Georgina did at Herzberg and Mulne, a printing firm, and those of the second-eldest brother Davey, who worked at Flacks furniture store, that helped keep Richard at St Mark's Primary School until standard four and then at Trafalgar Junior School until standard six.⁷ It is Davey, possibly fictionalised as Daniel in *Emergency*, who was the only brother that Rive felt some kinship with in the home:

Andrew got on well with Daniel. He was quiet and an introvert, something like himself, without the bitterness and resentment. Daniel was good-looking, soft-spoken and understanding. A regular church-goer, he had very little in common with the rest of the family other than his mother and Andrew. They often spoke, Danny and he, in

⁷ Information about the schools Rive attended is taken from Harry Hendricks's tribute to Rive at the memorial service for Rive at Hewat College. The audio-tape of the tributes of Hendricks, Meyer, Dudley, Pratt et al. was in the possession of Dwane Harris but has subsequently been donated to the District Six Sound Archive.

the quiet hours of the morning while they lay next to each other. His brother was appreciative and honest in his opinions. He liked Danny best of all.

(Collier edition 38)

Josias remembers the young Richard as being a very independent boy even at this early age, who did exceptionally well at primary school. Wannenburg believes that this school, which was Anglican, “instilled Anglo-Saxon virtues” (“Death” n.p.) in the mind of the young boy. Rive’s own experiences at the primary school are transmuted into fiction in *Emergency*.

Dreyer fondly reflects on his origins in District Six in an early flashback in the work:

The boys played games during the first lunch-break, but he was too self-conscious to join in. He stared with wide, black eyes at the teachers and the classrooms and the Biblical pictures on the wall and the miniature tables and chairs and the neat pile of worn readers in the cupboard. See me, Mother, can you see me? And life was beautiful and golden-brown on those apricot days when he was seven. (Collier edition 21)

What he describes here as the boy’s “wide black eyes” reflects quite literally Rive’s striking dark eyes but also clearly plays on the metaphorical, prefiguring the title of his memoir.

Rive’s very alluring eyes are described by his old friend Reines as “doleful” eyes (16). In this passage Rive recreates himself, consciously or perhaps intuitively, as a child who is sensitive, self-conscious, very observant, immersed in texts and on the outside of the throng, often distanced from family yet immersed in neighbourhood, and with a deep subliminal longing to recreate an ideal mother-child bond (“see me, Mother, can you see me?”).

What Rive never wrote about overtly or autobiographically, in his reflections on either his childhood or his adult years, but about which he confided to close colleagues and friends, and

encoded in his fiction, was his strong sense of disaffection with his family, especially after the death of his mother. In *Emergency*, Andrew has just left his home after the traumatic death of his mother and his relationship to his family is described by the narrator as follows: “[h]e had a kind of revulsion about hearing the news of his family, yet his curiosity got the better of him. He would have preferred to wipe out their existence from his mind” (Collier edition 76). The fact that Rive had a different father and that he came twelve years after the seventh sibling might have put a generational distance between him and the others. In *Emergency* we hear “he was afraid of his elder brother; James had beaten him for breaking one of the dining-room chairs. James was very fair, a play-white, always cold and aloof” (21), and “[James] ... despised Andrew, whose dark skin he found an embarrassment” (37). As a result of being the dark half-brother among siblings who were all shades lighter, he felt the internalised racism that was prevalent in the family and caused untold strife and disruption, often leading to life-long animosity between family members.⁸ Longstanding friends of Rive’s, Ariefi and Hazel Manuel, recall Rive’s sisters who lived in Woodstock, and they remember him being the darkest of the siblings. This was an issue in the family, they claim, and Rive felt estranged from them. Much of the time he was raised by his grandmother rather than by his mother and, by his teens, had left home to board elsewhere. He maintained some contact with his sister Georgina, who, the Manuels say, sent him packages while he was overseas. When he graduated he went to his sister to say he was a doctor, “a doctor of literature, not of medicine”, he continually used to stress.⁹

⁸ Josias however denies that family members who were only “a shade lighter” than Rive were prejudiced against him because of his dark skin.

⁹ Ariefi and Hazel Manuel. Personal interview.

Rive's fraught family scenario is much like that of the dark-skinned protagonist Mavis in Rive's short story "Resurrection", first published in 1963. In the story, Mavis's fair-skinned, play-white brothers and sisters refuse to acknowledge the existence of their coloured sibling. Perhaps this story of Mavis gives us an inkling of the pain and humiliation felt by the younger Rive; pain and humiliation, at times very explicit, at times concealed, but always at the heart of the protesting voice in his literary and civic life. And while these emotions directly affected him in deeply personal ways, he seemed only able to confront them in fictionalised transmutations. His memoir is silent on this aspect of his early life, symptomatic perhaps of the trauma of his childhood years or perhaps reflecting his own ambivalence about his colour – condemned to be black but refusing to see himself as black – a matter I discuss in earlier and subsequent sections of the study.

Another factor alienating him from the family, particularly later beyond his teenage years when it was fairly evident, was his homosexuality. Rive attempted to conceal his sexuality from family members and most of his friends for all his life. Many, especially those of his generation or older, only realised he was gay because of the circumstances of his murder which were, especially after the trial of the two accused, without a doubt the murder of a gay man by young boys with whom he had or intended to have a sexual encounter. Some suspected that he was gay, while a few knew he had had relations with younger men. As if out of respect to Rive the influential public figure and educationist, the son of the community who had made a name for himself locally as well as internationally and did them proud, and also perhaps respecting his own obvious wish to remain closeted, there was during his lifetime a public silence about his homosexuality. His brother-in-law, Josias, claims that Rive's youngest sister, the one to whom he was closest, would have been horrified had she known he

was gay. She never did realise he was gay, or, like many of her generation, possibly refused to recognise something that was beyond her comprehension or moral universe. Josias also claims that Rive became especially estranged from his sister Lucy because her husband was hostile to Richard – perhaps, Josias speculates, because they were jealous of Richard’s achievements, or perhaps, Richard’s homosexuality became evident as at a later stage, and so the hostility increased.¹⁰ Rive must have sensed even at a very early age this fairly widespread socially encrypted disgust for homosexual men and this increased the distance between him and his family. At what age he realised he was gay remains unknown.

One of Rive’s enduring friends was Albert Adams. They met as fellow students at Hewat College where Adams was a year ahead of Rive. Adams was much more comfortable with his being a gay man at that stage than Richard was, and Adams accounts for the difference in the following terms:

I think even in '53 I knew Richard was gay ... Dennis Bullough¹¹ was a gay chap, who lived in Bree Street and he had a partner, John Dronsfield who was an artist, and Bullough and Dronsfield kept a kind of open house for artists and the like, and Bill Currie was a close friend of Dennis Bullough, and if you knew Bill [as Richard did], you were invited to Bree Street ... it was a group of gay people and, you know, if you were ... there, you were gay ... Already then I knew that Richard was gay, we all knew that he was gay. Although our gayness, I think, was a little bit more open than Richard’s. Richard had this macho-image of course, he was also a sportsman ... So he was involved with sports and young people, and I suppose ... I don’t know to what

¹⁰ Speculations made by Freddie Josias.

¹¹ Dennis Bullough, also known as Dennis Hatfield, was a well-known book critic for SABC radio and for local newspapers.

degree that also [kept] a halter on him to keep his gayness under cover ... It would really not have, not have been accepted had he worked with young men you know on the sports field ... it was also simply part of Richard's insecurity. I'm thinking ... underneath all this kind of bravado, and this really extrovert, public image that he gave, I think there was a, a real sense of ... insecurity on Richard's part, I'm ... almost sure about that, I'm almost sure about that. (7-8)

Adams was one of the very few friends with whom Richard was open about his gayness, but even with Adams he was reticent about revealing any details of his sexual preferences or affairs.

He decided, it seems, not only to keep his sexuality an intensely private matter, but to deflect it by recreating heterosexual stances that could be perceived as indicating his "normality". Mphahlele, who first met Rive in 1955, and became a lifelong friend and mentor to Rive, was bothered by Rive's lack of family attachments and wondered whether his father was from Madagascar because of the name "Rive" being so close to "Rivo" or Rivero". Mphahlele also remembers that Rive did not relate to his brothers because they were not from *his* father. There was clearly a distance between him and his family, Mphahlele remembers, and he seemed to have cut all family ties, claiming he would leave his house to his nephew instead.¹² Rive did in fact leave his house to Ian Rutgers, who was not a relative but in fact the man I suspect Rive was in love with for a long time. Ian lived in a room in Rive's house for many years. He was the brother to Andrew Rutgers whom Rive had befriended when Andrew was a young student. As a result, Rive became very friendly with the Rutgers family. As far as I can gather from my own observations in the time I knew Rive, Ian regarded Rive as a mentor and

¹² Es'kia Mphahlele and Rebecca Mphahlele. Personal interview.

even father-figure and did not or could not reciprocate the attraction Rive felt for him.

“Nephew”, unbeknown to Mphahlele, was not indicative of a blood relative but was, instead, often a code word used by Rive for a young man he felt close to, and to whom he might have been sexually attracted or involved with, and whose presence he had to explain away, ironically by invoking conventional familial relations.

Those of us who worked with Rive during his years as a lecturer at Hewat College of Education remember being introduced, during suppers at his home in Windsor Park or on the sports field, to a number of his “nephews”. In a short story which partially fictionalises my attempts to create a biography of Rive, I focus on the attempts of the character called Richard to disguise the boys he surrounds himself with and to whom he is attracted, as “nephews”.¹³ The story questions Rive’s silence and secrecy about his sexual life and his need to disguise real relations with fictitious familial ones. Was this socially imposed because of the taboo of homosexuality, or self-imposed, and then for what reason? Butler accounts for this phenomenon of the appearance of heterosexual norms within gay identities as follows:

It is important to recognize the ways in which heterosexual norms reappear within gay identities, to affirm that gay and lesbian identities are not only structured in part by dominant heterosexual frames, but that they are *not* for that reason *determined* by them. They are running commentaries on those naturalised positions as well, parodic replays and resignifications of precisely those heterosexual structures that would consign gay life to discursive domains of unreality and unthinkability. (“Imitation” 23), (Butler’s emphasis)

¹³ Shaun Viljoen. “Richard”. *Under Construction: “Race” and Identity in South Africa Today*. Eds. Natasha Distiller and Melissa Steyn.

While Rive did on occasion consciously enact “parodic replays” of heterosexual convention, at other times he used these conventions to disguise his secret life as a homosexual man. I also argue that these heteronormative veneers were in fact symptomatic of his deep yearning to be “normal” – part of conventional, mainstream social existence.

Some of his friendships with young men remained, in their true nature, clandestine and silent; perhaps this unspoken relationship was unintentionally encoded in his memoir, *Writing Black*, where he fleetingly describes these moments of taboo friendship with “the local guttersnipes” (6) in the poetic line which is also prophetic of the despair that marked his love life – “we used to sit in darkened doorways, and our silence was full of the hopelessness of our lives” (*Writing Black* 6). While Rive notes that “discovery by my socially insecure family was fraught with danger” (6), he fails to acknowledge, even in the most subtle or euphemistic way, that there might have been taboos other than just crossing class lines implicated in his being drawn to boys marginalised by conventional social norms.

Yet despite this dominant discourse of deep disaffection with family, Rive certainly had moments of intimacy with certain members of the family, which were hardly mentioned by him and rarely written about in his autobiographical writings. He seemed particularly close at times to his mother, as can be gauged from the rare references to her in his work and from close friends. He was also particularly close to his sister Georgina and her husband Freddie Josias as well as to certain nieces in the family. According to Josias, Georgina was the sister with whom Richard had most contact. She is perhaps fictionalised in *Emergency* as Miriam – the sympathetic, supportive and, significantly, “dark” sister who never quite gives up on Andrew in contrast to the hostile, fair-skinned sister, Annette:

Miriam was easier to get on with than Annette. She was almost as dark as himself, quiet and detached. He had never really known her. She had married a bus driver when Andrew was eight and had gone to stay in Walmer Estate, seldom visiting District Six. (56)

In later years, Rive visited Georgina and her husband at least once a year and they in turn visited his Selous Court flat in Claremont on occasion. Rive wrote to Georgina on a regular basis when he travelled and Freddie Josias remembers her receiving letters from Rive when the latter was in Japan in the mid-1980s.

One of the nieces whom he seemed to care for was Georgina Retief, the daughter of the eldest of the Rive siblings, Joseph Rive. Retief says she was named after one of Richard's sisters – “his favourite, Georgina Rive”.¹⁴ She has fond memories of her uncle Richard who carried her to St Mark's Primary school in District Six and insisted she went into an English-medium class even though she was Afrikaans-speaking. He was also a student teacher at her school, a fact she was very proud of as a young pupil. Retief also mentions that Rive stayed with Georgina and Freddie for a short while. The niece Georgina confirms that most of the family distanced themselves from Rive because of his homosexuality and he in turn had very little to do with the family. Retief does not make any reference to colour prejudice within the family but it is probably easier for families to admit to homophobia than to internalised racism in order to account for intra-familial hostility.

As a top-performing pupil, Richard was awarded a municipal scholarship at the age of twelve to fund his studies at the prestigious Trafalgar High School in the District where, his memoir

¹⁴ This and subsequent information in this paragraph comes from a telephonic interview with Georgina Retief (née Rive).

declares proudly, he studied “subjects with a ring about them” – Latin, Mathematics and Physical Science (*Writing Black* 6). Richard Dudley, a leading educationist and leading member of the Teachers’ League of South Africa, remembers encountering Rive at Trafalgar. Dudley was doing research at the school in 1944 when Rive was in standard seven: “[The young Rive was] an earnest, bustling, bright young lad, as yet unsure of himself ... Among a group of really gifted pupils, he was one who drew attention to himself.”¹⁵

Rive’s high school years coincided with the tyranny of Nazism and, with the defeat of fascism, the renewed vigour of worldwide debate about freedom, equality, democracy and national independence. His years at Trafalgar High were to be formative intellectually and ideologically. Richard Dudley, an NEUM stalwart, captures the decisive intellectual influence the school had on Rive’s outlook on life:

[A]t Trafalgar a climate and ethos had been created which was unequalled in any institution for the oppressed at that time. For among the teachers were distinguished scholars like Ben Kies, Jack Meltzer, Suleiman (Solly) Idros, George Meisenheimer, Cynthia Fischer and the equally distinguished science teacher, H.N. Pienaar.¹⁶ This generation of teachers ... were the articulate bearers of a new outlook in education, a team dedicated to excellence and selfless in their service to their pupils. ... It is here where the teachers brought into the classroom, from all corners of the world ... writers and their works to [nurture] the minds of their pupils. ... Through these teachers ...

¹⁵ Richard Dudley’s tribute to Rive at Hewat College memorial service.

¹⁶ Ben Kies was the most influential of these scholars and teachers. He was regarded as the leader among the NEUM leadership. His tall and sturdy bearing complemented his incisive intelligence, encyclopaedic knowledge and his ruthless, forthright manner. While Rive revered him as a teacher and as an intellectual, Kies was disparaging of Rive’s character and dismissive of his work and ideas. Kies felt that he tended to be an opportunist and a poseur and that his work was trite and reinforced stereotypes.

these scholars learnt that oppression was created by mankind, could be ended by mankind, and that a new society could be created too by mankind. (*Tribute* n.p.)

The teachers Dudley refers to were part of an intellectual tradition coming out of the left-wing reading and discussion circles and broad social movements in the country, typified by the notion of a principled, programmatic struggle propounded by the All African Convention (AAC) and its constituent organisations, formed in 1936, and later by the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), formed in 1943. Both these organisations propagated a struggle against racial oppression and economic domination on the basis of a minimum programme of demands, aimed at breaking with the dependence on ruling class largesse that was the premise of the nationalist politics of negotiation adopted by the African National Congress at the time. These more radical intellectuals saw the limitations of narrow nationalism and were inspired by the ideals of the French and Russian revolutions, by Marxism and Trotskyism. The NEUM, a broad front of civic and political organisations, reached the peak of its popularity in the late forties and early fifties but then fragmented and was eclipsed by the more popular ANC and later Pan African Congress (PAC). The ideology of the NEUM, however, remained influential in the 1950s and beyond, and was marked by subscription to a radical anti-imperialist internationalism and to a policy of “non-racialism”. Non-racialism challenged the notion of the existence of the category “race” and insisted on a common humanity of all people and on a definition of national identity that stressed common interests rather than differences among South Africans.

The positions of the NEUM on national identity and non-racialism stemmed from an analysis of the international and national situations, suggesting that the ruling classes, both national

and imperial, used vestiges of tribal culture and racial policies to divide and rule the oppressed. Thus any obeisance to “ethnic”/ “racial” or regional culture was seen as fostering a false and divisive identity. From the late 1950s onwards, the ideas of the NEUM were kept alive by smaller groupings and remained hugely influential, especially among “coloured” intellectuals in the Cape. Rive became a very close friend of one of the younger generation of NEUM leaders, Victor Wessels, having taught with Wessels’s wife, Daphne Wessels, at South Peninsula High School in Cape Town. It was largely through Wessels, but, later, also under the influence of prominent NEUM members like Ivan Abrahams (a colleague at Hewat College during the seventies and eighties) and Harry Hendricks (with whom Rive worked in the Western Province Senior School Sports Union and in the South African Council on Sport), that Rive consolidated and refined the intellectual leitmotifs of his life-commitment to the underdog, non-racialism, progressive nationalism, principled struggle, universal equality and humanism. These had been seeded during his days under tutelage of the teacher-scholars at Trafalgar High School, from experiences on the sports field and from ideas in the books in libraries he chanced upon by himself, as a determined, curious and avid young reader. While Lee is correct in asserting that “Rive never publicly belonged to any national liberation organisation in South Africa” (7), he fails to recognise the extent to which Rive was a product of and aligned himself to the ideological positions of his political teachers and mentors in the NEUM. For most of his adult life, Rive was in fact at one time or another a central member of NEUM associate civic organisations like the school sporting bodies and the national umbrella body, the South African Council on Sport.¹⁷

¹⁷ Lee’s further claim that Rive “was in step with Congress politics in his unswerving advocacy of the principle and practice of non-racialism” (9) is completely incorrect. Rive was very critical of political positions and practices of the ANC throughout his life. Also, as I try to show, Rive’s non-racialism stemmed from his association with NEUM intellectuals and *not* from the ANC whose policy was “multiracialism”, and *in effect* still is.

In a letter to Langston Hughes in 1954, Rive, a highly articulate and well-read twenty-four-year old, committed to the struggle and to the ambition of becoming a writer, describes, in the understandably overblown terms of a wide-eyed and overawed young writer in the making, how he sees his political bias emanating from the influences outlined above:

. . . [I] am avidly fond of reading and fanatical about politics.

I belong to a school of thought, Trotskyite and Leftist in its outlook (shades of Senator McCarthy) who believe in non-collaboration as a political weapon. After becoming a gold-chorded [sic] King Scout in the Boy Scout Movement I was almost forced out because of speeches and reports attacking Imperialistic indoctrination and the division of the movement on racial lines. I'm out of it now. (30 July 1954)

While at school, Richard joined the scouts rather than the church brigade, as the family thought the former more respectable than membership of the church lads' brigade, which entailed "marching through the streets behind a blaring, tinny band" (*Writing Black* 6). It was while he was in the Second Cape Town Boys' Scout Troop that he first met Peter Clarke, who was to become a good friend and fellow artist. Rive's already developed sense of the iniquities of racialism and his courage to speak out against injustice, which he relates to Hughes in the letter above, were hallmarks of his outlook and character, even in these early years. In another, slightly later letter to Hughes in 1955, Rive gives more revealing detail about the incident in the scouts:

Concerning the Boy Scouts, in South Africa it is divided into racialistic groups. When Lord Rowallen, chief scout of the world, visited South Africa, a preliminary meeting of Scouts was called to "decide on the questions he was to be asked". People started asking silly questions like official length of garter-tabs and colours of scarves. Everyone shirked the political issue till I asked "whether the division of Scouts into racialistic groups as

practised in South Africa was in accordance with true Scouting principle and tradition”!
 Complete chaos. When we met Rowallen I asked the same questions and of course things
 were made so hot for me that I resigned. My troop threatened to resign in protest. But I
 objected. (10 Feb. 1955)

We glimpse in this letter fragment, in both the actual event recalled as well as in the rhetorical
 representation of self in the narrative (with its evident sense of rhythm, drama and climax), the
 fearless, outspoken leader of the troop, the irrepressible and just voice of a leader of the silent,
 oppressed masses.

His fearless breaking of the silence on racial issues must have been spurred on by his own
 experiences of racist attitudes towards him because of his dark skin. While the progressive
 teachers at Trafalgar High were to help him formulate his non-racialism, there were others whose
 reactionary attitudes must have hurt him deeply and alienated him. Gilbert Reines, who was a
 fellow pupil with him at Trafalgar, remembers one such standard six teacher he and Richard had
 at the school:

You know, in those days, you had to bring your mug to school to receive milk, and if
 you've forgotten it, [this teacher] used to put a saucer on the floor with milk in it, and
 make you lick it, you know, lap it up like, like a cat. ... And ... he always tried to catch
 Richard out, I think for something or other. But one day ... he said to Richard very
 seriously, 'oh d'jys 'n slim kaffir' ['oh, you're a clever kaffir']. (27)

In the classroom, on the sports field, in the street, inside the home – wherever he turned, it must
 have seemed to him that he was being ceaselessly assaulted by soul-destroying hatred.

Besides highlighting the racial situation of the time of his childhood, the early chapters in *Writing Black* focus on two other areas of his youth so fundamental to Rive's whole life – sport and his ambition to be a writer. Even at an early age Rive was a superb athlete, winning prizes at amateur competitions organised by the well-meaning social workers in District Six. Peter Meyer, a longstanding colleague in the sporting world and fellow educationist, traces Rive's development as a sportsman:

His interest in athletics started at primary school and developed under the guidance of physical education teacher “Lightning” Smith at Trafalgar High School. ... He excelled particularly in the four-hundred-yards hurdles ... and the high jump. During the late 1940s he became the South African champion in these events, participating in the colours of the Western Province Amateur Athletics Union and in competitions of the South African Amateur Athletics and Cycling Board of Control.¹⁸

While at high school he also joined the “exclusive, upper-class ‘Coloured’” Arial Athletics Club (*Writing Black* 7; *Meyer Tribute* n.p.). Even his earliest aspirations of developing his talent as a sportsman were frustrated by the demeaning politics of racism and prejudice: “At first the members, all fair-skinned, were worried about my dark complexion, but relented because not only was I a mere junior but I attended Trafalgar High School” (*Writing Black* 7). This attitude, that tempers overt racism with mitigating overlays of class considerations, encountered by Rive early on in life, must have increased his determination to get the best education he could, and, in addition, to flaunt it as a retort to people judging him by the colour of his skin. Besides his participation in organised sport, Rive was also keen on mountain hiking, often walking up the

¹⁸ Peter Meyer's tribute to Rive at Hewat College memorial service.

numerous tracks on Table Mountain with friends and students, and he occasionally went spear fishing. One of the fishermen he went spear diving with was Jim Bailey, owner of *Drum* magazine, whom he seemed to know even before he made his ground-breaking trip to meet the *Drum* staff in late 1955.

Every other aspect of life selected for display by Rive in *Writing Black* – childhood, sport, teaching, studying, travelling – is consciously and demonstratively linked to the colour question and the system of racialised oppression in South Africa. The memoir is as much protest literature, or “anti-Jim Crow”¹⁹ as he calls it, as it is autobiography. Rive links his drive to be a writer to his being a keen reader as a child, a connection made by very many other writers when recounting memories of childhood.²⁰ Rive adds, however, that he read voraciously and indiscriminately everything he could get his hands on “to escape the realities of the deprivation surrounding me” (*Writing Black* 9). He also insists on capturing the racialised assumptions about the world of books embedded in the perceptions and reality of the young Richard:

“I never questioned the fact that all the good characters, the hero figures, were White and that all the situations were White Books were not written about people like me. Books were not written by people like me” (*Writing Black* 9).

This chapter in his memoir, called “Growing Up”, covers the period between 1937 and 1955 and is in fact solely about Rive becoming a writer. It is noteworthy that a number of aspects of his

¹⁹ In 1979 Rive was one of the keynote speakers at the conference of the African Literature Association of America held at the University of Indiana in Bloomington. His paper was called “The Ethics of an Anti-Jim Crow” and emphasised the complete exclusion of black people from normal national civil society in South Africa. *Writing Black* grew out of this paper.

²⁰ See Antonia Fraser’s compilation, *The Pleasure of Reading*. She documents accounts by a number of prominent writers who recall what avid readers they were as children.

childhood reading are fore-grounded and conflated in his recreation of these early years. He establishes that he was a keen reader but also reveals that he was drawn to the classics of English literature (he names Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Scott and Haggard in particular) during his high school years. As I will argue elsewhere, Rive was not only genuinely inspired by what was canonised as great English literature, but was also consciously establishing and asserting his credentials as a cosmopolitan intellectual and writer in the memoir,. In addition, he demonstrates an acute awareness of how the received literary tradition was constructed and perceived as a Eurocentric way of seeing the world and the writing self. But this was soon to change for the teenager.

It was the discovery of the writers of the Harlem Renaissance – Rive mentions in particular Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer and Cedric Dover – that allowed the young Rive to find representations in literature that spoke more directly to his own dilemmas and contexts, and break the illusion that books were for and about “White Folks” (*Writing Black* 10). In his 1980 essay “On being a Black Writer in South Africa: A Personal Essay”, Rive claims to have first encountered Hughes when he read *The Ways of White Folks* at the age of twelve, a book he found on the shelves of the Hyman Lieberman Institute Library in Muir Street, District Six: “A new world opened up. This was about me and depicted my frustrations and resentments in a world obsessed with colour” (21).

The influence of the black American writers of the Harlem Renaissance was also refracted through the work of the writer who most directly influenced the whole *Drum* school of writers, Peter Abrahams. Mphahlele makes the point that while the previous writing tradition by black

authors located itself in folklore, in the oral past, in the (often Christian) allegorical, the didactic and in the epic, it was with Thomas Mofolo, Herbert Dhlomo and R.R.R. Dhlomo, and A.C. Jordan that elements of realism were being favoured in work by black writers. Mphahlele continues:

Realism, however, really burst into full blossom for us when Peter Abrahams published *Dark Testament* (1940) ... Abrahams acknowledged the influence of Afro-American writing on his own ... Abrahams' novels were to provide an inspiration for later fiction – that of the next decade. (“Landmarks of Literary History” 307)

Abrahams' gritty realism, detailed depiction of local settings and autobiographically inspired content, are features evident in the Harlem Renaissance writers themselves. He became a model for both black journalists and fiction writers of the fifties. Rive, who always spoke of himself as a member of “the Protest School” of writers, acknowledges his debt to both Abrahams and Mphahlele: “There were many factors which gave momentum to [the Protest School] which had started hesitantly in the Forties with Peter Abrahams and Ezekiel Mphahlele” (“The Black Writer and South African Literature” 9). Elsewhere in the same article he also talks about Abrahams in the following terms: “Abrahams was intent on showing social conflict in the broad, political sense of the word” (6). Rive suggests in this article that the realism of Abrahams also derives from the social realist traditions fostered in the prose emanating from the Soviet Union. Rive himself was less preoccupied than, for example, La Guma, with highlighting class conflict in his fiction, but found the stylistic conventions of realism – the insistence on authentic and detailed description of place and time – a mode of expression that enabled him to articulate an anti-racist, humanist rather than Marxist position and, like Richard Wright, say “Listen, White man” (“On being a Black Writer” 22). Apartheid impelled Rive to be a writer; even at a young

age, he dedicated his talent and directed his anger to writing against apartheid.

In *Writing Black*, Rive dates his first “raw, angry prose” (10) from about the time he gained his school-leaving Senior Certificate and, after the death of his mother, moved out of District Six to the abutting neighbourhood of Walmer Estate, to Flat 3, 17 Perth Road – a relatively middle-class area in comparison to where he had grown up. He was extremely glad to be shot of the slum existence he had grown up in, as the emotion of Andrew Dreyer in *Emergency* suggests when the narrator recounts his feelings towards his home neighbourhood as a teenager in his final year at high school:

Andrew was determined to blot out the memory of the slums, the dirt, the poverty. He remembered the feeling of shame and humiliation he had experienced when Miriam had told him that Justin and Abe had come to pay their respects in Caledon Street after his mother had died. He was glad he had not been home. He wondered how they had reacted.

Had they realised before that he lived in a slum? (Collier edition 68)

Rive had made the first of many moves towards middle-class comfort and respectability, but later he noted that “paradoxically I also became more aware of my own position as an unenfranchised, Black non-citizen” (*Writing Black* 10). As his experience for the rest of his life was to prove, no matter what his financial, literary or educational achievements were, he remained a black man in the eyes of the authorities and of those whose minds had internalised racist propaganda.

After Rive completed high school in 1947, he worked as a clerk at a business called Phil Morkel, “[b]ut after two years,” Hendricks suspects, “he must have felt that business talk was too limited a field for him” (n.p.). Perhaps he had already decided to bide his time, earning the money he

needed to pay his way through college. Then in 1950 he registered at Hewat Training College in District Six where he completed his training to become a high school teacher of English. At Hewat, Rive met fellow students like Ivan Abrahams and Albert Adams, who became his friends, fellow artists and political comrades. Ivan Abrahams remembers first meeting Rive when the former arrived as a first-year student at Hewat and Rive was in his second year. Rive had garnered a reputation as a 400-metre champion. Abrahams, also a champion runner at his school, Athlone High, helped encourage Rive's sporting career, even to the extent of carrying his tog bag. He remembers Rive having a very impressive style of sprinting which, Abrahams claims, Rive picked up from the Americans.²¹

Rive was a second-year representative on the editorial board, headed by Albert Adams, of the 1951 edition of *The Hewat Training College Magazine*.²² The pieces of dialogue that Rive wrote for the magazine under the name "R. M. Rive" are called "Variations on a Theme", "With apologies to William Shakespeare", "With apologies to Alan Paton" and "With apologies to H.W. Longfellow", and are a far cry from the "angry prose" of the short stories associated with *Drum* which were to launch his name as a writer a few years later. But like parts of some of the *Drum* stories, these student pieces are marked by an obvious and sometimes grating derivativeness.

²¹ Ivan Abrahams. Personal interview. What Abrahams means by "American" style of running and how Rive picked this up is unclear. But it is yet another perceived or real link between Rive and America.

²² A copy of the magazine was given to me by Albert Adams in 2003.

The first piece called “Variation on a Theme” imitates an absurdist exchange between “Stranger” and “Tweedledee” very much in the mould of *Waiting for Godot*; the second imitates, in overblown Shakespearian diction, an exchange between “Stranger” and “Tweedledadio”; the third is a paternalistic exchange between Alan Paton and a black man (“Umfundisi” and “my child”) and the final one imitates the style of Longfellow with dialogue between “Stranger” and “Hiawatha”. The pieces demonstrate a number of characteristics that are significant. The writer clearly wants to show, even show off, an intimacy with the canon of English literature. At the same time, there is an element of parody present in that the pieces are so obviously flaunting characteristic diction of each of the writers. This makes them somewhat funny in a self-consciously learned, yet at the same time satirical, way. Lastly, the four pieces include a local, South African reference. From even this early stage as a writer, Rive was intent on engaging with the work of South African writers, even though he was enchanted by the giants of the English literary canon; a combination that remained a fundamental point of reference for him throughout his life.

Rive completed his teacher training at Hewat College in 1951 and, according to Harry Hendricks, he then “taught at Vasco High School for a year and during that year was one of the teachers instrumental in the formation [and] the founding of the Western Province Senior Schools Sports Union.”²³ After Vasco High, Rive joined the staff of one of the most prestigious coloured high schools, South Peninsula, where he eventually became head of the English Department and where

²³ Harry Hendricks’s tribute to Rive at Hewat College memorial service gives this date as 1951. Rive, in a letter to Hughes dated 30 July 1954, gives this date as 1951 contradicting the date (1952) he gives on page 111 of his 1981 memoir. The course at Hewat was a two-year offering and the memories of Abrahams and Adams, and the Hewat magazine as well, place him there in 1950 and 1951.

he taught for almost two decades, spending some of those years overseas and a few teaching at Athlone High School. He still lived in Walmer Estate at this stage but later moved to lodge in Second Avenue, Grassy Park “with an aggressively respectable family, who insisted on ignoring their even darker neighbours” (*Writing Black* 111), in order to be nearer his workplace. At the start of his career at South Peninsula High he taught Latin and English, and his principal was Attie De Villiers – one of his teachers at Trafalgar High.²⁴

Together with colleagues at the school like Wilfred King, Rive established a reputation for South Peninsula as a top-performing contender in inter-school athletics championships. He also made his mark as an athletics coach and administrator while at the school. In 1956 he continued to be a leading member of the Western Province Senior Schools Sports Union. He served on the executive committee of the body till his appointment at Hewat in 1975. In 1958 he helped form the South Peninsula Athletics Club in order to consolidate and extend the work being done in sport at school level. With the formation in 1961 of the South African Senior School Sports Association, Rive became a national player in the field of athletics administration. Meyer observes:

Richard became a Western Province delegate to the South African Senior School Sports Association, and served on the executive for many years. His wit, his irony, his sarcasm, and eloquence in debate made him a fierce and feared opponent He could analyse a situation to the point of being clinical, and could formulate resolutions and motions very

²⁴ Hendricks’s tribute to Rive.

concisely and accurately. But he was sometimes very impatient and arrogant. He came across as somewhat of a braggart.²⁵

In 1952, while teaching full-time, Rive decided to register as a part-time student for his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Cape Town, majoring in English. He continued to write creatively in his spare time. Teaching, writing, organising sport, and studying made their demands on his time and he eventually graduated with his BA ten years later, in 1962. His degree courses included Political Philosophy (II), History (II), Economics and Economic Geography. It was in one of the registration queues, in 1959, that Rive and Alf Wannenburg met and became friends and writing comrades.²⁶

In one of his first letters to Langston Hughes, in 1954, the budding twenty-four-year old writer paints a detailed, fascinating picture of his typical day at the time:

I awake at six in the morning at my home in Walmer Estate (a select Coloured area where Africans are seldom seen, but don't blame me), and catch a bus to Cape Town Station. I am allowed to sit anywhere in the bus, but in Johannesburg I can only sit upstairs, three seats from the back and in Durban I will be allowed to sit where I like (because I'm Coloured) but Africans and Indians must sit upstairs.

At the station I board a section of the train where anyone may sit, but under no condition may I sit in the compartments labelled 'Blankes Alleen' as those are reserved for Whites. I have regular friends I meet on the train, Hepburn who is a Master of Arts

²⁵ Peter Meyer's tribute to Rive at Hewat College memorial service.

²⁶ Date taken from Wannenburg's "Memories of Richard".

and has a keen sense of humour, Bill Currie who is an outstanding actor but will never be able to act in National Companies because of his Colour and Arthur whom I suspect seeks solace in Roman Catholicism. Our conversation reaches a high standard, most probably far higher than most of our counterparts.

At Diep River I alight and walk 200 yards to pleasant South Peninsula High (a school for Coloured pre-University students) where the students are well-dressed and fed and come from better-class homes. Here I meet fellow lecturers who mostly belong to the Teachers' League of South Africa (a militant teachers' body now outlawed by the Department of Education). I lecture in Latin and English Literature and in addition take students for track athletics and swimming. After finishing here I attend lectures of the University of Cape Town (one of the two Universities in South Africa where no colour-bar is in operation) and am allowed in the same lecture room as white students. I should have mentioned that there is no academic segregation but a rigorous social segregation is observed, and I am not allowed to represent my University at Sports or functions attended by Apartheid Universities. After my lectures I usually go home and then to the Athletics Track which we are allowed to use on two nights a week when the whites do not use it. After this I either go to a political lecture, N.E.F. (New Era Fellowship, a militant Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) organisation) or M.Y.S. (Modern Youth Society, a group of radical youths with Leninist tendencies) or listen to the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra (no colour bar) or have the option of attending a Coloured cinema where a notice is usually displayed bearing the legend 'Not for Natives (Africans) and children under 12!!!' Or I watch the University Ballet in which Coloured Artists are allowed to perform or drama at the Little Theatre. I belong to the University Library, Public Library

and Educational Library (in any other Provinces there would be no library facilities for Non-Europeans whatsoever).

Were I an African, life would by no means be quite as pleasant. I would have to live in a location about 30 miles from Cape Town (Langa) earn a mere pittance and find a social if not economic bar to most cultural matters. I would also be open to abuse from both Whites and Coloured. An African friend of mine Mchigi was almost knocked over by a Coloured skolly (hooligan) and told 'Voetsek Kaffer!' while in my company. Mchigi holds an M.A degree in philosophy but is spurned as a Kaffer. The favourite term of abuse for Coloured people is 'Hotnot' or Hottentot. I have been called 'Kafferboetie' (friend of Kaffers), a frustrated intellectual, a pernicious [sic] influence, geleerde Hotnot (educated Hottentot), cynic, etc etc etc. During Vacation I usually travel extensively through South Africa, and that is when the fun starts. It is then that I am made to feel my Colour and see the system in operation. (30 July 1954)

This letter is remarkable for the manner in which it conveys a finely observed sense of how racial politics infiltrated and demeaned every aspect of the young Rive's daily life; for what it reveals of the young artist's eye for lurking class distinctions nevertheless present within the overriding issue of race; for Rive's empathy with those like Mchigi who were even worse off than he was; for his strong sense of himself and his circle as cultured, urbane intellectuals and members of a radical resistance to racial oppression; for his ability to portray character in concise and vivid ways, and for his irrepressible wit and the humour that cannot help but rear its head in his writing.

In his mid-twenties, he met Barney Desai, who was Cape Town editor of the national tabloid aimed at Black readers, the *Golden City Post*. Desai commissioned Rive to do a piece called “My Sister Was a Playwhite by Mary X”,²⁷ launching the long association Rive was to have with the popular press throughout his life. “My Sister Was a Playwhite”, a piece of journalism in the style of an agony / confessional column, is narrated by a dark-skinned young coloured girl. The narrator tells the story of her fair-skinned sister, Lucille, who is encouraged by their fair-skinned mother to live “as white”. The piece depicts the painful and humiliating divisions arising within the District Six family, where dark-skinned members are disowned, devalued and displaced, as a result of the aspirations of the mother and elder sister to exist as “white” in a racially legislated society. The final paragraph of the story explains the moral tone and mock confessional style of this journalist piece:

I am writing this confession, distasteful as it is, because Lucille has asked me to do it to sound a word of warning to all Coloured persons who entertain a desire to “cross the line” and pass for White. (31)

There are strong autobiographical elements to the story – the home in District Six, the divisive family attitudes on racial identity, the fair mother and dark father, the narrator being a top-performer at St Mark’s School but getting no acknowledgement for her academic achievements from father or mother, and perhaps even the name of the protagonist, Lucille, hint at a story about Rive’s own sister Lucy. These overt autobiographical elements would clearly embarrass the family, which is perhaps why Rive chose to use a pseudonym as well as change the gender of the

²⁷ Rive’s memoir suggests his article was written in his “early twenties”, which implies a date prior to 1955, but the *Golden City Post* started its run only in 1955. The article could not be found in the *Golden City Post* but did appear in its companion paper, *Africa*, in July 1955. Is this another indication of Rive’s penchant for making himself a little younger than he actually was? Or is his memory for dates somewhat unreliable?

narrator. The piece in all likelihood predates any of the stories Rive composed for *Drum* shortly hereafter and is intriguing for the insights into what were possibly aspects of Rive's childhood and the strain that existed within the family. A dominant strand of Rive's '*Buckingham Palace*', *District Six*, which was to come over thirty years later, is already very evident in this, the earliest of his work set in District Six – the lyrical and deliberately hymnal recreation of the fabric of past life in a place constantly under threat of erasure. It also begins a lifelong use of fictionalised autobiography in his creative work and a preoccupation with District Six as a setting for the exploration of the antithetical interconnectedness of the personal and the political, of nostalgia and despair, and of loss and hope. It is one of only two fictional works where Rive uses a female narrator.

It was in Desai's office in 1955 that Rive again met artist Peter Clarke, and for the first time got to know photographer Lionel Oostendorp and writer James Matthews, all of whom were to become friends of Rive. Clarke recalls a gathering of these friends in a letter to Hughes in 1955, capturing the cultural earnestness and hunger of the young men at the time as well as their predilection for having a damn good party:

I saw Richard on Saturday, in fact I spent the afternoon at his home. He was having a party for a small group of us which included another writer friend James Matthews and photographer Lionel Oostendorp and one other friend (DRUM was responsible for our getting to know each other). It was quite a happy little affair and we spent the time eating and drinking and being merry while talking books and stories, art, poetry, music and that great old one and only subject, W-O-M-E-N We listened to Beethoven as rendered by Malcuzyński, we listened to Borodin's "Prince Igor", Prokofiev, Smetana, excerpts from

“Hamlet” and “Macbeth” and John Gielgud reading T.S. Eliot’s “Preludes” There was Chopin and Delibes. Richard has a fine collection of records which make truly enjoyable listening. (16 Nov. 1955)

Despite their both growing up in a slum, Rive and Matthews had very different dispositions and social aspirations. Rive describes the bond and the differences that marked their friendship from the very start and all the way through their long and often affectionately acrimonious association. The differences between them were already apparent in their first encounter in the office of the *Golden City Post* in Corporation Street, District Six:

So here was James Matthews, whose stories I had read in the *Weekend Argus*; the telephone operator who wrote fiction in his spare time. I knew ... that he came from a slum area above Bree Street, as beaten up as District Six, and that he had the merest rudiments of a secondary education. I had also heard he was a member of a powerful gang. I realised immediately that he saw in me everything he despised. I was not only Coloured middle class, but I spoke Coloured middle class and behaved Coloured middle class. (*Writing Black* 11)

Matthews, in his tribute to Rive in 1989, makes a similar remark about the proximities and differences that marked the two men as writers and friends: “At times we were the opposite sides of a coin. My habitat the shebeens. Yours the drawing room of academia, our writing the strong bond” (*Tribute* n.p.). Rive embodied the existential paradox that was characteristic of the divided subjectivity of black intellectuals in the colonised world during the anti-colonial struggles for independence – being part, yet apart; being black and engaged in struggle, iconic of and giving

voice to the mass of the locationised and voiceless, yet being an educated, well-travelled writer and academic, living in fairly comfortable, middle-class conditions. Rive lived throughout his life with the tension attendant upon such straddling of worlds; Matthews was far less racked by the division, living throughout his life in a working-class area, spurning the comforts of suburbia.

It was not only writing that was the strong bond between Matthews and Rive, but also their common opposition to racism. The early to mid-1950s were marked by the spirit of the defiance campaign and the cultural assertiveness of *Drum* magazine and its writers. Internationally, the post-war wave towards national independence swept through Africa and fomented intense interest in African affairs. The local refraction of this phenomenon was the heightened resistance to the increasingly severe apartheid regime. Through short stories, reportage and photography, the writers associated with *Drum* asserted their humanity and cosmopolitanism in a fusion of African and American themes and styles as a retort to ruling class attempts to dehumanise and tribalise. *Drum*, Michael Chapman asserts, “was part of the socialising process of the fifties: it helped to record and create the voices, images and values of a black urban culture at the precise moment that the Minister of Native Affairs Verwoerd was setting out to render untenable any permanent African presence in the so-called ‘white’ cities” (*The Drum Decade* viii).

“Times were giddy” Rive remarked in his memoir (17), referring to the year 1955, a turning point in his own life as a writer. Certain events seemed to have catapulted him into the world of South African and international writing and writers. In May 1955, at the age of 25, Rive saw his short story “Black and Brown Song” appear in *Drum* (Raju and Dubbeld 10), becoming one of his very first stories to be published. His story called “Dagga Smoker’s Dream”, written under the *nom de*

plume “Richard Moore”, a practice the young Rive regarded as “adventurous and way out” (*Writing Black* 17), won a short story competition run by *New Age* and was published by them in September 1955 (Raju and Dubbeld 10).

Rive calls some of his very first prose and that of his contemporaries being published in left-wing magazines and newspapers like *Fighting Talk*, *Drum*, *Africa* and *New Age* “protest fiction” (*Writing Black* 10). The elements of protest – the declamatory tone, the insistent politicisation of content, characters weighed down by social circumstance, the valorisation of humanist assertions as antipodal to the ruling racist zeitgeist – were to recur in all his fiction, marking even his work in his last decade, like the posthumous novel *Emergency Continued*, albeit in more muted tones than in the earlier writings. These traits were particularly prevalent in short stories like “Black and Brown Song” and “Dagga Smoker’s Dream”.

“Black and Brown Song” is a scathing indictment of racist stereotyping among non-white men (I look at this story in more detail later in this section) and “Dagga Smoker’s Dream”, like “Black and Brown Song”, uses as its main focalising protagonist a dehumanised lumpen working-class coloured man who has been turned into a pathetically anti-social and violent mobster. Both stories, quite typical of the tenor of these early stories that caught readers’ attention locally and abroad, use gritty realism in describing setting, confrontation and character, and also employ dramatic dialogue with elements of dialect, which enables the depiction of a terrifying and violent gangster mindset. These man-in-the-street stories by Rive were illustrative of what, according to Barnett, both Clarke and Themba were able to achieve in their stories in *Drum* around the mid-1950s:

In *Drum* the black man could give expression to what one of its contributors, Peter Clarke, called a very virile, passionate, conscious entanglement with living our lives. Can Themba's reply to people who queried the cheeky abuse of English in *Drum* was: 'Confound the cultural ideas of these men! All we seek is the fullest expression of the bubbling life around us and the restless spirit within us' (19).

These stories, like all of Rive's fiction, even at its most overtly autobiographical, focus on those stigmatised and marginalised individuals who are caught in the tensions that define the hostile spaces they inhabit within their malignant society.

Rive was introduced by Barney Desai to two of the judges of the *Drum* competition, Jack Cope and Uys Krige, and he struck up what were to be important and lasting friendships (*Writing Black* 10). These friendships gave Rive access to the world of writers, locally and internationally. Krige's intervention resulted in German translations of four of Rive's stories for publication in Peter Sulzer's *Christ Erscheint am Congo* (*Writing Black* 17). In fact, the dedication in Rive's *Selected Writings* (1977) is to "Jack Cope – who taught me how to write". Rive makes it clear in his memoir that Cope was the most important writing teacher at the start of his career in the mid-fifties:

Jack was tall, good-looking, gentle and understanding I was receiving recognition out of all proportion to the quality and quantity of my work. There was far too much international recognition and praise based on a handful of unpolished short stories and there was also far too little constructive criticism other than that I received from Jack Cope, who painstakingly made me account for every word I wrote. (*Writing Black* 17)

The deep concern and sense of friendship Cope had for Rive are evidenced by the fact that Cope

attended all of Rive's graduation ceremonies – at the University of Cape Town, at Columbia where he gained his Masters, and at his doctoral graduation at Oxford.²⁸ Cope's role in nurturing black writing talent seemed to stem from a deeply-held conviction that he could assist “these young men and beginners ... to master the full range of techniques. They are moving away from the folk-tale and religious influences and looking at life with clear, merciless eyes.”²⁹

In the late-fifties Rive also met Jan Rabie and Marjorie Wallace at a gathering of writers at the couple's home in Green Point, Cape Town. Included in this circle of writers and friends was Breyten Breytenbach, a fellow student at the University of Cape Town. In his biography of Krige, Kannemeyer describes the home of Jan Rabie and Marjorie Wallace in the late 1950s, a refuge and a meeting place for artists at a time when apartheid was increasingly constraining social and cultural life:

Jan-hulle se huis was gou 'n bymekaarkomplek vir kunstenaars, skrywers, politieke dissidente en boheme, soos Jobst Grapow, Kenny Parker, Richard Rive en die jong Breyten Breytenbach ... [Jan and Marjorie's home quickly became a rendezvous for artists, writers, political dissidents and bohemians, like Jobst Grapow, Kenny Parker, Richard Rive and the young Breyten Breytenbach]. (490)

²⁸ Harry Hendricks's tribute to Rive at Hewat College memorial service.

²⁹ A letter from Cope to Hughes dated 27 October 1954. The letter was in response to a letter from Hughes, it seems, outlining the latter's attempt to compile an anthology of African writing. Interestingly, Hughes, a polite and prolific letter writer with secretarial aid, never responds to Cope (there seems to be no archival evidence to that effect), perhaps dismissing him as white and irrelevant to his project which focused on black writing. Sensing Hughes's interest only in black writers, Cope describes himself thus in the letter: “the best I can claim is the old African compliment: Your skin is white but your heart is black.”

Rabie in turn visited Richard at his Grassy Park home. On one such visit to Grassy Park in 1957, Rabie brought with him Ingrid Jonker whom Rive found to be “a beautiful, withdrawn young woman with wide, haunted eyes and a penetrating stare. [I] was fascinated by Ingrid” (*Writing Black* 111). The two became very close friends. Rive recalled that “[s]ometimes I would drive her around central Cape Town and Sea Point on a motor scooter and we would pretend to be brother and sister because Marjorie said we looked alike” (*Writing Black* 111). In fact, they seemed so close that Mphahlele thought they were lovers.³⁰

Another event that drew Rive into the national writing scene was when Es’kia Mphahlele became fiction editor of *Drum* in January 1955 (Mphahlele, *Es’kia Continued* 118)³¹ during the last months of Sampson’s editorship of the magazine (*Drum* 229). This marked the birth of what Rive calls the “Protest Movement” in South African literature, which, according to him, was “faintly reminiscent of the Harlem Renaissance” (*Writing Black* 22). In 1955 Rive had in fact taken a train trip across the country to visit Desai, who was now manager of a cinema in Martindale in Johannesburg, and to make contact with the writers at *Drum*. At the time of his visit to the office of *Drum* in the city, he met Bloke Modisane, Casey Motsitsi, Todd Mashikiza and Lewis Nkosi. There was clearly no love lost between Nkosi and Rive, with Rive describing him as “a bright young reporter ... who I felt later developed into an overenthusiastic critic” and also as “starry-eyed and opinionated” (*Writing Black* 12-13). But it was clearly Mphahlele whom he seemed to

³⁰ Es’kia Mphahlele and Rebecca Mphahlele. Personal interview.

³¹ In a letter on a *Drum* letterhead to Langston Hughes dated 30 January 1955 Mphahlele writes: “As you will see from the letterhead I am now working for DRUM as fiction editor – have been since last December.” This date differs by a month from the one given by Mphahlele in the publication cited above. The original correspondence between Hughes and Mphahlele, dating from 1954 to 1966, is, like the Rive-Hughes correspondence, housed in the Langston Hughes Papers, the James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University.

admire above all the others, describing him as “the Grand Old Man” of South African letters (*Writing Black* 13).

While in Johannesburg, Rive was taken along by Mphahlele and his wife Rebecca to a party at Nadine Gordimer’s house in Parktown, enabling him proudly to proclaim in *Writing Black*, “I had dined with Nadine Gordimer” (17). At times like these in his memoir one can almost *hear* him make this claim in his inimitable puffed-up, cock-sure, Oxbridge voice, though not without a redeeming edge of self-parody that was sometimes present. Gordimer was, at the time, playing a critical role in helping to support and encourage the new generation of black writers. Despite his admiration for her work and her courage, Rive, adopting the more left-wing attitude to Gordimer, whom he labelled as a white South African liberal, was more ambivalent towards her than Mphahlele, who was less dogmatic about political categorising. Rive always disliked liberal paternalism and Gordimer, at that stage, was thought by Rive to have a patronising attitude to black writers. Mphahlele, though, is quoted by Rive as saying of Gordimer: “Nadine is not White nor Black. She is just a good South African” (*Writing Black* 13). But politics aside, it is clear Rive did not like Gordimer from the start and she in turn did not really take to him. They nevertheless had mutual admiration for each other’s writing.

Rive’s short stories from the mid / late fifties – “My Sister was a Playwhite” (1955), “Black and Brown Song” (1955), “Dagga Smoker’s Dream” (1955), “Rich Black Hair” (1955), “The Bench” (1956), “Willie Boy” (1956), “African Song” (1956), “Moon over District Six” (1956) and

“Rain” (1960)³² – combine a sense of angry or sometimes more muted and pained protest³³ at the unjust and dehumanising nature of racial oppression. These strident tones are often combined with a vision of a single, egalitarian, non-racial nation best expressed in the epigraphic poem to the story “Black and Brown Song”:

Where the rainbow ends,
 There’s going to be a place brother,
 Where the world can sing all sorts of songs,
 And we’re going to sing together, brother,
 You and I,
 Though you’re white and I’m not.
 It’s going to be a sad song, brother,
 ‘Cause we don’t know the tune, And it’s a difficult tune to learn,
 But we can learn it brother
 You and I,
 There’s no such tune as a black tune,
 There’s no such tune as a white tune,
 There’s only music, brother,
 And it’s the music we’re going to sing,
 Where the rainbow ends.

³² The dates to these stories given here are the first publication dates according to Jayarani Raju and Catherine Dubbeld. They do not however list “The Return” as one of the stories.

³³ In *Writing Black* Rive identifies this range of tone in protest writing as “[s]ometimes our protest is quiet and subdued but bubbling and frothing below. And sometimes it is turbulent and spouts out, and the ashes scatter widely and burn” (39).

“Black and Brown Song” and “African Song” both use songs and their lyrics as counterpoint to the harsh realities of racial oppression experienced by the protagonists. In “Black and Brown Song”, Johnny-boy, Amaai and Braim, rough, ruthless and violent gangsters, hang around outside the movie house in District Six waiting to pick off unsuspecting victims when they confront a black man and, in attempting to rob him, Johnny-boy slits open his face with a knife. This story depicts the way racist stereotypes constructed by the social system have been internalised by the coloured gangsters who treat the “kaffer” as sub-human, and regard the “White man” as a superior being. The refrain, in the form of lyrics / poetry that frame and interrupt the narrative, gives an authorial perspective deploring the divisions between “Black” and “Brown” songs and the consequent racialised debasement of relationships. A second climax to the story occurs when another black man attacks Johnny-boy in retaliation but is outnumbered by the three gangsters.

Even more horrific though than the racial abuse and the stabbing in the story, is the fact that “[t]he watching crowd was as passive as ever. No-one thought of interfering while the three boys were beating up the African” (Chapman, *The Drum Decade* 92). But the cruellest irony comes with the ending, when the black man who was beaten up is treated as the criminal by the police when they arrive, leaving the reader feeling indignant but helpless. “Black and Brown Song” starkly portrays the vicious and inherently violent hierarchical pyramid of the apartheid social formation; this kind of impassioned indictment of the apartheid system was particularly revelatory for readers outside of Africa.

The words of the song at the start of “Black and Brown Song” became widely anthologised as a

Richard Rive poem, “Where the rainbow ends”, particularly in South Africa and America. As a poem it represents a simple yet lyrical and visionary call for a society free from racial divisions and prejudice. In South Africa it has appeared in poetry compilations edited by Gray, Pereira, Couzens and Patel and Malan (Raju and Dubbeld 18). In the United States, it first appeared in a collection of poems called *Poems from Black Africa* edited by Langston Hughes and published in 1963. It was recently (2005) recommended reading in American schools during Black History Month (“Black History Month” n.p.).

The thematic / ideological thrust of Rive’s early stories is clearly a condemnation of racial oppression and speaks, as Chapman puts it, “eloquently for racial justice” (*The Drum Decade* viii). The short story was the dominant form chosen by the *Drum* generation because, according to Mphahlele, “the situation was not conducive to the novel. In the short story one could get the message across in a few broad strokes. We also used the short sentence from Afro-American prose. La Guma produced longer short stories but longer prose pieces were often written outside the country.”³⁴ Rive, in his critical essays on South African literature, would often echo Mphahlele’s reasons for the dominance of the short story genre during the fifties.

During this period, while Rive spent a lot of time on his writing and with fellow writers, he continued to earn a living as a teacher at South Peninsula High School, where he proved to be, to many of his more talented pupils, a source of inspiration to learn, to read widely and to make something of their lives. A few of the students did find him alienating and overbearing, but others, like Carol Abrahamse, who was a student in his class for four years, from 1959 to her

³⁴ Es’kia Mphahlele and Rebecca Mphahlele. Personal interview.

matriculation in 1962, remember him as a most inspiring and thought-provoking teacher. Some also say he could be cruel and imperious at times. What is interesting about the comments of Abrahamse, who has lived in Canada for over forty years (emigrating just a few years after leaving school), is that she sees Rive as being formative in her encounters with him:

He was a very enthusiastic and dedicated teacher and was very hurt when his family shunned him in the street when they saw him coming because as you know he had a very dark skin. As far as the English class was concerned, the way we read and discussed in depth Shakespeare and other plays – this gave me a life-long love for the theatre. He could be pretty cruel; he used to hit me on my hands for my handwriting and the pen I used, so being a rebellious teen I used a thicker and thicker nib every time and my handwriting got worse ... I was not one of his groupies who would sit at his feet and adoringly listen to everything he said. I have never liked this in most of the gurus I have encountered. As a result of seeing his ego so inflated – it gave me a life-long dislike of joining any group led by a strong male ego.

The good stuff was the political awareness and all the political discussions we had in class instead of English. It gave me a life-long interest in world politics, political systems and local politics. I remember one very important moment when he asked the class to vote on whether we thought people should have a certain amount of education in South Africa to be able to vote, or if everyone eighteen and over should vote. I voted for everyone to have a vote. Our class had the top five students who were brilliant and I was in the next five close to the top All the top students voted that only the more educated people should be eligible to vote. We discussed it and he argued that everyone should vote regardless of education. I was proud of myself for choosing everyone. That moment I

realised a lot about myself. I took care of a woman from Cortes Island [Vancouver] a few months ago who had both her knees replaced and had to have it done in Vancouver. She paid me the biggest compliment, because next to her I am pretty wealthy and she told me I was one of the few wealthy people who doesn't think I am better than anyone else. I think that discussion with Richard Rive and our class helped me with that.³⁵

A good friend of Rive's, Ariefi Manuel, was also a student in his class of matriculants in 1957. Manuel remembers Rive taking students to the Little Theatre in Cape Town and they were also taken to the open air theatre at Maynardville. He introduced them to classical music and Manuel remembers Rive loving Beethoven, but disliking Tchaikovsky. He used to have a portable record player to play the LPs to the class. Rive loved to quote from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Dylan Thomas's *Christmas in Wales*.³⁶ Manuel's memories bring to mind these very qualities in the main character in *Emergency*, which Rive was to begin to write three to four years after Manuel had had him as a teacher. It is strikingly clear, however, that in his classroom Rive opened up worlds to young minds which the segregated educational and social system was hell-bent on shutting out.

Rive would often in his leisure time, when he took respite from teaching and sport, visit the homes of friends to chat, smoke and have a drink. On a visit to the home of Dennis Bullough and his partner John Dronsfield, where he went with Albert Adams some time in the early fifties, he

³⁵ Carol Abrahamse. E-mail response to questions on Rive.

³⁶ Ariefi and Hazel Manuel. Personal interview.

met Gilbert Reines, who would later share his Selous Court flat for a year and who would become a good friend of his. It was about 1958, Reines recalls, that Rive approached him to share a flat as Rive needed to move out of his lodgings in Grassy Park but he could not afford to rent a place on his own. Reines agreed as his girlfriend lived close to the area and the two men then moved into Selous Court in Claremont, a double-storied block of four flats. Living in close quarters with Rive meant that Reines remembers quite vividly some of Rive's personal habits and irritating peccadilloes, like his constant loud sniffing, picking his nose and scratching his groin as he sat with legs spread apart. He tells of Rive's preoccupation with being raided by the security police at the time, a fear that might have been real, but from Reines's account it is made to seem more like paranoia on Rive's part:

There was this whole thing about the police going around doing dawn raids and looking at people's books, looking for subversive material, and I know Richard used to come in and ... I [would] find him sometimes burying things in my room under the bed, and I'd say 'what are you doing?' (laughing) And that was just Richard, and I said 'stop being a drama queen' ... I said 'they're not coming'. 'Oh, no they're coming at any time, and they've been peering through the curtains' (laughing), 'they might come any time' he said, 'and raid the flats,' and at the end of the day I said 'Richard, they are not coming today, Richard'. I think how quite disappointed he was. (9)

Reines also remembers that Richard "had no respect for boundaries because he [had] a kind of communal attitude – 'what is yours is mine'". Reines continues:

I used to come home and he and his friends [were] invading *my* bedroom, sitting on *my* bed, you know, sitting around smoking you know, and the last thing you want to do, is come in at night into a warm bedroom which you had nothing to do with warming!

(Reines's emphasis, 10)

He also paints a picture of a fairly untidy and scatterbrained flatmate who in the morning rush would let the porridge boil over and cake the stove and on more than one occasion lock himself out of the flat with the keys inside:

One evening he came and said, 'you know what happened to me today?' he said. 'I was getting dressed in such a hurry, this morning, semi-darkness ... and I got to school' he said 'and they were all standing on the stage for assembly.' [And] he said 'the kids were standing in the front, and they were putting their hands together to say prayers' ... and so one kid's eyes were wide open looking at Richard's feet and he looked down he had one brown shoe on and one black shoe (laughing). And of course it whipped around the school like mad 'onpaar skoene, onpaar skoene!' [odd shoes, odd shoes] (laughing) ... and you know, that was Richard. (15)

Like many others who knew Rive at this time, Reines remembers him rushing around on his silver-blue Vespa scooter. Often friends would ride pillion and Reines recalls the story, often repeated by Rive, about the incident where the very quiet-natured Peter Clarke was riding pillion with Rive to Clarke's hometown of Tesselaarsdal on some assignment the two had devised:

... all I know is that they were talking and Richard was driving of course and talking away and Peter was very monosyllabic in his responses, he was a very hard person to talk to And of course after some time Richard was getting no response to his questions and when he turned around Peter wasn't there! He'd fallen off the bike (laughing). So he turned round and drove back and about ten or fifteen miles and there was Peter Clarke sitting there like ... the thinker on one of those milestones, you know, sitting there! (laughing). (11)

Reines also remarks that Rive was “a very angry young man” (7), that he never spoke about his family except one of his sisters, and that he seemed driven to be a writer, that “there was something that was driving him to make a name for himself as a writer” (60).

One of Rive’s very first short stories, “The Return”, written in all probability in 1953 or even before, was entered for a *Drum* short story competition which was judged, amongst others, by Langston Hughes.³⁷ Hughes was sent the eight stories entered into the competition in December 1953. Rive’s story got second prize.³⁸ Hughes was very impressed with the stories and his exposure to young writers in South Africa gave birth to his idea for the publication of an anthology of African short stories. He began writing to various African writers about his idea, first testing it on Peter Abrahams in London, who promised to contribute stories. He also wrote to the young Rive very soon thereafter, in a letter in 1954:³⁹

As one of the judges of *Drum*’s recent Short Story Contest it was my privilege to read your very beautiful short story, “The Return”. I am wondering if you have anymore such stories or sketches that you could send me?

There is great interest at the moment in America in Africa, particularly South Africa, it being so much in the news these days. And the books of Alan Patton [sic] and

³⁷ Hughes was asked to be a judge by the assistant editor of *Drum*, Henry Nxumalo, in a letter dated 7 April 1953. Hughes not only agreed but also offered to do a column about *Drum* in the *Chicago Defender* for which he wrote (Langston Hughes Papers, Beinecke library).

³⁸ In the subsequent 1955 *Drum* short story competition which Hughes also judged, he deemed that only the submissions by Peter Clarke (“The Departure”) and Rive (“Black and Brown Song”) were excellent. (Letter to *Drum* dated 20 January 1955, Langston Hughes Papers, Beinecke). Clarke again won first prize, as he had in the previous competition, a fact never mentioned by Rive whose various accounts of the results of the competitions were deliberately ambiguous, possibly to leave one with the impression that *he* had won first prize?

³⁹ The original correspondence between Hughes and Rives is held in the Beinecke archive at Yale University. Copies are held at NELM in Grahamstown.

Nadine Gordimer, among others, have been well received here. So, I have talked recently with one of the best American publishers about the possibility of an anthology of short stories by African writers, and he was most favorable to the idea, asking me to assemble such a collection, and promising to give it very careful consideration when gotten together. If accepted for publication, there would be the usual pro rata payment to each writer for his work used therein.

Should you have a half dozen or so more stories concerning the problems, inter-group relations, or folk life of the people, I would be most happy to see them as soon as you can conveniently send them to me for consideration in such an anthology. I liked the story of yours which I have very much and would want to include your work in the book. Peter Abrahams has promised to send me some of his stories from London, and we both feel that a very interesting volume can be assembled. I hope to hear from you soon.

With all good wishes to you for continued good writing,

Sincerely yours,

Langston Hughes

(28 May 1954)

This letter is remarkably similar in formulation to one sent to Peter Clarke (who was using the pseudonym Peter Kumalo at the time for his short stories) as well as to several other African writers like Can Themba and Amos Tutuola (in fact, if Hughes had computer technology at his disposal it would have been a cut-and-paste job). Clearly Hughes was not only spurring on budding African writers but was also driven by his vision for a pan-African anthology of writings. The letter had a dramatic impact on Rive and his life as a writer, marking the start of his

career and reputation nationally and internationally. It was the start of an often very detailed and fascinating correspondence between the two writers that lasted till Hughes' death on 22 May 1967, thirteen years later. Hughes writes to Peter Clarke saying that "Richard Rive ... writes wonderful letters."⁴⁰ The correspondence is particularly intense till around mid-1955, after which there is an unexplained gap till it is resumed in 1960.⁴¹

Rive, replying to Hughes, in his first (undated) letter to the American, is clearly inspired to write because of the hugely encouraging words and possibility of an international publication:

I have received your very interesting and encouraging letter. I am afraid I do not conform to the pattern of starving-in-the-attic writer. I merely felt like it so I wrote. I have only three or four other short stories, but at the moment it is University vacation (I am at University of Cape Town) and mean to write, I assure you that within six weeks I will be able to send you at least half-a-dozen short stories following the theme of "The Return".

(24 July 1954)

"The Return" told of a nameless stranger whose "sallow complexion betrayed that he was not European" (*African Songs* 104). The stranger returns to a platteland town in the Karoo where he is greeted with crude and foul racist insults by white youngsters and older folk in the main street. He finds refuge in the Coloured location where he seems vaguely familiar to the people, but where he also finds intense mistrust of "the kaffers". Both white and coloured folk justify their bigotry in terms of Christian doctrine, and when the stranger attempts to enter a whites-only

⁴⁰ Letter dated 2 March 1955.

⁴¹ There is a similar gap of about three or four years in the correspondence between Hughes and Mphahlele and between Hughes and Peter Clarke. Timothy Young, curator of the Hughes collection, cannot account for this gap.

church, he is bundled out by the church warden. The concluding paragraphs reveal that the stranger is in fact Christ returning, only to discover that in this racialised society “there was no understanding in their hearts” (115).

Like the stories he was to write a year or two later, “The Return” highlights the hatred amongst people bred by racist attitudes, which were shockingly evident even in boys as young as eleven in the story. The work, especially in its use of dialogue and Afrikaans, depicts the crude racist labelling and entrenched master-servant attitudes that prevailed in both rural and urban South Africa. As in some of the other stories (“No Room at Solitaire” and “Resurrection”), Rive uses the contradiction between the Christianity the characters subscribe to and their very un-Christian, racist behaviour to expose the inhumanity and immorality inherent in racist mindsets. Just as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o did in his earlier novels, Rive reworks Christian mythology in order to expose the oppressive nature of racist attitudes, and, in this way, reasserts as moral and just his vision of egalitarianism.

The harsh realism of parts of “The Return”, describing racist behaviour and attitudes, is reminiscent of similar descriptions of racist encounters in Peter Abrahams’s autobiography, *Tell Freedom*, especially when the young narrator Lee and his friend Andries encounter three white boys. The dialogue and narration that ensue in Abrahams’s story, in which the black boys are called “Hottentot”, “bloody kaffir” and “ugly black baboon” before the violent fight breaks out between the two groups of boys, find an echo in Rive’s story in the racist and violent encounter at the start between a white and black boy. Abrahams’s gritty style and his depiction of the brutal realities of a divided society, were, as Mphahlele has argued, a local progenitor of a realism that

found favour with Rive and other writers of the *Drum* school faced with similar social conditions.

Another interesting element in this Rive story, which can be found in many of the other short stories, is the overt or muted identification of author with protagonist. The stranger is described in terms that have been used by Rive to describe himself elsewhere: “[t]he nose was sharp and aquiline and the hair burnt in [sic] rich brown through exposure. His eyes attracted most attention. Their light-brown, almost hazel colour contrasted oddly with his dark complexion” (104). Like the stranger, Rive was the outsider, in his family and in his country, and his was a mission to redeem his people and his land through his writing.

Arnold Rampersad, in his definitive two-part biography of Langston Hughes, confirms that the idea of the publication mentioned by Hughes in his letter to Rive above was in fact born from his exposure to the works submitted to him as a judge in the *Drum* short story competition (238).

Rampersad elaborates on this project of Hughes, aimed at showcasing African voices in the United States, saying that it failed to find favour with American publishers for a number of years:

Just as he had done with Mexican writers some twenty years before, he began to assemble an anthology of short stories by Africans (probably the first such venture in the history of American publishing), and he was undeterred when Simon and Schuster rejected the first six stories he submitted as a sample. Carefully he wrote to virtually every young writer whose name had come to him, including Amos Tutuola, Eflua Sutherland, John Mbiti, Gabriel Okara, Davidson Nicol, Cyprian Ekwensi, Peter Clarke, Richard Rive, and Ezekiel Mphahlele Few American publishers were then interested in foreign literature, and almost none in that of Africa. (238)

Hughes's persistence, assisted by increasing awareness of and interest in the tide of nationalism sweeping through Africa towards the end of the decade, triumphed in the end and in 1960, *An African Treasury: Articles, Essays, Stories, Poems by Black Africans*, was published by Crown Publishers (Rampersad 238). In a letter to Peter Abrahams, Hughes makes an interesting observation about the collection of African prose pieces:

The South Africans will be best represented – along with the Nigerians. And their differences are interesting: the Nigerians have a lot of humor in their writing, and the South Africans a lot of sadness and poetry.⁴²

The anthology received good reviews in America and was published in 1961 by Victor Gollancz in London. Mphahlele, in exile for two years already, was excited about the publication and exclaimed in a letter to Hughes: “You have done an excellent job of this anthology of African writing: congratulations! It simply bristles with life & newness, unlike Peggy Rutherford’s ... *Darkness and Light* ... which is cluttered with statuesque pieces.”⁴³ In South Africa, Hughes’ book was banned and anyone in possession of the book could be fined or jailed.

To Rive, Hughes was the icon of the black writer struggling for survival and recognition in white-dominated society. The American’s literary and critical works inspired Rive’s own creative output, especially in the latter’s earlier years. Rive claims that, on reading Hughes, “[a] new world opened up. This was about me and depicted my frustrations and resentments in a world

⁴² Letter to Abrahams from Hughes dated 28 February 1955. While this comment was made at the start of the five-year process to produce *An African Treasury*, Hughes’s comments were equally valid for the final compilation.

⁴³ Letter to Hughes dated 27 July 1960, Beinecke Library. Rutherford’s anthology was published in America under the title *African Voices* and appeared simultaneously with Hughes’ collection.

obsessed with colour” (Rive, *On Being a Black Writer* 21). As a consequence of Hughes’ friendship and intervention, Rive’s quite dramatic rise as a writer on the international scene was precipitated and, by the early sixties, he was already well-established within intellectual circles locally and was known as a committed South African writer internationally.

One of the anecdotes Rive liked to repeat is recalled by Gray in his memoir. Like many of the anecdotes for which Rive became notorious (be these true or apocryphal), it casts him in the light of articulate, well-versed and witty storyteller, making light of what touched him to the quick all his life – the colour question.⁴⁴ The incident was about Rive’s meeting with Sarah Gertrude Millin, author of *God’s Step-Children*, in which she relegates the “coloured” to the inferior status of the step-child. Gray recalls what was told to him by Rive:

So up stepped Richard Rive in his brilliant twenties, with a sheaf of short stories about “his people,”... [w]hen the colour-bar dowager encountered this upstart, she was evidently struck with genealogical confusion. All she could blurt was: “What are you – Indian?” To which Richard suavely replied: “No, ma’am, I am your step child.” (158)

But it was to be a while yet before Rive developed the self-confidence that would allow this kind of witty, parodic play with the question of colour, which had, since his earliest memories it seems, bedevilled his life, causing pain, anger and acute dislocation of body and spirit. The question of colour would, in fact, never go away.

⁴⁴ Gray makes a crucial point about the question of authenticity, memory and self-fashioning. He says that, in the end, it does not matter whether or not such anecdotes are true because the *thought* (my emphasis) that the story evokes, “freshens one’s sense that literary history is a sequence of such mythical moments” (159).

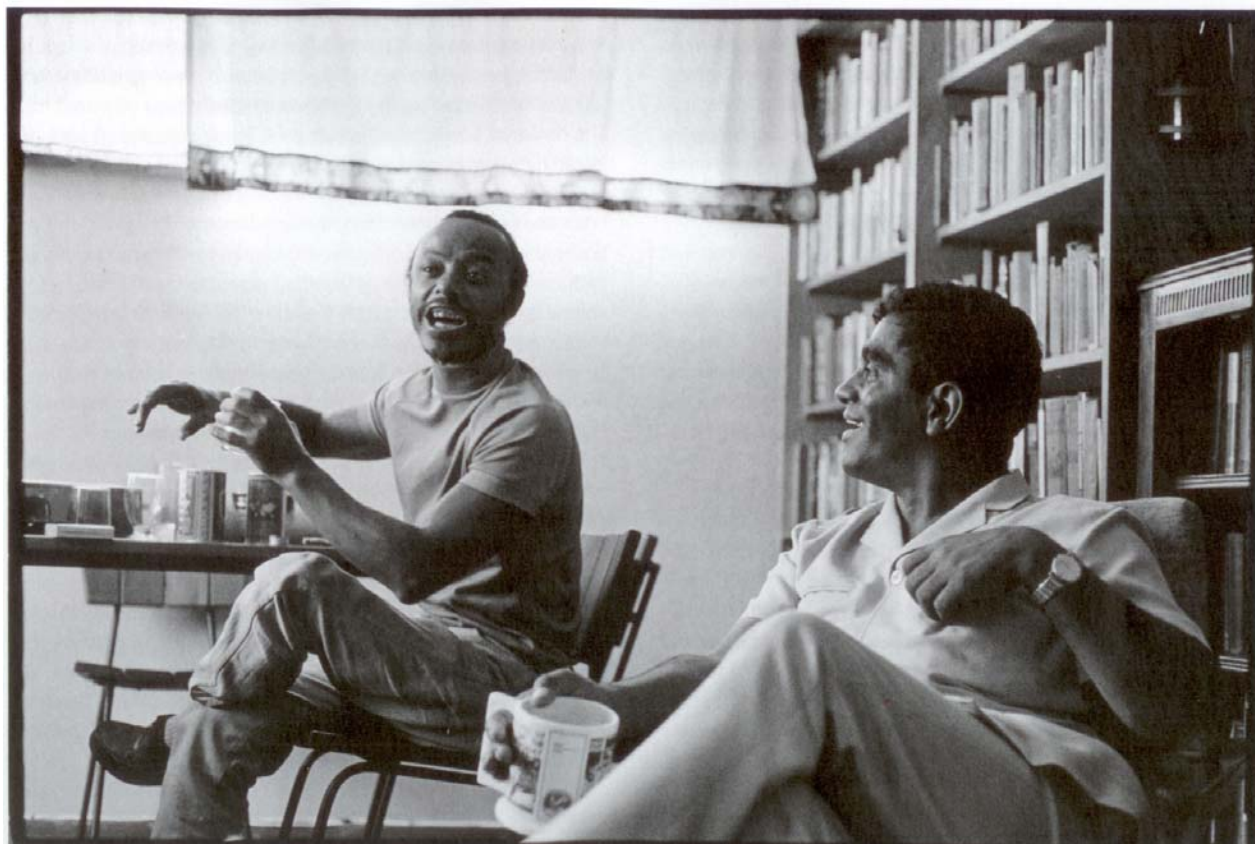


Illustration 4. James Matthews and Rive, Selous Court, circa late 1960s. Photograph by George Hallett.

2.2 A Cosmopolitan in Africa: 1960 – 1970

“1961 and 1962 were prolific years for me,” Rive recalls in his memoir (18). The 1960 Sharpeville / Langa uprisings had shaken the apartheid regime and had once again exposed the brutal nature of the South African state to its people and the world. The events gave Rive the setting for his first novel, *Emergency*, which he wrote in 1961 and 1962, and which was published by Faber and Faber in 1964. It was also the first novel, according to Barnett (129), to be set against the backdrop of the Sharpeville crisis and the first novel to be banned in South Africa. In *Writing Black* Rive overtly states that the life of the main character, Andrew Dreyer, “in some ways ran parallel to mine” (19). This semi-autobiographical protagonist finds himself in Cape Town in the maelstrom of the uprisings against the Pass Laws, organised by the Pan African Congress from the twenty-eighth to the thirtieth of March, 1960. While these events provided creative impetus for Rive, they were ironically the start of a state of emergency in the country that lasted till the early seventies, and were a severe setback not only to organised political resistance but to writers and artists inside the country. The fifteen-year period from the mid-1960s to about 1980 marked the most barren period in Rive’s creative writing life.

Andrew Dreyer, like Rive, grows up in District Six and becomes a “coloured” high school teacher. Dreyer’s main dilemma in the novel – choosing greater political involvement in the political struggle or escaping to safety – must have been Rive’s own dilemma at certain points in his life when the option of living abroad was open to him. Dreyer decides to stay. In the novel, Dreyer’s increasingly middle-class material

circumstances as compared to his old friends who remained in the slums of his youth, and his ambivalent relationship to the struggle of working people, can also be read to typify the uncertain relationship of Rive and many other members of the suburban black intelligentsia towards the struggle of the people and also of the oscillating position of the so-called coloured to both white minority and black majority.

Rive must have been elated at the publication of his first novel. As his memoir notes, there was a great deal of partying in London, where he was at the time of publication, and many accolades from friends and fellow writers. He must have also sensed the increase in literary stature that arriving back home as a “novelist” would bring, both in his circles of writers and friends and amongst the students and colleagues at South Peninsula High School. Lee provides a comprehensive review of the reception of the novel in 1964 and shortly thereafter. Overall, newspaper reviews in London and Ireland lauded the work as a successful novel of political protest.¹ The banning of the novel in South Africa meant that there were few published reviews inside the country, in the press or in journals like the Teachers’ League of South Africa’s *Educational Journal*. The fact that more was being written outside the country was clearly symptomatic of the repressive nature of the times.

Among the most encouraging about the novel was Mphahlele, as always the gentle and broad-minded doyen of younger South African black writers. It was Mphahlele to whom Rive had turned for an opinion on the draft manuscript of the novel earlier in 1963,

¹ Lee quotes from positive reviews in the *London Times*, October 15, 1964, and in the *Irish Times*, October 17, 1964.

before it was accepted by Faber and Faber later in that year, an indication of how deeply he valued Mphahlele's views. In his introduction to a 1970 Collier-MacMillan edition of the novel, Mphahlele gives his very generous and context-sensitive assessment of Rive's achievement:

The novelist in the South African setting has to handle material that has become by now a huge cliché: violence, its aftermath, and the responses it elicits. In this, he travels a path that has many pitfalls. He can depict a situation so immense and characters so tiny that we fail to extract a meaning out of the work; he can create symbols and "poetic" characters so that reality eludes us; he can be melodramatic; he can be too documentary. Richard Rive has avoided these pitfalls...His prose maintains its tension and its pressurised drive throughout. And the reader is pleasantly struck by the novelist's economy of diction and structure. (xvi)

When the dust of the revelries settled and the more academic reviews started emerging, Rive must have been deflated by the quite critical reception of his novel in some quarters. The most hostile was a review in 1965 by Lewis Nkosi who slated the novel in the following terms:

To read a novel like Richard Rive's *Emergency* is to gain a glimpse into a literary situation which seems to me quite desperate. It may even be wondered whether it might not be more prudent to 'renounce literature temporarily,' as some have advised, and solve the political problem first rather than grind out hackneyed third-rate novels of which *Emergency* is a leading contender.

(*Home and Exile* 231)

Two years earlier, in 1963, Nkosi had slated some of the writing in Rive's *African Songs*, in a review published in the Johannesburg-based magazine, *Classic*. The terms of Nkosi's harsh criticism of stories like "Moon Over District Six", "Resurrection", "The Return" and "No Room at Solitaire" reveal features he regarded as "irritating beyond endurance" (41) and "slipshod calamities of style" (42) in Rive's prose – Rive's penchant for archaic diction and literary cliché, his obvious reliance on the pathetic fallacy, and his creation of caricature (especially for black and white figures) rather than well-rounded characters. While Nkosi's criticism reveals his own bias towards nineteenth-century realist prose, he does put his finger on stylistic weaknesses evident in the stories he decries. In response to what must have been the most damning criticism ever of his literary work, Rive wrote an equally vitriolic retort in the next issue (1964) of *Classic*:

[T]here are two types of criticism the non-white writer in South Africa must guard against. Firstly, the over-sympathetic patronising type which is merely a manifestation of inverted racialism; secondly, the destructively nihilistic, done for motives personal or otherwise, of which Mr Nkosi's review is symptomatic. ... By all means, let us have criticism, it is necessary for the writer, strong, healthy criticism, but spare us the smart-alec [sic] vituperations of the Nkosis which are primarily intended as a display of pyrotechnics. (75)

Rive could clearly give as good as he got, demonstrating in this response his own mastery of combative rhetoric. While Rive does not convincingly deal with Nkosi's at times trenchant criticism, he manages to control the damage done by Nkosi's views on *African*

Songs by contrasting the clearly lopsided review with one by Mphahlele, who offers a more measured, critical condonation of Rive's talent.

The second bout of criticism from Nkosi's pen in his review of *Emergency* must have severely piqued Rive, and this continuing fracas no doubt lead to subsequent and ongoing enmity between the two writers. In his memoir, Rive recalls his reaction to Nkosi's review, calling him his "*bête noire* ever since he had reviewed a book of mine not only scathingly but inaccurately that I had been forced to reply in order to point out gross errors of fact" (143). Unfortunately I cannot locate Rive's reply to Nkosi's criticism of *Emergency* as the terms of the reply must make fascinating reading. For Rive to dismiss Nkosi's view as "inaccurate" is a standard polemical ploy to dismiss an argument and I am sure Rive must have taken issue with the extremely hostile points Nkosi was making about Rive and other writers like Modisane as well. Most obvious a point to make to Nkosi could be that the cessation of creativity he was proposing was in effect what repressive apartheid legislation was imposing, and that to wait for a new and favourable political turn could have meant decades of silence!

Lee criticises Nkosi's view of *Emergency* in less rhetorical fashion than I have above, aptly identifying some of the assumptions which underpinned Nkosi's view of the work of protest writers at the time:

[Nkosi] relies upon a droll and cruel humour to denigrate black fiction by South Africans in the sixties, en masse, as politically trite and monotonous. Nkosi bases much of his negative argument on the perceived failure of protest fiction to

conform to conventional left-Leavisite criteria of universal moral relevance and modernist “freshness”. (124)

By the time Rive writes his memoir, some good faith has been restored in the relationship between the two writers, Nkosi having been one of three judges who voted Rive’s *Make Like Slaves* the top play in a B.B.C competition in 1971. Rive still however gets a dig in when he describes his first meeting with Nkosi at the offices of *Drum*, using a backhanded and euphemistic compliment: “Sylvester introduced me to ... a bright young reporter, Lewis Nkosi, who I felt later developed into an over-enthusiastic critic” (12–13).

While Rive could easily dismiss in terse and disparaging terms left-wing rhetorical criticisms of *Emergency* coming from what he called a “pseudo-politician”, he seemed to listen more carefully to academic reservations about the work.² One of the most considered assessments of the novel was made by Bernth Lindfors in an article called “Form and Technique in the Novels of Richard Rive and Alex la Guma” published in an American journal called the *Journal of the New African Literature and the Arts* in 1966. Lindfors’s assessment, unlike that of Nkosi, takes into account the social context of production that so radically affected writers like Rive and La Guma, who remained in South Africa despite the fascist conditions:

The writers remaining in South Africa have had three alternatives: to stop writing, to write innocuous short stories for South African publications, or to send their manuscripts abroad. The best writers have had great success in getting their work

² In *Writing Black* Rive lampoons ultra-left criticism of his work (18). In contrast, he does not talk about the kinds of criticism raised by academic critics like Lindfors.

published outside South Africa. Short stories have been easiest to export, but in recent years ... three novels – one by Richard Rive (*Emergency*, London, 1964) and two by Alex la Guma (*A Walk in the Night*, Ibadan, 1962; *And a Threefold Cord*, Berlin, 1964) have appeared. This too has been a literature of protest. (10)

Lindfors continues in this article to account for the very evident tone of protest and lack of experience on the part of South African writers in this period with the more protracted and demanding form of the novel:

Such literature [as he mentions above] is difficult to write well. The author must be able to view his subject with sufficient detachment and emotional balance to write objectively. He must be able to control the passionate intensity of his own feelings and to coolly translate these feelings into a work of art which will move other people. If his tone is too shrill or his message too obtrusive, his writing will deteriorate into sheer propaganda. In South Africa it has been hard for non-white writers to achieve discipline, detachment and emotional balance in their writing. It has been hard for them to avoid writing propaganda. (11)

With these comments as preface, Lindfors goes on to highlight the strengths and more evident weaknesses he finds in *Emergency*, the work of a “promising” novelist (15). He finds that “Rive very adroitly manipulates prose rhythms and leit motifs [sic] to achieve a stream of consciousness effect” (12) and also that many scenes “display Rive’s sensitive control of space” by controlling and varying sentence length. (12) These strengths Lindfors sees as the hallmarks of the good short story but adds that Rive is not able to make these techniques “serve a larger purpose” (12) as is demanded in a novel. In short, he summarises his critique of the novel by resorting, quite playfully considering Rive’s

own pride at his youthful athletic prowess as a hurdler, to a running metaphor – he accuses Rive of “shortwindedness”, of being “a good performer in short dashes but he can’t run long distances very well” (12). The other weakness he identifies is the way flashback in the novel, used to give detailed biographical sketches of Andrew’s past, “is unnecessary for it does not help us to understand [Andrew] Dreyer’s thoughts, impulses or actions on the three critical days in his life.” “Dreyer,” Lindfors continues, “remains a sketch, a figure without depth or dimension who would be more at home as the hero of a short story” (12).

Lindfors’s contextualised criticism is very much echoed in the eighties by Barnett (1983) who perhaps sums up what many other critical commentators of the decade, Piniel Shava (1989) for example, think of the novel:

All the ingredients for a deep study of the options of a man under pressure in crisis have been assembled in *Emergency*, but Rive’s novel is disappointing in that he fails to dramatise these ideas credibly. The events and characters remain flat on paper. The reader never really becomes involved in Andrew’s dilemma.

(130)

In addition, Barnett makes a very valid criticism of Dreyer, and one that is perhaps a reflection of Rive’s own at times egocentric behaviour, when she notices that “Andrew seems to have little regard for those close to him” (131) by pointing to the way *he* decides what is best for his girlfriend Ruth at the end of the novel, as well as not being empathetic to the plight of his brother-in-law and his landlady. Like Lindfors, Barnett finds La

Guma's characters display more fullness, more humanity and more understanding towards others than those in Rive's novel.

It is Lee though who comes closest to recognising the political vision that underpins the novel and the writer's own stated concern with "the social and political emergence of the main character" (*Writing Black* 19). Lee, agreeing that the work has its weaknesses as a novel, nevertheless identifies its political thrust:

The novel, *Emergency*, is unsubtle in its representation of prominent political tendencies within the national liberation movement in the late fifties and early sixties in Cape Town. Abe Hanslo and Justin Bailey, two central characters who grow up with the main character, Andrew Dreyer, are used in the novel to dramatise the ideological tension and dialogue between the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) and the Congress movement, respectively. (104)

Abe and Justin, I would argue, though, represent the tensions between the different ideological and pragmatic approaches of the NEUM and the Congress movement at the time of the 1960 Sharpeville crisis. In addition, these two characters represent polar opposites in the mind of Rive himself as he was testing the strengths and limitations of his NEUM-based ideas of struggle and non-racialism at a time of acute social crisis. I conjecture that Rive was compelled by the crisis to rethink the very basis of his political being, that is, his belief in non-racialism and the need to conduct day-to-day struggles on the basis of certain principles as articulated by Abe in the novel. The scene at Braam's flat, where Abe and Justin pit their views against each other about whether or not to

intervene in the mass struggle unleashed by the PAC, is perhaps the most sustained exchange between these two contesting positions:

[Abe] continued addressing Justin.

“The people must at the very start be made to recognize the indivisibility of oppression. They must look upon themselves not as African, Coloureds, Indians or whites, but as a people seeking to abolish national oppression. Racialism cannot be fought with racialism, or with localised stunts.”

“Hear! Hear! said Braam contemptuously.

“That’s all very well,” Justin replied impatiently, “but where does it get us? Where do we go from there? Do we sit on our backsides discussing the finer points of political theories?” (Collier edition 163)

It is significant that the views expressed by Abe are in their most dogmatic form at times, using left-wing political catch-phrases that marked the NEUM hesitancy about getting involved in mass struggle. Justin’s viewpoints are, however, far less coherent and persuasive and rely on sentiment and activist cliché, but show a concern with and commitment to the struggling people that the intellectual position of Abe lacks. One reason Rive wrote the novel, I speculate, was to think through these contending ideas and connected practices. While Andrew continually questions Abe’s thinking by playing it off against the outlook of Justin (which must have held allure for Rive who wanted to *do* something), he concedes, by the end of the novel, the validity of Abe’s views but demonstrates a completely independent line of action by refusing to go into exile with Abe:

“You know, Abe, all my life I’ve been running away. I ran away from District Six. I ran away the night my mother died. I ran away from Miriam’s place. I’ve been running away from the Special Branch. Now I am hiding in Lotus River, like any common criminal. Maybe I’ve been running away from myself. But that’s all over now. I am determined to stay. And I don’t know why you had to deliver a sermon on non-racialism to me. I agree and always have with most of the things you say. But I still retain my right not to give up the fight against every form of racialism and therefore I shall remain here, not run away to Basutoland or Europe. I shall fight with all the others whenever and wherever I can identify myself with them. If there is another march in Cape Town I shall be in it. I want to live my own life.” (Collier edition 230)

Andrew remains in Cape Town, finally returning with his white lover Ruth to her flat. Perhaps Rive, like Andrew, was asserting that the best contribution he could make was to remain and not run. By doing so he chose to engage and challenge racial oppression head on and he would do this not according to the dictates of any organisation or ideology, but as his own conscience and will dictated. As would be the case for the rest of his life, Rive’s text confirms for himself and others that he would remain and not leave, and he would be committed to the struggle against apartheid – as a teacher, a writer and a sportsman, but never as the member of a political party.

For my particular interests in Rive’s life, two other aspects of *Emergency* are of note. The first is the absence in the novel of the protagonist as a *writer*. It is interesting that such a markedly autobiographical novel should not link Andrew to the world of writing that

Rive was engaged in at the time. Perhaps adding that particular dimension would have overburdened a novel that is already so clearly filled with the polemics of struggle and protest, and, through sustained flashbacks, the rites of passage of the young Andrew. Like *'Buckingham Palace'*, *District Six*, the novel is both a protest against racial tyranny and also a recreation by Rive of his life of boyhood and youth. In *Emergency*, classical music represents the creative world that provides a refuge for Andrew and is an antidote to the ugliness and pain in his life. Andrew continually listens to records of Smetana, Beethoven, Rachmaninov, Mendelssohn and other well-known composers. These iconic names of Western and Eastern European culture occur together with numerous instances in the novel where Andrew lists book titles by and quotations from the greats of the Western canon like Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, Tolstoy, Hardy, Hobbes and Locke. These claims, in Andrew's eyes and clearly in Rive's eyes too, intimate a familiarity with Western culture that demonstrates Andrew's / Rive's cosmopolitanism. This alignment with the West is in direct contrast to the barbarism of the white *Herrenvolk* and their attempts to ghettoise, tribalise and isolate the non-whites. These references though, repeated on numerous occasions throughout the book, begin to rankle and frustrate the reader, making one think of Andrew at times as a pompous and pretentious Europhilic pedant – in short, a prig; a view some people had of Rive the man. This view, while not without some justification, ignores the commitment of both the fictional character and the author to the local and the African, to the struggles, the literature and a new future of his country and continent. It also misses his conscious and intuitive sense of parody, often evident in his humour and his Shavian wit. This is not the case though with these repetitions in *Emergency*, which are meant to be taken seriously.

The relationship in *Emergency* between Andrew and Ruth primarily serves to mark the transgressive nature of their “interracial” love, exposing the ludicrous anti-human philosophy of the apartheid state which forbade love between white and black. The partnership is living evidence of Andrew’s non-racialism. It is interesting that for Andrew it seems easier to have contact with the white world in this manner, but the world of the African remains completely alien. This reflects the fact that even though the position of the so-called coloured was an inferior one like that of the African, there was more social contact between white and coloured than between coloured and black, especially in the Cape circles of writers and radical intellectuals.

The odds were clearly stacked against the relationship between Ruth and Andrew. The Immorality Act criminalised sexual relations between white and non-white, and the hostility to such affairs displayed by Andrew’s landlady, Mrs Carollissen, shows that she has adopted such racialised assumptions about human relations. By the end of the novel, even though Andrew chooses not to run off with Abe into exile but instead to return with Ruth to her flat, we know their relationship has no hope of surviving under the circumstances. The sequel, *Emergency Continued*, confirms that the relationship soon succumbs to the anti-social pressures and Andrew and Ruth never see each other again. Andrew is, as Barnett notes, a frustratingly egocentric character who seems to dictate the terms of the relationship and relate to Ruth in rather unfeeling ways. Ruth in turn remains a one-dimensional woman defined by her selfless love for Andrew. The relationship between Justin and his wife Florence is also dysfunctional because of his total

commitment to the struggle which leaves her feeling abandoned and betrayed. Andrew's sister, Miriam, is extremely unhappy in her marriage to Kenneth, who in his drunken state beats her and brings home prostitutes to their bedroom. Mrs Carollissen dominates her very passive husband, and Andrew's principal and his wife, with whom he briefly takes refuge, are a conventional, religious and wooden couple. Andrew's mother raises her children without a father. As with almost all heterosexual and conventional familial relationships in Rive's fiction, the ones in *Emergency* are tenuous, fraught, violent or doomed to failure.

Even when they are together, the love, even physical love, between Andrew and Ruth seems awkward and forced, with Rive using far too obvious cinematic-type metonymy, cuts and music to symbolise their passion and repetitively describing them as engaging "hungrily" with each other in the one love scene between them:

The Concerto moved into its beautiful second movement. He could hear her breath coming in short, quick pants.

"Ruth?"

"Yes, Andy?"

"They kissed hungrily."

"I know."

Passion overcame him, as he felt her hanging on to him. Hungrily he sought her. Days with Miriam and little boys with hymn-books. And Rachmaninov. *Vltava*? No, Rachmaninov. Rhapsody on a theme. A nocturne movement. A long coda. Beautiful. Hysterically beautiful. (Collier edition 85)

Interestingly, what I think is the only successfully captured scene depicting sensuousness and sex in any of Rive's fiction is the one in this novel between Braam and a prostitute he has brought home to his flat. Both are drunk. Rive conveys the desperation of the lust with a remarkably convincing build-up and frank and disturbing realism uncluttered by technical artifice:

They drank for a long time. She was becoming more drunk and Braam found the longing raging inside him. There were two open sores on her leg, but that didn't matter.

“Too much light?”

“Yes, too much light.”

He switched off and then blew out the lantern. He lay back on the sleeping-bag, pulling her next to him. She felt warm and sweaty.

“You want me?”

“Yes,” he said hoarsely, feeling for her clothes. The room became uncomfortably hot and he perspired profusely. Afterwards, when he lay back exhausted and dissipated, a feeling of revulsion came over him. Now that it was all over he wanted to get rid of her but she was snoring gently next to him. Braam turned away from her in disgust. (Collier edition 183)

It seems that when Rive describes this less conventional or illicit sex, he is able to construct it successfully in original and striking prose.

The relationship with Mrs Carollissen's young son, Eldred, who is also a student in Andrew's class at his school, carries very fleeting, homoerotic encoding in the way the

boy is described by the narrator and the way he relates to Andrew. The initial meeting is described as follows: “There was a boy in one of his Junior Certificate classes he had always noticed. Good-looking with greenish-grey eyes. Intelligent as well” (138).

Through Eldred, Andrew later comes to board with the Carollissen family and then he further describes Eldred as

a healthy, bronzed, solidly built Matriculation student at Steenberg High – in Andrew’s class in fact. ... At sixteen he worshipped his teacher, and Andrew in turn found him the only approachable member of the Carollissen household. (18)

When police raid Andrew’s room at the Carollissens, Eldred, to his mother’s horror, loyally and courageously defends his teacher, refusing to tell the policemen where Andrew is. Andrew is forced to leave the Carollissen house because of pressure from Mrs Carollissen who in turn is pressured by the police. On leaving, he describes Eldred again:

He had never really been aware of the extent of the youngster’s attachment to him. True, Eldred had always been around. ... Now that Andrew was leaving it was different. He would miss the boy’s inane questions, over-enthusiasm, his physical presence. (208)

This reading of encoded homoerotic attraction of the older man for the young boy is confirmed by the portrayal of Eldred in the follow-up novel twenty-six years later. I will further discuss this queer reading of the novel in section 2.3.

Sixteen years after its publication, in an interview in 1980 with Chris van Wyk in the magazine *Wietie 2*, Rive reflects in a frank and unusually self-critical fashion about *Emergency*:

I'm not very happy speaking about 'Emergency' because I think it's dated and I'm hoping to have more stuff that will be far more relevant. Look, I think it was very relevant for its time and it might very well be relevant now, but there are other things to write about now. But I think a careful reading of 'Emergency' (and some critics have been able to spot this) is that it is basically a series of short stories with a particular character in common. And the reason for that is that I am essentially a short story writer, not a novelist. (10)

With the publication of his next novel '*Buckingham Palace*', *District Six* just six years later, Rive was to prove himself wrong in that his legacy would become that of both short story writer *and* novelist.

During this artistically productive yet politically and emotionally testing period of the early sixties, Ariefi and Hazel Manuel were given refuge at his newly rented flat, 2 Selous Court, Rosmead Avenue, Claremont. The Manuels remember Rive listening to a lot of music, particularly classical works, and that he had done so while writing a part of *Emergency*. Rive at the time wrote in longhand "in foolscap manuscript books with red taped spines and stiff black covers" (Wannenburgh 33).³ The Manuels also remark that they often sensed anger in Richard, and that he could at times be a lonely person. People reacted sharply to him, they say, either loving him or hating him, but always fearing his tongue. "When he was a younger man, he did not hesitate to tear someone apart, but when he liked you he was gentle and endearing."⁴ In one of his letters to Hughes in 1954,

³ The handwritten manuscript of *Emergency* is held by NELM.

⁴ Ariefi and Hazel Manuel. Personal interview.

Rive describes himself thus: “I am also extremely emotional, love arguments especially on political themes, verge on cynicism and [am] violently anti-social in certain respects” (30 July 1954).

In his memories of Rive, Wannenburg captures in astutely observed detail another dimension of Rive’s social life at the time – his cultivation of and being cultivated by liberal white circles:

As a consequence of winning a few local short story contests in the late fifties, Richard had been “discovered” by a host of well-meaning people on the fringes of the arts, and invitations were plentiful. Although he suspected that, no matter how pure the motives of those who invited him seemed to themselves, he was being paraded as a drawing-room curiosity, he generally accepted and took me along for moral support. I would hold my breath when someone in the company entered a danger zone in conversation and finally uttered the trigger words “coloured intellectual” or “coloured writer”, waiting for him to snort, “What’s that; can you eat it?” and leave them wondering what they had done wrong. And afterwards he would remark wryly that I, as a white, would have to wait longer to be “discovered”. (32)

Rive continually crossed the white-coloured and, less frequently perhaps, the coloured-black “race” barrier, despite the indignity or embarrassment it sometimes entailed.

Unlike most of his “coloured” friends, fellow writers, comrades or colleagues who did not cross these lines because it was frowned upon politically, or because it was too dangerous, or illegal, or because it was just too awkward and pointless, Rive persisted,

meeting some of his dearest friends and fellow writers in the process, forming a writing camaraderie in the Cape which Gordimer called, with undisguised envy, “a sort of colony along the coast” (“On the Murdered Writer”, 25). He always made the effort to look up or invite home writers from elsewhere in the country as well – colour was no consideration of course. Why was the crossing to the black side far less evident? Perhaps his drive to be a writer meant that to succeed the most important contacts were obviously white. Perhaps the contact was easier as the control of entry to black townships, more geographically isolated from other areas especially in the Cape, was strictly policed and in fact illegal without a permit. Perhaps having English as a common tongue was what facilitated coloured-white contact as opposed to coloured-black contact. Perhaps Rive’s middle-class and Western cosmopolitan aspirations made him look to those in South Africa who represented that world.

In 1963, Rive’s first collection of short stories, *African Songs*, was published by the East German-based publisher Seven Seas. The collection included several of the stories written in the late 1950s and early 1960s like “The Bench”, “Moon Over District Six”, “Rain”, “Willie Boy”, “African Song”, “No Room at Solitaire”, “Resurrection” and “Strike”. Also emerging in 1963 was *Quartet: New Voices from South Africa: Alex La Guma, James Matthews, Richard Rive, Alf Wannenburg*, edited by Rive. This collection of sixteen short stories was dedicated to Mphahlele: “For Zeke Mphahlele, in admiration and regard for his work for literature on the African continent in general, and [...] our country, South Africa, in particular.” The foreword was by Alan Paton and it was published by Crown in New York. It was republished in 1965 by Heinemann Educational

Books, London, unfortunately without the introduction (Raju and Dubbeld 10). The four writers in *Quartet* had been members of a literary discussion group based in Rondebosch, Cape Town, which Rive claims in his memoir he had started (18). Each writer had four stories in the collection. Alf Wannenburg recounts the meetings of the group of *Quartet* writers and Rive's role:

Back in the early sixties, during a brief period when Alex La Guma wasn't restricted by banning orders, Richard, Alex, James Matthews and I met occasionally over a gallon of Lieberstein to read and discuss the stories we later published in our *Quartet* collection. Richard ... was then the most widely published of the group, and, as he was five years older than I and "established", I considered him my mentor. I had known Alex longer, but he was little disposed to literary discourse, preferring to play his guitar and set up shot glasses and tumblers for proletarian friends, whereas Richard was, as he often joked, "grossly over-educated", and enjoyed nothing more than talking about books and writing.

(29)

The four stories by Rive in *Quartet* appeared in *African Songs* as well – "Strike", "Resurrection", "No Room at Solitaire" and "Rain". This insistent creative output and unflagging drive to be a writer, especially given the circumstances under which Rive had to work, led J.M. Coetzee to remark that "[a]s early as the 1960s Rive was regarded – everywhere but in South Africa – as among a vanguard of engaged writers" ("Writing Black" 72).

In the clearly autobiographical short story called "Strike", Rive's first story in *Quartet*,

the narrator describes the protagonist, Boston, who also happens to be a writer, in terms that capture an image of Rive as he probably saw himself at the time:

Boston spoke with a slightly affected accent that made people look at him twice in conversation, and wonder where he came from; it offended at first until one became used to it. His face was dark brown, with heavy, bushy eyebrows and a firm jaw. His hair was black and wavy. In Durban he could pass as an Indian, only his accent gave him away. He was soberly dressed except for a brown suede jacket that he hoped gave him a Bohemian touch. Just sufficient to indicate that he wrote short stories. He was in his late twenties, and just starting to put on weight (4-5).

This self-portrait is remarkable for the manner in which it depicts, with photographic accuracy, physical features of Rive at about thirty.⁵ Yet there is also present in the character description of Boston a fascinating idiosyncratic reflection on race and skin colour. The character is labelled “dark brown”, not the most accurate description of Rive’s complexion. Was this simply a fictional colouring of a protagonist? It seems more likely to be one of many indications of Rive’s own fraught relationship with his self-fashioning and its inextricable marker. He could not, or perhaps would not, see himself as “black”.

If one examines the photograph of Rive with Mphahlele on the Champs Élysées in 1963,

⁵ Boston is said to be in his late twenties in the story. If we assume that the story was written at least a year before publication it means Rive was about thirty-one at the time of composing this description. The setting of the story, on 27 May 1961, was just four days before of the declaration of South Africa as a republic on 31 May 1961. The story fictionalises a local response to a predominantly ANC call for a three day strike, the last day of which was to coincide with 31 May. The strike was a consequence of heightened political activity post-Sharpeville (1960) and in part called for a national convention (Lodge 232).

published in *Writing Black*, among the most striking features of the attractive young Rive are the markedly thick jet-black eyebrows, the prominent, sculpted jaw line and a head of full, wavy black hair parted on the left side and curls draped over the right end of the forehead. There are also the deep-set light-brown eyes and big, round nose sharp at the bridge. His full lips seem to mirror the shape of his eyebrows.

Concurrent with Rive's highly conscious and ideologically well-developed opposition to racism was a fraught subjectivity with regard to his own dark complexion. Rive was widely known to students at South Peninsula High School and at Hewat College of Education⁶ where he lectured, as "Chokka", an affectionate but nevertheless bigoted reference to Rive's very dark skin colour (the word "Tjokka" is Afrikaans for squid or cuttlefish and alludes to the creature's intense black secretion).⁷ Milton van Wyk, who came to know Rive and his work in the mid-seventies and eighties, says about this nickname:

[Rive] was also treated with contempt by some of his students, who resorted to calling him "Chokka", a corruption of chocolate because of his dark skin. This was a label which he totally abhorred. On the other hand he also enjoyed making fun of himself by saying: "I'm so black, I'm navy blue."⁸

It was however not a nickname anybody dared use to his face as there was an intuitive awareness of his sensitivity and also, possibly, users understood that the name, despite its

⁶ Hewat Training College changed its name to Hewat College of Education, probably when the institution was transferred from the Cape Education Department to the Coloured Affairs Department in 1963.

⁷ Craig Mackenzie, one of the external examiners of this thesis, suggests that this explanation of the etymology of the name is a dubious one.

⁸ Milton van Wyk. A written response to a personal interview.

affectionate or playfully deflationary connotations, carried derogatory or even racist overtones whether these be intended or unintended.

Rive refers to his complexion on a few occasions in his lengthy correspondence with Langston Hughes during their eleven-year-long friendship. Rive gives, in the initial letter in 1954, detailed portraits of himself. In this letter he describes his childhood and his experiences of racial prejudice, yet his only reference to his colouring is in the following ambiguous and euphemistic terms:

Some of the students I teach are very fair and can easily cross the Colour line. So they all trundled along and went to see a ‘White Only’ performance of ‘Julius Caesar’ while the lecturer (myself) who is a graduate in English Literature was unable to enter, because of his deep tan. (30 July 1954)

“Deep tan” implies a dark brown colouring or, because of the meaning of “tan”, a lighter coloured skin that has darkened in the sun. Rive could not, it seems, directly refer to himself as black or dark. While said in jest, the van Wyk quotation above belies a truth – it turns his blackness into another colour, navy blue. Elsewhere in the correspondence with Hughes, Rive describes himself as having “Aryan features” (a term he undoubtedly knew was fraught with racist overtones of whiteness and Nazism), but the self-fashioning in these terms seems to reflect a desire *not* to be black in the mind of the young Rive.

Almost twenty years later, Rive entitles his memoir *Writing Black*. The title is an accurate polemical statement of Rive’s political allegiances, and possibly concomitantly an astute marketing strategy, for Black Consciousness had become a popular philosophy and

commodity by the time Rive's memoir was published. The title also reflects an assertiveness about being "Black", not only as literal colouring, but primarily as proclamation of a positive and resistant identity in the face of "the single most important theme in my life: constitutionalised racism" (Rive, qtd. in Bowman). "Black" has now become a positive, political signifier inspired by Fanonism and the confidence that came to the oppressed with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement in America and its refraction in South Africa, the Black Consciousness Movement of the late sixties and early / mid-seventies. It is for Rive what Lee accurately calls "a strategic blackness" (12).

Concurrent with this Africanist rhetoric one continued to hear Rive's very pronounced hallmark Oxbridge (to the South African ear at least) accent, deliberately cultivated by him even before he spent time at Oxford completing his PhD on Olive Schreiner. He in fact asserts this (Western) cosmopolitanism as a very conscious antidote to racialised and ghettoised "coloured" identity imposed by Apartheid when he proclaims in *Writing Black*:

I, personally, am able to empathise with no world other than that of Western European sophistication and unsophistication. I have never had the opportunity to identify, like Langston Hughes in *The Weary Blues*, with

The low beating of the tom-toms,

The slow beating of the tom-toms...

I cannot be what the propounders of negritude or the African Personality cult would have me be. I am Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. I am Langa, Chatsworth and Bonteheuwel. I am discussion, argument and debate. I cannot

recognise palm-fronds and nights filled with the throb of the primitive. I am buses, trains and taxis. I am prejudice, bigotry and discrimination. I am urban South Africa. (23)

It's as if here Rive is defiantly saying, you see me and pigeonhole me as a black man, inferior, primitive, but I defy you – I am not your “black”; I am cultured, cosmopolitan, and, as the accent would testify, have the best education in the world. Rive's manner of speaking is another reflection of his paradoxical self-construction. Lee describes this contradiction evident in Rive in the following very perceptive terms. He asserts that while on one level “the literary and cultural lineage of the dandy appealed to Rive's elitism and intellectual background”, on another he sees that

Rive's country gentleman image was also a self-indulgence which amused him, and manifested his sense of self-irony. Rive's sartorial and verbal style recalled the indolence, languor and sophistication of the Victorian dandy and the clubbiness and snobbery of his cricket-loving, cravat-wearing colonial counterpart. As such, Rive's implication in this identity subverted apartheid notions of black South Africans as willing manual labourers and undermined the central apartheid tenet that black South Africans were culturally incommensurable with Western (white) civilisation. (11)

Recent critical works on Rive, like that of Farred and of Lewis, raise the question of articulation of identity in Rive's work, focussing especially on the contradictions between Rive's more consciously held notions on race and nation, and meanings discernible in the fabric of both fictional and non-fictional work. Lewis, in a most insightful analysis of

how Rive constructs a set of identities in his memoir *Writing Black*, asserts that the tension in the memoir “is between a univocal political persona and facets of self that are intricately entangled in racial discourse” (137). She elaborates this position as follows:

Rive’s autobiography, fiction and non-fictional writings frequently condemn ‘Coloured’ as an official category and any expression of coloured self-consciousness as evidence of false and imposed identity. It will be argued here that despite this Rive directly and obliquely engages with the entrenched myth-making surrounding an official label in ways that indicate an insistent absorption with areas that his conscious disavowals appear to resolve. (135)

Like Lewis, I am arguing that, even accepting the inescapable presence of colour-encoded racial markers in the context of South Africa after the assumption of power by the National Party in 1948, Rive seems to have internalised contradictory notions of self that at one and the same time proclaim *and* deny particular identity positions. Lewis concludes that “Rive writes a hybridized identity that not only responds to ‘racial hybridity’, but also charts multiple subject positions and unstable subjectivities” (146). The narrative in Rive’s memoir, recalled and examined below, reveals these multiple overt and oblique articulations of self.

Rive’s 1963 publications secured him status as a significant South African writer both within the country and internationally. From December 1962 to September 1963, he travelled up the coast of Southern Africa by boat and then through Africa on to Southern Europe and finally to London, funded by a Farfield Foundation Fellowship secured for

him by Mphahlele. Mphahlele had decided to leave South Africa in 1957,⁹ and in 1963 was director of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Paris (*Writing Black* 19). Rive mentions in his memoir that this Congress is “an American-based organisation ... [whose] purpose was to combat the cultural inroads of communism, but no-one in the organisation seemed to take that aspect seriously” (*Writing Black* 71). Here Rive skims over a controversy of which he must have been aware, as suggested in his euphemistic phrasing – the Congress was in fact funded by the Central Intelligence Agency as a way of soliciting pro-Western sympathy from writers in Anglophone Africa, who were perceived to be more radically critical of the West than their assimilated Francophone counterparts. Rive took his cue for a strategic involvement with the Congress from Mphahlele himself, rather than from his political associates in the NEUM, who would have suggested he refuse such collaboration. Rive would continue to find himself in such “compromising” positions at various junctures and his decisions seemed to be guided by his self-assertion as a writer independent of any political line, rather than as a member of the NEUM to which he was nevertheless very closely aligned. In deciding to accept the funding, he risked being seen as a CIA spy, and being ostracised by more radical friends at home. This perhaps accounts for the silent treatment he got from some of the writers in exile, like Todd Matshikiza, whom he met up with on this trip abroad.

The first half of *Writing Black* gives detailed descriptions of his encounters with people and places on this trip. I discuss the point of this litany of meetings and plethora of names

⁹ Rive claims in his memoir (19) that Mphahlele was refused a passport and had to leave on an exit permit preventing him from ever returning. David Attwell however claims in *Rewriting Modernity* that Mphahlele left on an ordinary passport, not an exit visa, after much internal wrangling between the Native Commissioner, the Departments of Native Affairs, Internal Affairs and the police in Pretoria (114-115).

later in this section. Rive's first port of call on his ten-month trip was Durban, from where he travelled inland to meet Alan Paton at his Kloof home. His main purpose was to secure Paton's introduction to the manuscript *Quartet*. Paton, according to Wannenburg,¹⁰ came to see this visit in retrospect as pure opportunism on Rive's part, as Rive's real views on Paton included hostility to the liberal politics of the world-famous author. What he thought of Paton is clear from correspondence with Hughes in which Paton is discussed. When Hughes writes to Rive in 1954, he mentions in very appreciative and sympathetic terms his view of Paton and his work: "[t]he books of Alan Patton [sic] and Nadine Gordimer, among others, have been well received here." Hughes in fact had just met Paton, who was on a trip to the States in May 1954, "at a big colored party...[h]e spoke most effectively."¹¹ Rive responds in his next letter to Hughes expressing his ardent view of Paton as "extremely unpopular with the non-Europeans. He represents a school of thought accepting white trusteeship where all men are equal (but some more equal than others)."¹² His memoir also depicts the meeting as iconic of the meeting of two different schools of thought in South African literature:

He represented the high point of Liberal Writing in South Africa. I was

¹⁰ In "Memories of Richard" Wannenburg says he accompanied Rive on this visit and describes it and Rive's motive as follows:

We were duly ushered into the presence of the great man in the rondavel he used as his study. There we spoke for a while before Mrs Paton appeared with the typescript of the introduction – "Four Splendid Voices" – which Mr P perused, signed and handed to us. In parting he suggested we go to a performance of *Sponono*, a stage version of one of his short stories. ... On the way back to our lodgings Richard, mindful of the Liberal school of writing that Paton represented and the nascent Protest school of which he was the founder, said something unflattering about *Sponono* that unintentionally, but perhaps revealingly, gave the impression that he had been purely opportunistic in asking Paton to write the introduction. This appears to have got back to Paton, for some years later, when Richard asked him to contribute a short story to an anthology he was compiling, Paton replied through an intermediary that he didn't think that Mr Rive would be interested in anything he had written. (35)

¹¹ Letter from Hughes to Abrahams dated 30 May 1954.

¹² Letter from Rive to Hughes dated 30 July 1954.

representative of the nascent Protest School. Liberal Writing may be loosely defined as writing mostly by Whites about Blacks to move Whites out of their socio-political complacency Protest Writing on the other hand is written mostly by Blacks articulating their position to a White readership they feel can effect change. Sol Plaatje and Peter Abrahams were amongst its progenitors.

(*Writing Black* 21)

That Rive and the other *Quartet* writers had agreed to have Paton do the introduction to their publication was in fact probably a mix of qualified admiration for the man's work and opportunism – he carried weight in the international literary world.

The African leg of Rive's journey took him through East Africa, visiting Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt. That Rive chose to visit this array of African countries at a time when travel to and through them could be arduous is testimony to his commitment to his notion of himself as an "African writer". However, as I will demonstrate later with the aid of Wannenburg's observations, the real imaginative heartland for Rive was not Africa, but Europe. In Mozambique he was visited by Luis Bernado Honwana, who showed Rive his manuscript of his short story in Portuguese called "We Killed Mangy Dog". Dorothy Guedes, with whom he was staying, translated it for him from the Portuguese. Rive liked it and arranged for a translation of the story to be included in his soon-to-be-published *Modern African Prose*. In Uganda he met Gerald Moore, African literature scholar, as well as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, then known as James Ngugi, at Makerere University. He remembers Ngũgĩ for "the intensity with which he approached his work" (*Writing Black* 38).

After travelling to Ethiopia, Egypt, Greece, Italy and Switzerland, he arrived in Paris and stayed with Mphahlele and his family at their home on Boulevard St Michel. Mphahlele read Rive's manuscript of his novel *Emergency*. Rive must have been proud to share this manuscript with his mentor and no doubt took seriously what criticisms Mphahlele had of the work. In Paris he met up again with his writer / artist friends from Cape Town, Peter Clarke and Breyten Breytenbach. Breytenbach took him to meet the famous South African painter living in exile in Paris, Gerard Sekoto. Rive's critical comments on Sekoto and his work reflect perhaps Rive's own fear of breaking with his homeland and going into exile, excising the very source of his creativity:

His eyes seemed vague and lost but would suddenly brighten intensely when a chord of recognition was struck. He painted Africa from memory, but it was a romanticised, coffee-table memory. He had been away far too long. He had become far more French than African To me he epitomised the effects of prolonged divorcement from one's subject matter. (*Writing Black* 73)

With these friends in Paris he celebrated, in early 1963, the publication of his very first book, *African Songs*. A party ensued and the gathering of exiles and locals celebrated in a fashion typical of South African writers' circles of the time – with laughter, wine, song and dance; the achievement of an individual talent is a milestone for the group as well. He then travelled to London with Peter Clarke and spent a few days at the Regent's Park home of one-time editor of *Drum*, Sylvester Stein, and later moved into a hired room further down Regent's Park Road in a house in which Todd Matshikiza was also living

with his family. That Matshikiza gave both him and Clarke the cold shoulder led Rive to think about the perceptions of differences that he had been resisting – differences between “coloured” and black, between those forced into exile and those allowed to travel on valid passports. There are a few such sincere and awkward moments of self-questioning in the memoir that reveal Rive’s capacity to empathise with the views of others contrary to his own, and which offset the preponderance of self-assured assertions about politics and people he is prone to making. Another possible reason, as mentioned, could be due to Matshikiza’s resentment of Rive accepting the Fairfield Foundation Fellowship.

At the African Transcription Centre in Dover Street, a meeting place for artists, he met Nigerian writers John Pepper Clark, Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe. Of Achebe he remarked that he was “gentle, quiet, unassuming [...] one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century” (*Writing Black* 82). Rive was approached by Keith Sambrook of the recently initiated Heinemann’s African Writers series and asked to compile an anthology of African prose, leading to his editing *Modern African Prose*. Gray sums up the importance of this compilation in its day and, as Rive clearly grasped, for many decades thereafter:

Modern African Prose [was] the first anthology to assemble a continent-wide English selection including Chinua Achebe, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Cyprian Ekwenzi, Amos Tutuola and Ngugi wa Thiong’o. In parts of independent Africa this title became the educational setwork to insert after *Julius Caesar* and the “Immortality Ode.” Richard later refused to update and revise it, for it did have its

historic position in the rise of African Literature and is still used as is. Heady and optimistic, assertively forward-looking, as were Richard's own stories – impressionist slivers of the poor life, singing of dignity and scenting freedom. (162)

He also met two South African writers whom he admired very much, William Plomer and Dan Jacobson:

Both were iconoclasts impatient of shibboleths. Both put their society under a searching microscope Whereas Jacobson relied on nuances and innuendo, Plomer used rapier thrusts which went straight to their target. Both in no uncertain terms exposed the sham that is still often passed off as the traditional South African way of life. (*Writing Black* 83)

While in London, Rive also received the news that Faber and Faber had agreed to publish his novel *Emergency* and Wannenburg wrote to him that Crown Publishers in New York would publish *Quartet*. This plenitude of success coming the way of the thirty-three-year old writer led him to declare in a somewhat quaint idiom he was fond of: “[t]here was a spring in my step and birds whistled happily over the way in Regent’s Park” (*Writing Black* 84).

As the above summary indicates, the trip in 1962 / 1963 was filled with numerous encounters with writers, artists, publishers, friends and strangers, demonstrating Rive’s zest for engaging with people and his compulsion to immerse himself into the world of writing and African writers in particular. The proliferation of names mentioned while on

this trip, and on three subsequent ones over the next seventeen years, seems initially to irritate J.M. Coetzee in his review of *Writing Black*, but on reflection he accounts for it in an interesting and illuminating way:

One wonders what all these chance brief acquaintances are doing in the story of Rive's life till one gets the point: that the sections of *Writing Black* set outside of South Africa are intended to provide testimony of how it is possible for a South African to interact on perfectly ordinary terms with perfectly ordinary and even dull people in societies not based on racial divisions. ("*Writing Black*" 71)

There is however an additional way of reading the naming in the book – reading it as name-dropping. Rive, the memoir signals to the reader encountering this litany of names, is by association clearly a member of the panoply of greats. This mode of self-construction, while not untrue (Rive had by then established himself as a major South African writer), nevertheless reflects the strong self-inflation that was a characteristic of Rive. The narrative in the memoir is a performance of his stature as writer. Athol Fugard, jokingly but not without a note of seriousness, remarked to Rive when he first met the young writer in the late 1950s, "With your arrogance and self-assurance I'll make an actor out of you" (*Writing Black* 73).

Another, less self-absorbed side emerges in the memoir as well. There are incidents which reveal a side which is quite the opposite – a selfless and genuinely caring man. In Kenya he attended a party with all social classes of people and ended up holding forth in his pompous way in his Oxbridge accent to three working-class British soldiers. They

told him that they did not understand the “fancy words” he was using, and that he sounded like “a bleeding BBC announcer” (*Writing Black* 35). He realised he had been engaging in a monologue rather than making conversation and then began to ask real questions and listen to the men talk about their lives. In the memoir he clearly empathised with their marginalisation in Kenya, with their loneliness and even understood their dislike of the “wogs”. In another incident when he entered Sudan, Rive assisted a young South African political refugee who was penniless and, despite finding him a shady character, put him up and helped him. It was often young, marginalised men, much like himself in his family circle as a teenager in District Six, whom he sought out and engaged with in this way. It also happened to be the profile of the kind of man to whom he was sometimes sexually attracted.

Other occasions in the memoir, when Rive was less conscious of himself as subject, were when he became enthralled by particular characters he was describing, ironically because they seemed to reflect an aspect of himself (which he never seemed consciously to notice). His meeting in London with the Nigerian writer Christopher Okigbo was one such incident. Rive’s descriptions of Okigbo are vivid and touching; Rive was clearly moved at the untimely death in 1967 of Okigbo, who fought on the side of the Biafran separatists. But perhaps it was his flattering claims to Rive that they were the two younger African writers “destined to rescue African literature” (representing perhaps the ideal legacy Rive would dream of as his contribution to the world of letters) as well as his evident affection for Rive, that endeared him to Rive (*Writing Black* 81). Interestingly enough, he also labelled Okigbo “a sartorial dandy” (*Writing Black* 81) – clearly the two

were kindred spirits.

While in London he visited and stayed over at the homes of various friends who had emigrated to Britain from South Africa – Albert Adams, Cosmo Pieterse, and Gilbert and Ursula Reines. The Reines were themselves struggling to adapt to a new life and found Rive at times demanding and overbearing. According to Ursula Reines, he told rather than asked her to type out the whole manuscript of *Modern African Prose* which he was preparing for publication. Rive did however recognize their contribution in his acknowledgements in the book. Gilbert Reines remembers Rive’s boundless energy at the time and that “he couldn’t sit still for five minutes ... his company was always quite stressful in a way, and you were always sort of saying ‘when is he going?’ ... He had his catch phrases [and] he used to quote the same things at me often!” (57).

The highlight of his stay in London was his first meeting with Langston Hughes. It represented the most important meeting on the ten month trip abroad. Rive called Hughes “[t]he man who had created *Simple*, the Shakespeare of Harlem, the greatest living Black writer in the world” (*Writing Black* 102). He revealed his awe and excitement at the prospect of the meeting: “I ... dressed in my only suit, put on my best necktie and made my way down to the Dover Street Hotel” (*Writing Black* 102). He was appalled at the casual way the receptionist at Brown’s Hotel in Mayfair responded to his request to see if Mister Hughes was in: “She made it sound so matter of fact, as if they regularly had one of the greatest writers in the world staying over. I felt her attitude was almost irreligious” (*Writing Black* 102). Hughes was having a shower but asked Rive to come up to the

room. The description of what follows is a fascinating mixture of 1950's movie script, farce, bathos and vivid character portrayal:

I knocked. I could hear a shower running somewhere inside. I knocked louder, then heard a voice shouting something. I opened the door and entered. The shower was switched off for a moment.

“That you, Dick?” said a voice in an unmistakably broad American accent.

“I am Richard Rive.”

“Glad to meet you, Dick. Make yourself comfortable and have a scotch. Be with you in a second.”

I made myself as comfortable as possible under the circumstances, poured a stiff whiskey, downed it in one gulp, poured another and sat nervously on the edge of my chair. What a dreadful anticlimax if I were to see this great writer coming out from under a shower. He would be wet and drying his paunch with a towel. He might even have ingrown toenails. I speculated that he would look like any ‘Coloured’ uncle from District Six. When he did appear in dressing-gown and slippers, I found him pleasantly roundfaced and with close-cropped curly hair, and he goggled owl-eyed through heavy-rimmed spectacles. He chainsmoked and talked all the time with a cigarette dangling from his lips. (*Writing Black* 103)

The two went off to a performance of *Black Nativity*, a musical written by Hughes, at the Strand Theatre in Aldwych. The manner in which the famous writer courted attention at the theatre – to the extent of blowing kisses at the actress as she was about to sing, causing her to stop the show and shout “Lang” – fascinated Rive and is reminiscent of his

own self-indulgent behaviour twenty-six years later at the time ‘*Buckingham Place*’, *District Six* was being rehearsed at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town. Richard would continually refer to “my play” and to himself as “a true Thespian.”¹³ Hughes, as a black writer, was clearly the strongest role-model to the younger Rive, who dedicated his first book, *African Songs*, to Langston Hughes, taking the cue for his title from Hughes’ poem “The Weary Blues”:

Ah, we should have a land of joy,
Of love and joy and wine and song,
And not this land where joy is wrong.

On his return to the Cape, in September 1963, at the relatively early age of thirty three, Richard Rive had clearly arrived as a writer locally and internationally, but in a country now once again controlled with an iron fist by a white supremacist regime where both his books had been banned – *African Songs* while he was travelling abroad and *Emergency* soon after he arrived back. Later, in 1965, *Quartet* was also banned. With his wry sense of humour, he claims in his memoir, “I was now part of a small élite of South African writers not allowed to read their own works in case they became influenced by them” (109). On the verge of returning home from his trip abroad, he had, as he says, “serious doubts about the wisdom of returning” (*Writing Black* 108). It is clear that he grappled with the dilemma – to stay in London would mean freedom from all he had fought against; to return meant facing a harrowing, uncertain and unsafe future. He finally chose not to stay in London where he felt he could “avoid all this” (*Writing Black* 108) but to return to what was his home. He does not say what swung the balance, but does speak of

¹³ This is from my own memory of Richard’s behaviour at the time.

an intense longing for home that took hold of him towards the end of his long and frenetic trip abroad:

I longed once again to hear the traffic faintly roaring past my flat on Rosmead Avenue. I longed to dive into the cold water outside Gif Kommetjie and prickle the fleshy lace-edge of abalone between the rocks. I longed to climb along Waterfall Buttress under dark caves wet with dripping ferns. I wanted to share the hilarity of interschool athletics with rosettes, caps and warcries. I wanted to sit at the quiet of my desk in the very early morning, working away at my writing.

(Writing Black 107)

The yearning for the landscape and rituals of home, and in particular his strong sense of obligation and self-fulfilment, even exhilaration, that attended his work in education and sport were what seemed to draw him back. But perhaps also, as his reflections on Sekoto's work implied, he felt that the pain of home was simultaneously the very source of his creative life. And, in addition perhaps, it was his sense of commitment to a writing life and struggle back in South Africa. Or perhaps, as possibly the least articulated reason, he wanted to return to the place where he had left behind a young man to whom he had grown furtively and uncontrollably attached – to the land where he knew he had found ways of slaking his innermost desires. In a later section in this study I discuss the likelihood that this particular young man was a student of his called Ian Rutgers.

Rive had arrived home to a country in which the full repressive force of the post-Sharpeville regime was pervasive. The 1960s were dark times for the disenfranchised majority and its writers, most of whom had gone into forced or self-exile. Rive and James

Matthews were amongst the few remaining *Drum* writers in South Africa. Can Themba sought refuge as a school teacher in Swaziland. The two years that followed his arrival back home Rive describes as a time when “not much happened, but some of the things which did occur were scarring and bitter” (*Writing Black* 109). There were many acquaintances, for example, who cut ties with Rive on his return as he was perceived to be a marked and dangerous man whose books had been banned by officialdom.

In July 1965 two traumatic events, which deeply unsettled Rive, were symptomatic of these dark times in the country – Ingrid Jonker drowned herself in the sea off Green Point and Nat Nakasa threw himself off a New York skyscraper. Ariefi and Hazel Manuel remember him being extremely upset, especially at the death of Jonker. On his return from his trip abroad Rive had resumed his close friendship with her. The intensity of feeling which he had found in her from the start of their friendship continued to strike him: “she was always strange, sometimes withdrawn, often impulsive, and always unpredictable” (*Writing Black* 112). Like other writers who describe Jonker in Jan Rabie’s *In Memoriam Ingrid Jonker* (1966), Rive sensed her to be a prescient, child-like medium embodying the intense, irreconcilable and tragic conflicts that were to wrack the country in the late fifties and sixties. Rive was “one of the few people to see her off on the Union Castle liner” (*Writing Black* 112) when she left on a short trip to England after winning a major literary award in 1963. At her funeral, he remembers when she gave him a copy of her collection of poems, *Ontvlugting*, inscribed with the words “‘*Vir Richard – sonder die liefde is die lewe nutteloos.*’ Without love life is worthless” (*Writing Black* 112). Perhaps Jonker was one of the very few to impel him to reflect on the nature of love

or lovelessness in his own life.

The week before he was to depart for his 1962/3 trip abroad, he received an unexpected visit at his flat in Selous Court, Claremont, from Nat Nakasa. He had heard of the writer but had never met him before: “[T]here stood Nat, case in hand, a trifle dumpy and stuttering with shyness at what he felt was an intrusion. ... He had come from Johannesburg for a week and hoped to find accommodation with me” (*Writing Black* 113). Nakasa had also come to see if Rive were interested in the magazine he was about to launch called *The Classic*. Rive and Nakasa kept up “an enthusiastic correspondence” during Rive’s prolonged absence and after his return (*Writing Black* 113). Nakasa in turn had been refused a passport to take up a fellowship in journalism at Harvard and was then forced to leave on an exit permit, preventing him from ever returning to his country. Nakasa’s letters to him, Rive observes, had become “more and more pessimistic and more despondent” (*Writing Black* 113). They vowed to meet up in 1965 as Rive had applied for a Fulbright Fellowship to study in the States. But Rive was not to see him again.

Rive departed for New York in August 1965, having been awarded the Fulbright Fellowship and Heft Scholarship to study, according to his account in *Writing Black*, African and Afro-American literature under Robert Bone at Columbia University. A transcript of the components of his Master’s degree from the Magdalen College Archive show that in fact the emphasis in the degree was on education, not literature.¹⁴

¹⁴ The transcript of the MA results for his ten modules, which ranged from modules in American culture and education, to American Negro literature to educational modules, were all passed in either grade A or B.

He had been extremely anxious that he might not be granted a passport, in which case he vowed not to go on an exit permit as “[n]o one was going to deprive me of my country” (*Writing Black* 114). Despite the dispiriting situation inside South Africa, Rive had clearly made up his mind that his own future now lay not as an exile, but as a writer inside the country. Unlike the dilemmas he faced when on his previous trip, he now seemed certain that he would return to South Africa after his stay in New York. The effect of exile on Nakasa was still a fresh and disturbing memory.

In 1965, while Rive was studying for his Master’s in New York, he again met Hughes and, through him, Arna Bontemps, Jay Wright, Le Roi Jones and Arthur Spingarn. At a party at Hughes’s apartment, Rive was struck by the writer’s incredible energy (*Writing Black* 120). A dinner Rive had with Langston and Arna at “Franks” in New York is described by Rive in the article “Taos in Harlem” (1967). This article is an imaginative recreation of their meeting, using bits of Hughes’s poetry and Rive’s previous encounters with him. It is interesting as one senses Rive’s admiration for Hughes and his life of commitment to writing and to the struggle of black people in America and the rest of the world. Yet one also picks up his unspoken reservation about certain of the “black consciousness” aspects of Hughes’s outlook. What struck Rive (who must have known how brusque and arrogant he himself could often be) was the humility of the man. With friends, however, Rive loved to play at parodying himself in quite a childlike manner. And, like Hughes, Rive could not resist engaging in talk (in Rive’s case it was often witty repartee) with all sorts of people, yet both had bouts of loneliness which could only be

fought by feeling that their work and lives were somehow connected to the struggles of their community.

For Richard Rive, Langston Hughes's life must have resonated with his own: both so-called coloured in hostile, white worlds; both determined to be writers, experimenting with a range of genres and always willing to nurture and support younger writers; both from poor, troubled families centred on the mother yet each feeling different, spurned by the rest of the family; active sportsmen when young; both choosing to lead lives as single men; both intensely closed about their sexual lives. This might have been partly because, prior to Stonewall and the permissive late 1960s,¹⁵ the climate was not conducive to coming out, partly because Rive seemed to need to fit in and be accepted, and partly because of his liking of young lumpen working-class boys – like the two who murdered him. Hughes was always tight-lipped (often called a “clam”) about his sexual relationships. It was at a supper with Hughes and Bontemps that Rive posed a veiled yet pointed question about Countee Cullen: “And the tragedy of his personal life? ... Did it influence his writing?” (*Taos* 115). This question was presumably about Cullen's not-so-covert homosexuality / bisexuality and the way it influenced particularly his poetry. The questions were probably also probing Hughes about his own sexuality. It was the first more or less overt reference to homosexuality in Rive's writings and only one of two in Rive's whole body of work.¹⁶

¹⁵ Stonewall marked a turning point in the way the world related to homosexuality and the way homosexuals related to the world. The unexpected and protracted resistance to police harassment at the New York gay bar called Stonewall in June 1969 marked the start of the worldwide gay liberation movement and annual gay marches.

¹⁶ The other was to the unwelcome advances from a homosexual publisher in Greece, recorded in *Writing Black* (56) and discussed below.

The silence on questions of sexuality in Rive's work is intriguing. It was not just that he remained silent about his homosexuality, both in his public life and in his fiction and non-fiction, but that this obvious silence coexisted with the loudness of his protests against inhumanity and racialism. As suggested earlier, to raise questions relating to what he was intent on keeping private, forces to the fore questions of ethics in the construction of biography. Rive chose to keep his sexual preference an intensely private matter and homosexuality rarely appeared as a subject in his fiction or memoirs. The very silences in both real life and fiction on this matter are in themselves exemplary of a not uncommon Jekyll and Hyde existence forced upon or chosen by gay men who were young in a pre-Stonewall and highly repressive South Africa. It would have been unthinkable for a biographer to write about this aspect of Rive during his lifetime, not because of the predictable resistance from Rive himself but mainly because it would have been viewed as diminishing, even betraying his main, recognised contribution. It might possibly even have been seen as the work of the apartheid enemy.

Rive's fiction as a whole portrays, according to Lee, "the oppressed, the downtrodden and the dispossessed" (18). To what extent is Rive's preoccupation with the marginalised not only political but also linked to his own sexual repression? Contradictions in his sense of self are evident in his ambivalences towards homosexuality. When did he begin to sense that he was homosexual? The Manuels are amongst the very few, it seems, whom Rive confided in about his sexual orientation. They were living in Port Elizabeth during the late 1960s and Rive often stayed with them when he visited the city. On one of his

visits to them during their stay in Port Elizabeth, they remember him speaking in confidence to them about his homosexuality.¹⁷

While evidently having recognised his own homosexual impulses by the early sixties at the latest, his memoir *Writing Black* nevertheless expresses disgust at the sexual advances of a male Greek owner of a publishing firm in what he must have known were markedly homophobic terms:

The owner took my hand and held it for an embarrassingly long time. He spoke in a melancholy tone and said ... that he loved the Negro race; he admired Blacks; he was a friend of my people; he would personally translate all my works into Greek. He was a bachelor and would invite me for dinner that very evening at his flat. ... There was something repellent about his fawning and his over-attention. ... Once in his apartment, he suggested I stay for a week. ... “You indulge in erotica?” I left without the promised dinner. (56)

The unwanted advances, while clearly repulsive to Rive, were consciously written in a way which reinforces the very attitudes that kept him in the closet; and he must have known this would be the case. Was he rhetorically positioning himself as heterosexual in the public eye by enabling a reading which seemed to align him with homophobia?

While Langston Hughes was a major influence on Rive as a writer, the two had noticeably different views on what constituted social justice for the black oppressed and on the role of the writer in the struggles of the community. Like Hughes, and maybe to

¹⁷ Ariefi and Hazel Manuel. Personal interview.

some extent because of him, Rive's work is about the lives and struggles of ordinary oppressed people. Rive's main vehicle was prose, but, like Hughes, he also explored a range of genres. His short story, "Resurrection", first published in 1963 and chosen by him as his story in the anthology *Modern African Prose*, invites comparison with Hughes's short story "Father and Son", published in 1934 in *The Ways of White Folks*. Both have as their theme the dilemma of a mulatto child from a white father and a non-white mother. In "Resurrection", we experience the funeral of the dark-skinned mother from the viewpoint of the "coloured" daughter, Mavis. Rive's story begins on a dramatic note and while it captures the trauma and bitterness of those in the family who are ostracised by the fairer, bigoted relatives, the inexperienced writer lays it on too thickly with the obvious symbolism of hymn fragments, the pain Mavis unrelentingly shrieks at us and the unconvincing repetitions of the ending:

Mavis felt hot, strangely, unbearably hot. Her saliva turned to white heat in her mouth and her head rolled drunkenly. The room was filled with her mother's presence, her mother's eyes, body, soul. Flowing into her, filling every pore, becoming one with her, becoming a living condemnation.

"Misbelievers!" she screeched hoarsely. "Liars! You killed me!

You murdered me! Don't you know your God?"

(Modern African Prose 65)

Hughes's "Father and Son" carries the reader along with the passion and courage of the mulatto son, Bert, in his battle to be recognised by his all-powerful white, racist father, Colonel Norwood. Hughes refracts his politics through character and story, but also occasionally uses his narrator to preach. In the following extract we find the narrator

pontificating (and one hears Hughes) on the effect an individual can have on circumstance:

In the chemistry lab at school, did you ever hold a test tube, pouring in liquids and powders and seeing nothing happen until a *certain* liquid or a *certain* powder is poured in and then everything begins to smoke and fume, bubble and boil, hiss to foam, and sometimes even explode? The tube is suddenly full of action and movement and life. Well, there are people like those certain liquids or powders; at a given moment they come into a room, or into a town, even into a country – and the place is never the same again. Things bubble, boil, change. Sometimes the whole world is changed. Alexander came. Christ. Marconi. A Russian named Lenin.

Not that there is any comparing Bert to Christ or Lenin.

(Levering Lewis 603)

Rive avoids such authorial intrusion in his short story narratives. However, the way he refracts his message through character is, at times, jarringly obvious. It is as if Rive insists on his indignation being written into the narrative. These somewhat divergent approaches reflect their different views on the role of the writer. Although never a member of the Communist Party as claimed by the McCarthyites, Hughes gave visible and active support to the American left at critical moments in the country's history through his writings. Up to the period of the McCarthy hearings, writing and fighting were, to him, inseparable. In "Father and Son" he makes direct reference to the crucial and topical Scottsboro trial and Camp Hill shootings. Rive, never as closely involved in

political organisations and their polemics, believed that while the black South African writer had a dual function – “[a]s a Black he storms castles and as a writer he defines the happening” – as writer per se “his main function ... is to define and record. He is an articulate memory of the oppressed people” (*Storming Pretoria’s Castle* 32). There should be a distance, Rive asserts, between writing and fighting. This insistence on writer as witness, even angry witness, rather than revolutionary, is symptomatic of his more conventional, liberal humanist notion of the role of the writer.

Rive derives the battle metaphor for his argument about the nature of the writer’s domain from one of his favourite South African poets – Arthur Nortje (“Storming Pretoria’s Castle” n.p.). Nortje’s final line of his poem “Song for a passport” ends with the words “O ask me all but do not ask allegiance!” (30). To Rive the line exemplifies the call for the writer to be allowed to define his own voice, while yet remaining, like Nortje, and like Hughes in his last decade, party to a much broader cause against bigotry and tyranny. Perhaps it was the very early and seminal influence of Cope’s liberal humanist outlook and the way that he insists on the absence of propaganda from literature that laid the bedrock for Rive’s own strong assertions, in literature and in life, of individualism, albeit an individual voice that believed it represented the voice of the oppressed mass.

Rive’s views as a writer differed from those of Hughes in distinct ways. In his essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926), Hughes takes issue with the view of Countee Cullen who wanted to be “a poet – not a Negro poet” (qtd. in Rampersad, *Vol. 1*. 130). This non-racial view, Hughes claims, results in the equation “I would like to be a

white poet” and adds that “within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mould of American standardisation” is the outcome. This non-racial attitude is “the mountain standing in the way of any true Negro art in America” (qtd. in Rampersad, *Vol. 1*. 130). Hughes believed in the Black Race. Rive’s non-racialism meant his views on culture and race were closer to those of Cullen than to Hughes.

Despite the emblazoning of “Black” entailed in the title of his autobiography, Rive, as we have seen, decried the existence of a separate black race and the very notion of “race”. His questions to Hughes in “Taos in Harlem” are meant to engage on this point: “Do you think that American Negro Poetry will finally be completely integrated into American literature? ... And lose its ethnic qualities? ... And would such a state be desirable?” (*Taos in Harlem* 36). Rive, in the preface to his memoir, emphasised his “strong belief in non-racialism”, which led him to say “I will look forward to the day when it will not be necessary for writing in my country to be tied to ethnic labels, when the only criteria will be writing well and writing South African” (vii). Hughes, even from Rive’s account, was clearly irritated by Rive and the position that underpinned these questions. He made fun of them and changed the subject. Years before this meeting, the correspondence between them, from roughly the early sixties, reveals a cooling off of relations between the two. Perhaps the honeymoon of initial exchanges was over, or perhaps they realised how different they were. Perhaps Hughes found Rive’s non-racialism and Euro-centricism too far off from his own interests in the black soul. Perhaps Rive had now made it as a writer and Hughes was no longer central to his advancement.

As was the case with Rive's trip to London two years earlier, the most important contacts he made were the ones with Hughes and those to whom Hughes introduced him. The chapter in *Writing Black* dedicated to his time at Columbia recounts numerous other meetings with ordinary Americans. Rive is most scornful and dismissive of those who see him as an African curiosity and associate Africa with the primitive and wild animals. On the other hand, he is constantly curious about the attitudes and politics of black Americans, arriving in the United States at a time when the influence of the Black Consciousness movement was growing. He taught at a school in Harlem East during the university break in order to get closer to the black youngsters he saw on the buses and on the streets of Harlem. While he found the lack of discipline and unruly behaviour in the classroom impossible to handle, he was affectionately tolerant of their naïve questions about Africa, accounting for their militant attitudes towards whites as a legitimate response to "American refusal to accept the Black into the mainstream of its development" (*Writing Black* 123). In all probability, the experience in the school must have made him reflect on the respect for teachers back in Cape Town and on his own high standing at his school as well as in the broader community.

The return in June 1966 to South Africa after an absence of a year was once more marked by a sinking feeling at the depressing realities of home. Despite having his Master's degree from an internationally acclaimed university, it still made no difference to his second-class status in his country. The five-year period between his return from Columbia and his next departure for Oxford in August 1971 is covered in a mere three pages in his memoir and is remembered by him as a time of dearth and death. It was, after

all, the period when National Party hegemony over the country seemed to be beyond challenge and the struggle for a new order was at its nadir. Gray eloquently calls this most difficult period in the life of the country “the deep freeze of high apartheid” (163), contributing to “the despair, darkness and disillusionment that set in on Richard from the mid-Sixties” (163).

During 1967 Rive half-heartedly studied for a Bachelor of Education degree at the University of Cape Town, but he was completely disillusioned with the institution as it bowed to pressure from government legislation to exclude all black and most coloured students.¹⁸ He seemed to find comfort and purpose however in his teaching and the lives of his students as well as in his involvement in sport during this time: “I felt very close to my pupils and experienced with them the same hopes and despairs” (*Writing Black* 127). His deep concern for the well-being of some of his students is made evident by the way he is touched by the tragic drowning of a young boy from his school, which he describes in his memoir (127). At the news of the death, brought to his attention by another schoolboy at the school, he rallies to give what practical help he can. He drives to the scene of the death an hour outside of Cape Town to find out what he can, counselling the distraught youngster along the way, and then drives all the way back to the home of the deceased to assist and console the parents. Was this one of the occasions where Rive displayed genuine philanthropy? Or was it another scheme to inveigle himself into the life of a young man? Or, a bit of both? The tragedy is deepened when the boy who brought him the news of his schoolmate’s death is himself killed soon thereafter in a

¹⁸ The Extension of Universities Education Act of 1959.

motorcycle accident. On the death of his old patron Hughes in the same year, 1967, he is, however, completely and strangely silent.

The other death that stung him was that of Arthur Nortje in 1970. Rive had first met Nortje at a gathering of aspirant writers at the Hazendal home of Cosmo Pieterse in 1963.¹⁹ Pieterse and Rive had been at Trafalgar High at the same time and both became teachers. Rive's first impressions of Nortje were that he was "a squat, somewhat untidily dressed young man with a heavy and laboured accent" (*Writing Black* 128). It was typical of Rive not only to notice the accent but to ask Nortje, almost as a put-down, if he were Afrikaans-speaking. Nortje took offence to the question and retorted: "...but I write in English. Why must you ask?" (*Writing Black* 128). It seems however that the two got along and Nortje consulted Rive about some of his poetry. It is quite fascinating that Rive assumes and seems to revel in the role of established writer and a forthright but also pedantic mentor in the relationship, doing to Nortje exactly what Jack Cope had done to him:

We went through [the poetry] in fine detail and I was hard on him, forcing him to substantiate the use of every word he had written. Finally he threw down the sheets in anger and demanded, 'Are you for me or against?' I tried to explain that I was neither for him nor against. I was for good poetry and against bad poetry. Much of what he showed me was good but he was as capable of producing weak lines. He refused to accept my reasoned argument ... to be critical of his poetry was to be critical of the man himself. He was his poetry. (*Writing Black* 128)

¹⁹ Rive does not date these meetings in his memoir but mentions that Nortje was in his final year of study at the University of the Western Cape. Dirk Klopper gives this as 1963 in the chronology of Nortje's life in *Anatomy of Dark*.

Rive drove Nortje home after this session and it was Nortje, not Rive, surprisingly, who spoke most of the time. As was the case with Jonker, Nortje, Rive records, was a very “intense” person. There is a hint in this description of their encounter that Rive is in fact underplaying the awe and admiration he had for Nortje’s poetry, particularly by 1980 when he was composing these memoirs. On a number of occasions Rive was to quote lines from Nortje in his articles and essays, in order to articulate the solitude and expectation that Rive felt burdened the South African writer at home as well as abroad.

What Rive’s own descriptions of his encounter with Nortje also reveal is the missionary zeal with which Rive assisted younger writers. There were dozens of aspirant writers who showed him their fledgling attempts and he was unselfish in giving his time, enjoying too perhaps the sense of being big brother that accompanied the exercise of mentoring.

Wannenburgh testifies to this aspect of Rive as writer and friend:

Richard ... was enthusiastic about my writing and was prepared to guide me.

Whenever I completed a short story, I took it to him, and we would sit at his kitchen table while he went through in fine detail, asking questions and making suggestions, sometimes for hours at a stretch. (33)

The years after his return from Columbia were also marked by a dearth in creative work. “All this time I continued writing although my output was a mere trickle,” he bemoans in his memoir (129). He managed to write three articles for *Contrast* in 1967 but nothing after that till much later in 1972. Part of the reason for the creative drought he was experiencing in the late sixties must have been the suffocating air generated by the rule of

terror which banned for both possession and / or distribution local and international writing which was even vaguely critical of what Brecht would have called “the dark times.”²⁰ The deaths that were the signature of this period for him were themselves metonymic of these dark times. Also, his own feeling of being firmly in his middle years, of having achieved much, yet often acutely lonely and being in a state of sexual turpitude (see my reading of “The Visits” below), were surely debilitating factors which prevented him from working productively. If there were any stage when Rive might have regretted not going into exile, it was probably in these few trying years. In an interview with Chris van Wyk, Rive comments on this period between 1966 and 1971:

1966 was the moment of truth in South Africa for black literature when all writers in exile were banned And no objection from anybody in South Africa ... South African Literature became White by law. Now between '66 and '71 nothing happened. There were exactly two writers left in the country – black writers – James Matthews and myself. The rest had gone into exile or into prison. And James was not writing and I was so disillusioned – books banned, surveillance and all the pressures that work on one in South Africa – that I went into the academic stream and I kind of collected degrees and lectured and wrote books about writers instead of writing myself you know, not books actually, articles. I did a lot of polemical writing more than anything else. This might have gone on indefinitely if it weren't for ‘Sounds of a Cowhide Drum’. ... In '71 the breakthrough came with Mtshali's not very good poetry and Nadine Gordimer's over-flattering introduction to it. ... '71 was the end of the protest school of writings. (*Wietie* 2 11)

²⁰ An image used in many of Brecht's poems to signify a period of repression.

What probably also contributed to his creative block was the very harsh criticism levelled at his work *Emergency* in 1966, discussed in the previous section, by fellow writer living in exile, Lewis Nkosi. The combined effect of these causes for despair, together with his desire to “round off [his] formal education” (*Writing Black* 129), was to lead him to apply to do a Doctor of Philosophy firstly at King’s College, Cambridge, which turned him down, and then to a number of colleges at Oxford, with Magdalen College being his first choice. Clearly piqued by being turned down by Cambridge, Rive’s letter to Magdalen is overly assertive and melodramatic in tone:

Because I am a brown South African ... to get the qualifications I have has been no mean feat. I grew up in the slums, won scholarships from the age of 12, won awards to continue further studies and finally received an American Fulbright Fellowship. It is out of the question I think to receive direct assistance from the state, as my colour excludes me. ... Thus I will be doomed to spend the rest of my life eking out a meaningless existence here trying to teach a bit of literature at grade school whereas I know I have the ability (and proved it) not only to do meaningful research, but to play an important role at any university....where African Literature will be taught.²¹

In his application form to Oxford University he stated that his area of research was to be “trends in contemporary novels or poetry in Africa in English.” He listed Philip Segal, professor in the Department of English at UCT, as one of his referees. Segal wrote in his reference that Rive had not achieved brilliant results in English but he studied while

²¹ Rive’s letter of application to Oxford dated 26 July 1970, Magdalen College Archive.

teaching and showed tenacity in his academic work.²² A more interesting and personable report, with very astute observations about Rive's character and ability, was the one by Lindy Wilson, who headed the South African Council on Higher Education (SACHED). SACHED at the time was a reputable, liberal anti-apartheid institution which worked to get non-white scholars access to higher education. Wilson writes:

[H]e would be an excellent person to do a post-graduate degree ... [h]e is obviously very knowledgeable on African writing: possibly an even better critic than a writer (that's only my very *own* opinion). He gave a lecture to the SACHED students some time back, and it is certainly one of the best lectures I've heard ... he's someone with a good sense of humour and tells some very funny stories against himself...he is an unusual person to meet in South Africa these days. But he stays because he says he belongs.²³

Lindy Wilson also suggests in her report that the Senior Tutor at Magdalen write to Jack Cope and Uys Krige for more information on Rive.

Magdalen, Rive writes in his memoir, offered him the position of a "Junior Research Fellow" which enabled him to fund his studies there. It is not clear, from his own account, why he made Cambridge and Oxford his first choices of university for the doctoral degree. Was it their reputation in the world of education that attracted him and would, by association, lend him the prestige he sought but was perpetually denied in his

²² Rive's completed application form to Oxford, dated 10 August 1970, and Segal's letter of reference, Magdalen College Archive.

²³ In a reference on Rive dated 28 October 1970. Magdalen College Archive.

own country? As he was not certain about the specific topic of his research before he left, knowing only that he wanted to focus on African literature, the choice of Oxford was clearly not because of the particular expertise it offered but more likely because of the iconic status of Oxford as the quintessence of a university and of Englishness. Still an underpaid teacher struggling to make ends meet, Rive had to appeal to the Oppenheimer Trust to cover the cost of his boat trip to England. After more than a year of working at getting into a university in the United Kingdom, he finally departed Cape Town for Southampton and Oxford on the Pendennis Castle in the spring of 1971. It had been just nine years since he boarded a ship in the same dock to embark on his first trip overseas as a fledgling writer bursting with ambition and hope. Now he was departing as an established literary figure both in South Africa and abroad, keen to round off his formal education with one of the highest possible qualifications and at what he saw as the world's most prestigious university; yet he remained a mere "non-white", an *Untermensch* in the land which he was leaving in his wake.

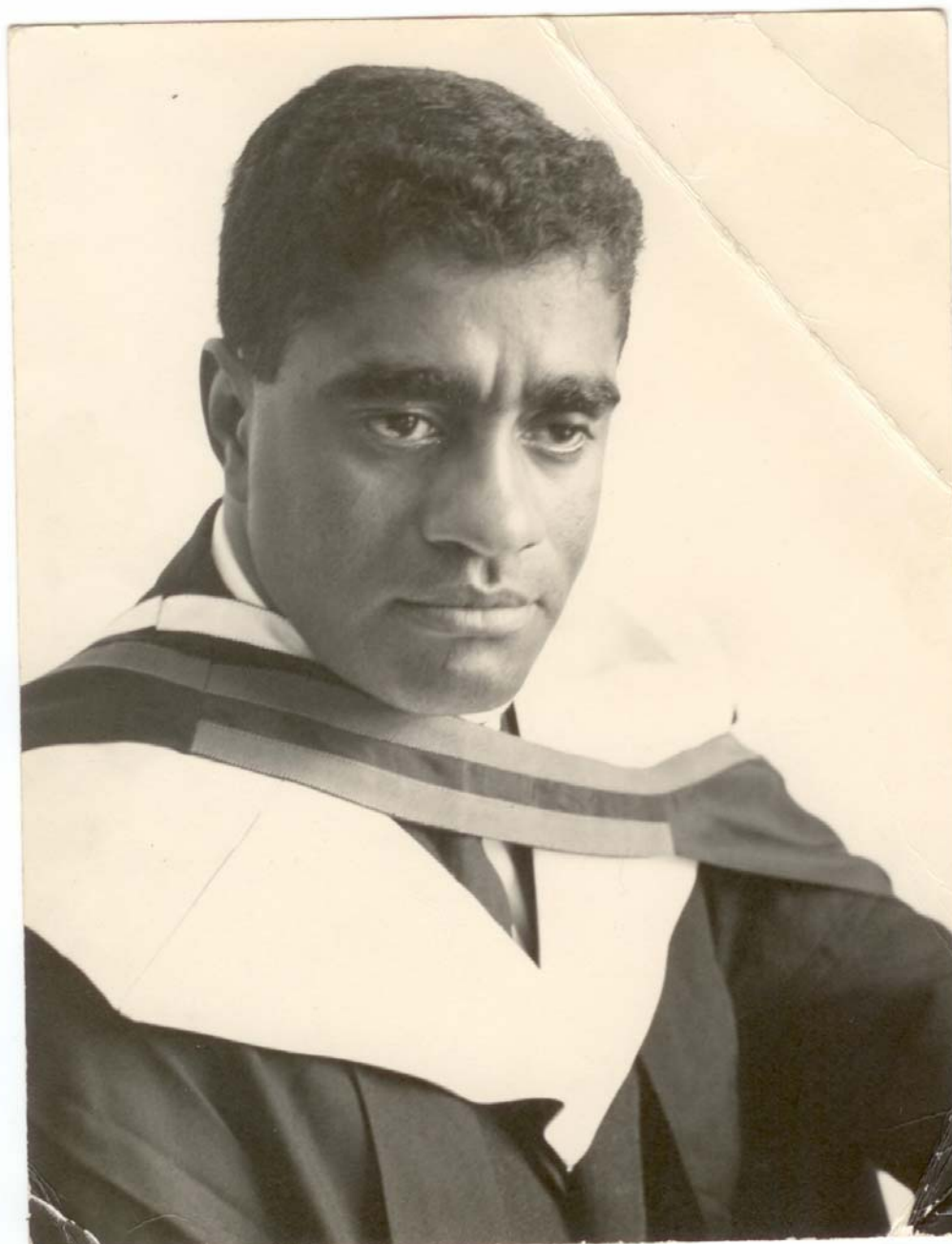


Illustration 5. Rive, Oxford graduation, 1974. Photograph by George Hallett.

2.3 Doctor Richard Moore Rive: 1970 -1980

By 1970, Rive's last major output of short stories had been in 1963, with the publication of *African Songs*. He published a story called "Andrew" in 1968, but it was an ineffectual condensation of his novel *Emergency*. In 1969 he published "Middle Passage" in *Contrast*, a short story which he reworked a few years later and published as a play under the title *Make Like Slaves* in Henderson's *African Theatre: Eight Prize-winning Plays for Radio* (1973). *Make Like Slaves* was produced as a BBC radio play and went on to win a number of accolades.

Rive had been interested in the theatre and dramatic script form from his student days at Hewat. All four of his student pieces in the Hewat magazine of 1951 were dramatic dialogues. Critics have noted the dramatic quality of his short stories and his frequent use of dialogue to convey character and situation. He himself was an amateur actor, as a letter to Hughes in 1962 delights in recounting:

Did Sylvia Titus write to you that she played Lady Macbeth in a Drama Centre production in which I played Ross? It was great fun and we crowded the city hall with Whites who came to hear Non-whites who spoke impeccable English and even knew what they were speaking about. We found it amusing. One critic said that after 5 minutes one accepts these dusky Scotsmen as genuine. I ask you.

(5 Jan. 1962)

But the success with *Make Like Slaves* was only to emerge once he was in Oxford. At home in 1970, while making his initial approaches to study overseas, he wrote a story

which won him the *Argus* “Writer of the Year” award. The story, “The Visits”, was the first new short story he had published since his stories of the early sixties. It was far more muted in its protest than any of his previous works and much more reflective in tone. Like his novel, it was clearly semi-autobiographical. While the short story can be read as a protest at the manner in which apartheid dehumanises, divides and alienates, it is also possible through a queer reading to see it as an intensely personal reflection on frustrated, unspoken desire and unresolved inner turmoil.

“The Visits” tells of a teacher in his forties who shares his flat with a male student. A black woman beggar visits the flat a number of times to ask for food. The protagonist is wracked by a sense of intrusion and the need to get rid of the woman, but on the other hand feels guilty about his hostility towards the indigent woman, and begins to empathise with her and her plight. The woman finally stops coming after the young student, who is more often than not away from the flat visiting his girlfriends, forcibly frogmarches her from the property. The story is marked by a pervasive sense of loneliness and an inner emptiness in the life of the protagonist that verges on despair. It ends with the student once again disappearing and the protagonist alone in his study “slumped down at the desk. He felt like crying but couldn’t...[and] ...sat at his desk just staring in the dark” (*Selected Writings* 58).

Two aspects of the story are striking. Firstly, the social chasm between the world of the teacher (who can be read as either “coloured” or “white”, but who is clearly not “black”) and the alien and impoverished world of the black woman. This existential gap becomes

a moral dilemma for the protagonist who largely resists her presence but also at times desires to help her. The teacher is confronting his internalisation of the divisions wrought by apartheid and exploitation, but is impotent to effect any change to inner or outer relations, except to offer fleeting yet finally effete charity. Unlike any of the earlier short stories, which in varying degrees ended with some measure of hope or redemption, here there is only “a staring in the dark”. This would be a more conventional reading of “The Visits”. Unlike the fore-grounded narrative of the woman described above, though, there is another possible interpretation of the story – that it is about intense loneliness and unspoken homosexual longing. This reading relies on decoding the silences in the text.

In reading silences in texts, I have been encouraged by the work of Allon White’s *The Uses of Obscurity*.¹ In examining the obscurity in a lot of modern writing, White analyses the fiction of Meredith, James and Conrad as part of an epochal cultural transformation to which each of these authors responded individually. He proposes that a new relation between writing and reading arose in this period of early modernism, calling these “symptomatic writing” and “symptomatic reading”, both of which were marked by the notion of suspicion. White traces symptomatic reading to “Althusser’s attempt to reconstruct what he terms the ‘problematic’ or unconscious of the text on the model of the Freudian analysis of a patient’s utterance” (163), and he views the work of literature “as a surface sign of something that could not be said directly ... the work of art is considered increasingly as an index of the psychological conflicts of the author” (4). The queer readings of many of Rive’s texts I suggest in this research, including the one

¹ I was first made aware of the work of White by my colleague at Stellenbosch University, Ashraf Jamal.

proposed below of “The Visits”, assume that there is something in the work “that could not be said directly.” My readings then often rely on such “symptomatic reading”, speculating about textual patterns or gaps that seem to be indicative of deeper psychological conflicts in Rive and which he suppresses and deliberately obscures or, perhaps, unintentionally encodes.

In an alternative reading, the story becomes a self-inscribed narrative of the utter loneliness and near despair at the loveless existence Rive feels he leads at this point in his life. The protagonist, like Rive in 1970, is middle-aged (Rive is now forty, the teacher forty-five) and fast becoming filled with a sense of world-weariness about his aging, about his work as a teacher and the meaning of literature in his life. He is, in his eyes now, “Mr Chips. Old at forty-five” (51). The South African poetry anthology he is reading solicits the comment “[w]hat a boring bore” (51). However, there is an unspoken dilemma running parallel to that of his alienation from the black woman – the muted dilemma about the relationship between the teacher and the student lodger.

Like “The Woman” initially, the student is not given a name but merely called “The Student” and the very first sentence of the story inextricably entangles the two characters inviting comparisons as to their various meanings in the life of the protagonist: “[i]t was on the evening The Student had gone out that The Woman had first arrived” (51). Unlike the woman, though, the student is never named and, even more so than the woman, becomes a presence by virtue of persistent withdrawal and erasure by the seemingly dominant theme. It is the boy’s absence, more so than the presence of the black woman,

which leads to the feeling of despair in the teacher at the end. The numerous arrivals of the woman beggar are paralleled by the numerous departures of the student from the flat. The teacher is “annoyed” at the woman coming to the door and is equally “annoyed” at what seems to be the sudden and loud departure of the youngster. But while the real sentiments towards the woman’s presence and absence are made evident and she is assumed to be the referent in the title of the story, it is really the presence and absence of the boy that can be seen as the covert subject and source of the despair which pervades the story. The sound of the student departing on his motorbike is on one occasion referred to as “the tortured whine as the Honda gathered speed up the driveway” (51). The transferred epithet “tortured” is actually the unspoken emotion of the teacher. For the young man, whether present or absent, is the real cause for his unspeakable emotional abyss:

How vacant the place sounded without The Student. How empty when he wasn’t there. How empty when he was there. A different kind of emptiness.

Impossible to speak to him any longer. He was too...too physical.

Throwing his weight and looks around. Girls, the telephone and the Honda. Looks and muscle. (51)

In this passage, the syntactical placing of the fragment “[t]hrowing his weight and looks around” more evidently refers to the boy’s relation to girls, but is also possibly referring to the boy’s relation to the protagonist. For, the logic could be implying, it was not easy for the teacher to speak to the youngster because he throws his weight around. Yet, how could he possibly use his “looks” (the noun is equally an object of the gerund “throwing” as is the noun “weight”) to manipulate the teacher without there being some suggestion of

homoerotic meaning? But this “different kind of emptiness”, the notion that there is some unfulfilled homoerotic attraction towards the student, is left unexplored, merely hinted at again in similar fashion at later points in the story, and the presence of the woman, seemingly the nominated centre of the narrative, takes over the centre-stage yet once again. In short, my reading of “The Visits” suggests that, in addition to the more obvious subject of racial and class divide and attendant moral dilemma for the protagonist, there is encrypted in this story an autobiographical narrative of thwarted homosexual desire and despair.

On his departure for Oxford, Rive must have felt enormous relief at the prospect of respite from the relentless conditions at home. His first two months at Oxford, September and October of 1971, were, however, filled with a yearning for home and depression associated with dislocation and the ever-present burden of the demanding doctoral work that lay ahead. To combat these feelings, Rive took to reworking “Middle Passage” into a play. The play *Make Like Slaves* won first prize in a B.B.C. “Writing Plays for Africa” competition in which Wole Soyinka and Lewis Nkosi were the judges (*Writing Black*, 143). It was produced as a radio play for the B.B.C. by Gwyneth Henderson. The unqualified success of his play must have convinced him to experiment more with such conversions of his prose into plays. He was to do so again to a fair amount of critical acclaim seventeen years later.

Rive lived in rooms at Longwall Annex in Oxford, adjacent to Magdalen College. He soon took to the customs and aura of Oxford in a way which many other students from

South Africa, feeling alienated from the town and institutional ethos, did not.² His memoir delights in his being part of the arcane rituals and associates with the eccentric characters which it describes:

I took quite easily to most Oxford customs. I enjoy eccentricities and eccentrics, and Oxford had enough of both. I liked the don who mumbled Latin to himself on his cycle as he creaked down the High. I enjoyed the sight of the don who hurried past me near Queen's, his gown flapping while he exclaimed to all who cared to hear him, 'They nearly all failed palaeography again.' (*Writing Black* 132)

One reads in these affectionately satirical depictions of the eccentric dons a possible reflection of Rive's own playful yet authentic vision of himself as the witty, wise and unconventional teacher – the stereotypical Oxford don. While often in his memoir he gently parodies the convoluted and euphemistic idiom of Oxford, he loves to use this register himself. By adopting the idiom he becomes a habitué of Oxford and embodiment of Englishness. But because of the overly performative nature of his mimicry, he could also be read as simultaneously mocking what the idiom signified and thereby as distancing himself from all it represented.

Rive's immersion in life as an Oxonian was because he was finally able to study at an institution where, he assumed, he would be seen as a student, rather than as a black student. Yet one of the most striking memories of his stay in Oxford, which he highlights in detail in both his memoir and in an article called "Four South Africans abroad",

² Nortje is a well-known example of a South African who felt this sense of alienation. Rive mentions a character called "Kobus" (probably a pseudonym) from Stellenbosch who felt similarly estranged at Oxford.

reflects on the manner in which the subjects of a racist social order themselves internalise the colour-conscious mindset and value-laden assumptions of racism. The incident which he reflects on in both these texts is when he assumes a young female British waitress at an expensive restaurant he has wandered into by mistake in Oxford treats him shabbily. He assumes it is because of the colour of his skin, but it turns out that she sees him as just another “Oxford toff” who “speaks posh” and she is tired of her treatment at the hands of his “class” (56-57). It must have seemed to Rive that societies like South Africa etch into the consciousness intensely racialised perceptions of human relations. Even armed with his obdurate ideology of non-racialism, he was himself not immune to the insidious infiltration of racialised modes of thought.

While this frank self-critique is quite dramatically revealing of the toxicity of racism, what is as interesting about Rive’s accounts of this incident is the existential ambivalence about belonging and exclusion that he does not himself comment on, but which is evident in the texts. He senses on entering the restaurant that it is in a league beyond his means, but he nevertheless stays and deliberately orders the most expensive items – a retort to any notion that he might be out of place. He also raises his voice to object to the young waitress’s treatment of him, but does so “adopting my most Magdalen College accent” (“Four South Africans” 56), which, given that Rive arrived in Oxford with his already pronounced Oxbridge accent, must have been verging on the melodramatic. The use of this accent is again an assertion, both for the sake of the listener but perhaps equally for his own sense of self, of being an intimate, an insider, not, as his colour might suggest, an alien. He desperately wants to belong, but belonging will always remain elusive.

During his stay at Oxford he often made trips into London, staying with friends. He most often slept at the Camden Town residence of Albert Adams and his partner Ted Glennon. Adams had emigrated to London in 1953 and had subsequently made a name for himself as a South African artist living abroad. He remembers that it was during Rive's period at Oxford that they cemented their friendship. According to Adams, Richard also had many acquaintances in London whom he often visited. He recalls a particular incident about Oxford related to him by Richard, which illustrates his pretensions to being a "gentleman of culture", but also shows his uncompromising sense of right and wrong. It also reveals the way in which those close to him tell such anecdotes – with great affection for Rive and a simultaneous shaking of the head in disbelief:

We saw him fairly often. In fact I think it's that time when Richard had friends, he often met them here...he had many acquaintances and friends in London and he used to invite them and we used to have a meal together here... and I do remember one occasion, this difficult Richard ...Richard came down, and he was in such a mood, he was so angry, and he said that he had been to a restaurant in Oxford and had ordered fish, and they brought him the fish, but the cutlery wasn't fish cutlery ... and Richard would not eat ...and I remember the little argument between the two of us, and I said 'Well Richard, today they don't really use fish cutlery anymore.' The reason was the metal which [the] cutlery had been made of in the past, you know, somehow retained the smell of fish. So that's why they did have some cutlery or other. 'Oh no' Richard said, and he [went] into [a] scream and how he, you know, told the waitress where he comes from this is not the

practice - they had separate cutlery for fish! 'I would not eat the meal!' and he stormed out of the restaurant. But that was typical of Richard. (16-17)

Rive's application to King's College Cambridge had not been successful because they claimed the college did not have the expertise to supervise research on African literature. Rive's acceptance by Magdalen College was not without qualification either. The college was concerned that, like King's College, it did not have the expertise to supervise his proposed research in the area of African literature. It felt he might have to work under the rubric of "Twentieth Century Literature" which he was reluctant but not unwilling to do. The college administration had received a number of references (besides those from Segal and Wilson) about Rive's abilities, including a very favourable one from Mary Renault (who signed using her real name, Mary Challans). However, possibly because Rive's Master's degree at Columbia was in education rather than a research degree in literature, Magdalen recommended Rive register for a Probationary Bachelor of Literature (Prob B. Litt) and not a D. Phil, which he finally did.

Under the initial supervision of J.L. Fuller, Rive embarked on his research in "Twentieth Century Literature". Fuller's progress report on 15 December 1971, however, indicated that Rive had clearly by then embarked on a very specific study on Olive Schreiner and was making good progress. It is clear that Rive came to Oxford with no clear idea of what he wanted to research within the general area of his interest, African Literature.

Reflecting on the choice of Schreiner nine years later in an interview with Chris van

Wyk, Rive responds to van Wyk's question "And your passion for Olive Schreiner?" in the following forthright terms:

Ah, there's no passion at all! I had to get a degree so I decided to do Olive Schreiner. She was a remarkable woman, absolutely out of her time. I was also interested in that period of South African politics and the period in England when she was writing. It was the Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw kind of pre-Bloomsbury. My favourite period in literature. (13)

Rive was possibly tailoring his reply to fit the more radical and less traditional audience of the magazine *Wietie* which van Wyk had just launched. He probably had a genuine interest in Schreiner's work and ideas. As Gray has argued, there were affinities between the two writers:

Like Olive Schreiner ... with whom he empathized sufficiently to devote the middle years of his work to her, he was a subtle public manoeuvrer, steering conference agendas and literary gossip circles alike back to basic issues: human rights, integrity; down with deception. (*Free-lancers* 157)

In late 1971 Rive explored the holdings on Schreiner at various archives and wrote to numerous institutions including the Jagger Library at the University of Cape Town, the South African Public Library, the Cory Library for Historical Research at Rhodes University, the University of the Witwatersrand Library and the Cradock Municipal Library to ascertain what they had on her. He made good progress in these initial stages of the research and on 1 May 1972 he was admitted to the full B. Litt. This was done under the temporary supervision of Terry Eagleton of Wadham College, who had taken

over from Fuller. Eagleton would continue in this capacity until someone with the appropriate expertise on Schreiner could conduct the supervision.

Rive was given leave of absence to return to South Africa to do research in the country for the Michaelmas term of 1972 and the Hilary term of 1973. He was granted 300 pounds by Magdalen to support the visit back home. He left Oxford for the Cape on 8 June 1972 and returned only on 16 April 1973. For this period he went back to live in his Selous Court flat. His supervisor for his B. Litt changed from Eagleton to Ridley Beeton who was based at UNISA.³ The title for his research had become “Olive Schreiner 1855/1920, A Critical Biography.” Eagleton’s progress report on Rive at the time of handover suggests he is working well and making progress: “[h]e has an interesting topic and is researching it assiduously. Apart from some minor stylistic problems ... there is no reason why he shouldn’t produce a useful piece of research.”⁴ One of Beeton’s first suggestions to Rive was that he look into Schreiner holdings at Texas University and recommended that Rive contact Bernth Lindfors.⁵ Lindfors was to become a useful advisor to Rive on his Schreiner research and was also to become a friend.

In preparation for the research on Schreiner back home, Rive wrote to Guy Butler at the Department of English at Rhodes University and Butler in reply made some very useful suggestions and invited him to visit the Department. Butler pointed Rive to Schreiner’s early diaries that could not be traced and which Cronwright Schreiner had used in his

³ This change of supervisor happened on 19 June 1972, soon after he left for Cape Town.

⁴ Details about the academic and administrative aspects of the years at Oxford were taken from the administrative file on Rive held at Magdalen College Archive.

⁵ Ridley Beeton. In a letter dated 19 January 1972, Magdalen College Archive.

biography of his wife. He also suggested Rive visit the municipal library at Cradock (Rive had however already written to the library in November 1972) and suggested they climb Buffels Kop to her grave together. Butler also discovered that the Albany Museum had “a whole cupboard full of Schreiner material, as yet unlisted.”⁶

An incident occurred when Rive was researching Schreiner holdings at the Cradock library in 1972 and which he described in detail in his memoir. A curious farmer, obviously disturbed by the anomalous black presence at the whites-only municipal library, engaged him and asked him where he is from. The farmer’s assumption was clearly that Rive is an Englishman and Rive of course picked this up. Rive then deliberately switched to Afrikaans to claim his local District Six (and thus obviously non-white) identity despite what his accent signified. Rive was able to assert distinct identities of himself, some of them quite contradictory, when and where he deemed it strategic and desirable, either for his own imaginings of who he was, or to skew the way others should perceive him.

For his thesis Rive was guided by what he initially thought was a precondition at Oxford for doing literary research – the writer needed to be long dead. He then considered working on either Olive Schreiner or Pauline Smith, but considered Schreiner to be the more seminal and chose her, and worked on her. In the section of his memoir where he talks about his work on Schreiner, he frames it by making reference to the large amount

⁶ Guy Butler’s letter to Rive, Magdalen College Archive.

of luck that came his way, allowing him to make an important contribution to South African literary historiography.

“While I was doing my research in England and South Africa,” he writes, “there occurred, luckily for me, a series of propitious and serendipitous events” (*Writing Black* 137). Jack Cope, while visiting Rive at Oxford, mentioned to him, as Beeton had done, that Schreiner archival material was said to be found at the University of Texas. In response to Rive’s query to the University of Texas, Bernth Lindfors sent him microfilm copies of the hundreds of Schreiner letters, which included letters between her and Havelock Ellis. In 1972, during his brief visit back home to do research locally, another chance meeting with Cronlyn Cronwright, daughter of Schreiner’s husband Samuel from his second marriage after Schreiner’s death, led him to gain access to information and documents. But the most significant find of his research on Schreiner, a result of the series of uncannily lucky breaks he describes in his memoir, he considered to be the access he gained to the personal correspondence between Schreiner and Karl Pearson, with whom Schreiner had had a close relationship. These letters added valuable new knowledge to Schreiner scholarship, especially about the envisioned ending to her unfinished novel, *From Man to Man*, and about her life in London between 1886 and 1889.

A number of other close friends and acquaintances visited Rive while he was in Oxford, tempering his initial feelings of being homesick and depressed, and also making input into his work. Ariefi and Hazel Manuel visited him at Magdalen College where Rive

smuggled Hazel into his rooms, much to her amusement. Businessman Latief Parker and NEUM stalwart Hosea Jaffe, close friends and comrades of Victor Wessels, spent time with Rive in long discussion and, according to Parker, Jaffe, with his in-depth knowledge of South African history from an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist perspective, helped Rive develop his critique of Schreiner's liberalism.⁷

On being awarded his Doctorate in 1973, Rive must have been elated, reaching the zenith on the trajectory to educate himself; a path that he relentlessly embarked on when he was still a teenager, often against daunting odds. On his return to Cape Town he went to his sister Georgina to proudly proclaim (as he would to many others), in typical Rive pose when he was chuffed with himself – his thumbs tucked under his armpits and fists campily limp in front of strutting chest, lips pouting – that he was “a doctor of literature, *not* of medicine”.⁸ His pride at his Oxford achievement would also be reflected in the way he peppered his flat with Oxford memorabilia, and in his frequent wearing of his Oxford T-shirt and display of other forms of Oxford heraldic symbols. But as on every other sojourn out of the country, his elation at what he had achieved and his determination to go back home were deflated by the dispiriting reality of the situation back home:

I was returning to South Africa because that was where I belonged. I had no idea what to expect, whether there had been meaningful changes or not. I certainly did

⁷ Latief Parker. Personal interview.

⁸ The Manuels claim that “when he graduated he went to her [his sister Georgina] to say he was a doctor ‘of literature, not of medicine’, something he often used to stress.” The description of his proud and camp pose is my own reconstruction, not theirs.

not expect any preferential treatment. In spite of my achievements and qualifications I was still an unenfranchised Black suffering under a policy of racial discrimination, born and nurtured in a notorious slum in a beautiful city in a bigoted country. (*Writing Black* 145)

Despite this, returning as a doctoral graduate of Oxford, he could use this educational status and defiantly see himself as “a member of one of the largest, most exclusive and influential old-boy networks in the world” (*Writing Black* 145).

Rive returned home by sea, and the South Africa he found when he disembarked was markedly different in mood to the one he first left three years earlier. The iron grip of the Nationalists had started to weaken and the first signs of a widespread resurgence of both organised and spontaneous resistance to the state had begun on a number of fronts.

Armed resistance to colonial and imperial rule had intensified on the African subcontinent and elsewhere – America was being defeated in Vietnam and, in Africa, armed struggle, particularly in Portuguese-controlled colonies, was intensifying. In South Africa, the working class, consolidated by the rapid industrialisation of the country in the 1960s, solidified into a number of militant union formations that began to rattle the cages of Nationalist Party rule.

On the literary front, the new mood of defiance and self-assertion is expressed through the work of a new generation of poets who come to be known as the “Soweto Poets” – Mbuyiseni (Oswald) Mtshali, Wally Serote, Sipho Sepamla and Mafika Pascal Gwala. Rive describes their work in a way which both connects them to his generation but also

recognises their independent contribution: “Their writings were as strident and declamatory as those of the Protest School of the 1950s and early 1960s, but this time the form was different, poetry as opposed to prose” (*Writing Black* 148). *Writing Black* recounts his meetings with each of the Soweto poets in terms that reflect his admiration for their work, particularly for Sepamla and Gwala, as well as revealing his sense of excitement at the growing family of (black) writers in the country. The title of Rive’s memoir, as mentioned earlier, is in fact an echo of both the assertive mood of the work of these poets and of the growing influence of the Black Consciousness movement.

After resuming his normal working life on his return, Rive continued to be active in school sports and it is in this regard that Wannenburg contacted him during this period. As a journalist for the *Sunday Times*, Wannenburg was asked to edit a page reporting on coloured sport as the newspaper had only depicted white sporting events till then. Rive agreed to help and, according to Wannenburg, organised a number of his former pupils to gather sporting results and match reports. However, Rive insisted on having a weekly column that often raised questions of sport and politics and which the conservative editors disliked. They put pressure on Wannenburg to cut out Rive’s column altogether. This caused a break in their friendship, recalled by Wannenburg in his memoir of Rive:

Inevitably there was a showdown with Richard, who arrived at my home one Sunday morning, demanding to know why I hadn’t used his column. Naïve about the workings of newspapers, he brushed aside my explanations and, insisting that it was a case of interfering with editorial independence, broke with the *Sunday Times* – and with me. (37)

What to Wannenburg was naïvety was to Rive probably a matter of principle. Rive could be a formidable adversary in an argument or a conflict, not baulking at confrontation, standing by what he believed to be right and just even if it meant ending a friendship. But on occasion “principle” was imbricated with ego and self-promotion. Having agreed to write for such a “separatist” sports page in the first place, Rive must have strategised that he could use the opportunity to make comment on sporting issues and, inevitably, on the political aspects of sport at the time. His profile as a writer and columnist would, at the same time, be raised in the most widely read newspaper in the country.

During 1974, his final year at South Peninsula High, he became mentor to a UCT student-teacher doing her training at the school, Maeve Heneke. He had previously met Heneke through Daphne and Victor Wessels. Both Rive and Heneke used to visit Victor to keep him company during his banning and confinement to his house in the early 1970s. Heneke had in fact first met Rive at the house of another set of his friends, Waxie and Tooti Daniels, when she was a fifteen-year-old teenager. Waxie Daniels used to teach with Rive at South Peninsula High and like Rive was noted for his interest in literature, amateur theatre and for his affected manner of speaking. What Heneke remembers quite vividly of this encounter was how Rive responded to her polite and conversation-making question to him about a Wilbur Smith novel, “Have you read *Where the Lion Feeds?*”, with the reply: “Yes, and it’s complete rubbish!” (2). This ruthless lack of guile, even to a teenager, was a manner not unlike that of Rive’s high school guru, Ben Kies, who would be ruthlessly honest no matter what the feelings of the recipient of the comment. Despite her initial put-down by Rive, Heneke grew to be a close and admiring friend. She

remembers the camaraderie between Richard and Victor, noticing that “he seemed a very different person when he was around Victor and Daphne” (3). An interesting observation she also recalls is the fact that during these visits to the home of Daphne and Victor Wessels, Rive “always had to leave I think it was quarter-to-eleven, as there was someone he used to go and fetch, and he was to leave bang on the dot” (3). Who was Rive fetching at that hour and so regularly?

During her practice-teaching stint under Rive’s tutelage, Heneke had the chance to observe closely and critically his engagement with his students:

[H]e took pride not so much in the achievements of the very bright students he taught, but he was over the moon at about that time [because] he got a so-called gang-leader, who was in one of his classes ... to write a poem, and he was *so* proud of this...that’s what made me warm even more to the man, the pleasure he took in one of his student’s achievements. (5)

Others have very different memories of Rive, reflecting very different reactions to him as a teacher. One of the students in his standard eight class, Val Preteceille (née Visagie), has very mixed memories of his influence and temperament, saying that he instilled in her a life-long love of literature and the English language but that she also thought he bullied certain children and she was angered by the way he treated some.⁹ Heneke accounts for the perception some had of his being hard on certain children by saying that she was “not entirely sure he would have been aware of how other people might be responding” (6). Another of his South Peninsula students from the period of the early

⁹ Val Preteceille. Personal interview.

1970s, who wishes to remain anonymous, claims Rive fondled and touched him against his will and, despite the fact that he told a few adults at the time about the incident, nothing was done about it. The tenor of the times which encouraged respect for figures of authority like teachers, and the absence of greater legal standing for children's rights, meant that adults, even parents, would dismiss such claims by young adults. This claim, that Rive forced himself on young men or teenage boys, was not an isolated case but seemed to have happened on at least another occasion.

Whether it is this last incident that Rive's close friend Albert Adams hints at or another one which almost got Rive into trouble, is not clear. But from what Adams says it is evident that Rive could be a relentless pursuer if he liked a young man:

[H]e was interested in young men, and beautiful young men – that was one criterion, that they had to be very beautiful. And he was very, very persistent because I know stories of his, you know of his persistence in pursuing a young man that later on almost got him into trouble. In fact I think it most probably did get him in some kind of trouble. It was all kept quiet, it was all hushed up. (23)

Many others whom Rive taught, however, found him, as Abrahamse and Preteceille did, an absolute inspiration. One such student was George Hallett, the now internationally renowned photographer. Hallett was a student at South Peninsula and it was Rive, he claims, that set him on the path to becoming an artist. He found Rive's love of the English language and of literature infectious and, coming as he did from an Afrikaans-speaking family, felt he wanted to speak English like Rive. Rive's pronunciation, while

sounding affected to some, was to the young Hallett the model of Englishness, and he asked his teacher how he could improve his manner of speaking the language. Rive advised him to learn bits of *The Tempest* by heart which Hallett duly did, speaking his lines into the wind on the beach at Hout Bay where he lived with his fisher folk grandparents.¹⁰ The very first photograph in Hallett's recent collection of striking images of writers, *Portraits of African Writers* (2006), is of James Matthews and Richard Rive in animated conversation at Rive's Selous Court flat.

Rive also taught at Athlone High School for a few years in the early sixties and again for six months when he was on leave from Oxford. The reason for the brief change of high school is not however clear. One of his students in his standard eight class at Athlone High, Clive Slingers, had Rive as class teacher as well as for English and Latin. Slingers remembers Rive for his "pomposity, his foibles, sense of humour and imposing character".¹¹ He says Rive made one of the boys translate a Latin piece on the board, knowing the boy was fumbling and making up the translation, but forcing him to continue for a long while up front, while passing sarcastic comments like "your mother doesn't love you" and "have you no ambition!" Slingers says Rive read aloud numerous passages to them from classics like Steinbeck and from his own stories and novel. He distinctly remembers Rive reading them his story "Resurrection". Slingers claims of all the teachers he has ever had, Rive is the most memorable.

¹⁰ George Hallett. Informal conversation.

¹¹ Clive Slingers. Telephone interview.

A year after his return from Oxford, in 1975, Rive took up a senior lectureship in English at Hewat Training College where he was to remain for the next fourteen years, till his death in 1989. Taking up a lectureship at his alma mater, where some of those who taught him were still on the staff, must have been cause for pride, especially returning there as “Doctor” Richard Rive. He was at this time back in his flat at Selous Court, and Gray teasingly talks of him at this time as “*Rishard of Saloo Court*” (163). Gray continues in satirical yet warm fashion:

The flat mispronunciation of his name stuck as an affectionate joke and the block was named after the great white hunter, F.C. Selous, no less. There, for the middle years of his existence, Richard crouched, for Selous Court was in the “white” area of Claremont, off Rosmead Avenue, near the racecourse in Kenilworth. He did live in daily dread of a Group Areas Act bureaucrat knocking on the door. When the knock came, after all of twenty years, it did provoke a most restrained short story, “The Man from the Board,” his only one in years, and then about the suaveness of his eviction on the grounds of the colour of his skin. On principle he defied discriminatory laws, and on principle he suffered. (163)

Rive taught English literature and didactics at Hewat. When he can, he continued writing, albeit haltingly, and continued to play an active role in sports administration. Michael Chitter’s biographical vignette of Rive traces his recollection as a young school athlete of a trip to Johannesburg in 1975 under Rive’s supervision. The piece captures the fascination and the fear Rive induced in the minds of his young charges:

[Rive] was part of the teacher contingent that accompanied about one hundred Western Province athletes to the national South African Senior Schools Sports Union Athletics Championships. I was walking alongside him and five other fourteen-year old Western Province athletes....The rule was always to remain obscure in his presence. I was always trying to prevent becoming a victim of his often stinging insults and disparaging remarks.

He had a way with words and most of the youngsters could not avoid hanging around him – even at the risk of become targets. He entertained them with his vocabulary. Any feature along the wayside that reminded us of the Cape Flats would make for entertaining comedy. The secret was to remain relatively obscure, but within earshot of his antics. (103)

He made it known and those around him felt it – he was at the top of the ladder of educational achievement; he was Dr Richard Moore Rive.

While relishing the respectability, he remained radically opposed to racial inequality and relentlessly continued to undermine white superiority wherever he could. Gray tells the story, with obvious relish, of how, probably in 1974, Rive used his influence to get Gray's anthology of Southern African stories, *Writers' Territory* (1973), prescribed to schools under the Department of Coloured Affairs:

Thanks to Richard's influence, Coloured schools were setting it, as it was the only reader to include work by a "non-white" South African (to wit: one of Richard's own stories – banned!) Such was the courage of educational publishers then that Richard's was the *only* [Gray's emphasis] Black South African writer in a heavily

traditional sequence from David Livingstone through Trollope and Haggard to Kipling and Plomer. Heady, apartheid-breaking stuff in those days.

(Free-lancers 164)

While Gray's sarcasm here exposes the conservative and compliant ethos in institutions of the time, he is also demonstrating that what from the vantage point of almost twenty years later seems like a puny and token gesture, was in fact a radical and courageous challenge in pre-1976 South Africa. Rive continued to dare.

Milton van Wyk became acquainted with Rive when he was a young high school student at Livingstone High and his mother, a primary school teacher, enrolled at Hewat in 1975 to do further in-service training. She was in one of Rive's classes and, like many older students who came to Hewat as in-service teachers doing part-time studies, she was impressed by and in awe of this accomplished, highly educated, articulate and well-travelled writer-teacher. Van Wyk recalls:

My mother enrolled as a student at Hewat College of Education in Athlone to upgrade her qualifications in January of 1975 and this is where she had contact with Richard Rive With the fondness for holding a captive audience, Richard would tell his class stories of his travels and his meetings with famous writers. I do suspect the stories were embroidered with the Rive penchant for exaggeration. He admitted later that while being a guest lecturer at Makerere University in Kenya he "nearly discovered Ngugi wa Thiong'o". These stories filtered through

to our supper table where I took an interest in this man who could tell enchanting stories of far away travel and interesting people.¹²

As a consequence of van Wyk's fascination with Rive on hearing his mother's supper-table stories, he began to read all the writer's work he could lay his hands on. He talks of this as his "second acquaintance with Richard" and records his response as follows:

It made me think about my own situation in a rather fractured society. Through his books I learnt to read widely and critically. I could identify with his writing because it was concerned with events, places and characters familiar to me.

Through *Writing Black* ... I learned about African and American authors like Luis Bernardo Honwana and Richard Wright. These authors articulated circumstances not too unfamiliar to mine which prompted questions concerning duplication of situations despite physical distance.¹³

While at Hewat, Rive, in 1976 or 1977, made an application to become a member of the Claremont branch of the Teachers' League of South Africa, the branch in which his old friend Victor Wessels was a leading member and to which another NEUM stalwart, Richard Dudley, belonged.¹⁴ Heneke, who was a very recent recruit to the branch, remembers the meeting at which Rive's application to become a member was considered:

¹² Milton van Wyk. Written memoir in response to a personal interview.

¹³ Milton van Wyk. Written memoir in response to a personal interview.

¹⁴ I became a student member of the Claremont branch of the League in either 1976 or 1977. Heneke remembers that I was part of the meeting at which Rive's membership was turned down and that we were sitting next to each other. I am uncertain as to whether I have only a very vague recollection of the meeting, as I sometimes wonder if I was in fact in the meeting at all.

Without very much discussion the consensus seemed to be that [Rive], because of his lifestyle, shall we say, as they put it then, he was vulnerable and therefore not really desirable as a member of the League, and his application was dismissed. (8)

There might have also been political reasons for turning down Rive's membership. While on a research field trip to South Africa in 1973 to work on his PhD, Rive accepted an invitation from Gessler Nkondo, an English lecturer at the Turfloop campus of the University of the North, whom Rive had met the previous year at Leeds University, to address his students on the topic "The Black Experience in South African Literature" (*Writing Black* 149). Speaking or lecturing at the "bush colleges", a term the League used to point to the separatist and inferior nature of non-white universities, was a contravention of the principle of non-collaboration in those days. That Rive had given a lecture at Turfloop, and his continuous contacts with liberals through his friendships with white writers, must also have militated against his becoming a member of the League.

Rive in all likelihood had some support for his application from Wessels and he must have been tremendously upset at the way the door to membership of the League, political home of those whom he most respected and revered, remained closed to him. This did not diminish his support for the political line taken by the League on various issues throughout his tenure at Hewat, and he continued to be the main distributor of the League's mouthpiece, *The Educational Journal*.

He was at Hewat College, then, when the 1976 student revolts erupted in Soweto and in the rest of the country, marking a turning point in the history of South Africa. For the

next decade non-white schools and colleges in the country were sites of numerous protests that reflected a larger mood of civil defiance and the demand for a new social and economic order in the country. Rive remained active in non-racial sport, continuing to help organise interschool sport, as Hewat College was also a participant in the interschool athletic championships in which high schools participated. He says of this period:

After the events of 1976, I settled down into a steady routine for the next two years. I lectured in English...wrote short stories and articles when the time and inclination allowed and worked desultorily on preparing my thesis on Olive Schreiner for publication. (*Writing Black* 154)

The publication of his first volume of this book on Schreiner's letters was only to materialise almost ten years later. The second volume was never published. But perhaps the description of his work as "desultory" was an accurate reflection of his overall mood and inability in this period to produce anything that fired him or that was new. In 1977 he published *Selected Writings*, a collection of already published stories from the late fifties and early sixties as well as critical essays he had published between 1964 and 1977 in *Contrast*, *New Coin Poetry*, *The New Classic* and *English in Africa*. The collection also contains his most recent story, "The Visits", written seven years before.

The publication of *Selected Writings* came, significantly, after the uprising of 1976, which ushered in an era of renewed hope for the achievement of freedom in South Africa. The publication, together with his doctorate from Oxford, cemented his reputation as a

writer, critic and scholar. It was during this period of the late 1970s, according to Gray, that Rive “repeatedly refused comfortable job-offers at the then mostly segregated University of Cape Town, feeling its Department had as yet hardly acknowledged the existence of South African authors” (*Freelancers* 165).

Selected Writings served both to consolidate Rive’s achievements as a writer after a very trying period in his life and the life of the country and was also perhaps symptomatic of his irrepressible drive to keep himself alive as a writer. The collection reproduced the earlier short stories like “Rain”, “No Room at Solitaire”, “Street Corner” and “African Song”, all first published in *African Songs* in 1963. He made very minor changes to these stories for the new publication, occasionally altering formatting, paragraphing or punctuation to make them slightly more coherent. “Dagga Smoker’s Dream”, first published in *New Age* in 1955, was also included.

The critical essays formed the bulk of the works in *Selected Writings*, as it was the form he had been working on most in the last decade. Unfortunately Rive does not date these texts in *Selected Writing* nor does he identify their provenance. In this regard the bibliography on Rive by Raju and Dubbeld becomes indispensable. Rive had first begun publishing critical essays in 1962, writing then on “‘Colouredism’ and Culture” in *Fighting Talk*. His first of dozens of essays in *Contrast* was published in 1964. It was called “No Common Factor” and in it Rive takes issue with the editors of the recently published *Modern Poetry from Africa*, Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier, who define African writers as being only black African. Rive counters this with his view that “merit, not

anthropological and political interests” should be the criterion for deciding who constitutes “African writers”. Rive claims that by ignoring the work of white African writers like Paton, Gordimer, Lessing, Smith, Plomer, Krige and Rabie, “[t]he African literary experience is incomplete” (*Selected Writings*, 70-71). He feels that there can never be a definition of “African Literature” as there is in fact no common factor between African writers, all of whom are unique individuals. Anticipating the argument that all African writers are the products of the clash between colonial and anti-colonial forces, Rive responds in the essay by declaiming: “I am certainly not the product of a clash of cultures, rather a synthesis of all experience, and the boundaries are more comprehensive than Africa and Europe” (72). The *standort* here reveals Rive’s aggressive humanism that asserts individualism beyond the limits of skin colour or historical place. His thinking demonstrates the influence of non-racialism in opposing “race” as in any way defining identity, and, as he shows in later essays, his antipathy for that reason to the declining influence of Negritude and rising influence of Black Nationalism in post-independent Africa.

In the essay “Senghor and Negritude” Rive traces the rise and decline of the literary phenomenon of Negritude and focuses on work by its main proponents, Césaire, Damas and Senghor. In his assessment of its influence, hallmarks and contradictions, he has drawn on the work of Mphahlele, who in his first and very influential edition of *African Image* (1962) is very critical of negritude both as philosophy and in its literary expression. Rive’s assessment of the poetry of Senghor is remarkably empathetic, more so than Mphahlele who was at that stage more condemnatory of the romanticism he

identified in the work.¹⁵ Rive, however, attacked what, from the point of view of his non-racial beliefs, he saw as the innate racism of Negritude:

Negritude is by definition racist, no matter how hard Sartre tries to rescue it from this charge by means of verbal sophistry such as “non-racist racism”....That which divorces itself accentuates difference....It implies status and hierarchy. Therefore the Black who abstracts himself and seeks protection within race, no matter how valid his reason, is a racist racist. (138)

Rive’s polemic here reveals how his belief in non-racialism and his experiences in the South African literary circles guided his attack on Negritude. It also reveals, however, the limitation of his critique in that while it correctly points to the colour-conscious elements of Negritude, it overlooks the fact that non-racial thinking could not offer a way of privileging the African / colonised over the European / coloniser, and by constantly imagining a single human commonality it downplays the attendant intersections of power that inflect these categories of race and space.

Another interesting feature of a number of Rive’s critical essays (“Arthur Nortje: Poet”; “Taos in Harlem” and “Three South Africans Abroad”) is their reliance on personal, autobiographical narrative to carry an argument. His superlative gift as a story-teller makes these kinds of essays by Rive often more interesting than the more conventional ones using academic register. He creates a form which combines autobiographical anecdote with critical reflection, and which makes such critical work both readable and also personal.

¹⁵ David Attwell points to “the growth of racial self-consciousness” (130) that marked a shift in Mphahlele’s thought away from non-racialism to Pan-Africanism between the first edition of Mphahlele’s *The African Image* in 1962, and the revised one which appeared in 1974.

In 1978, the year after the publication of *Selected Writings*, Rive was awarded a second Fulbright Fellowship to undertake post-doctoral work at the Humanities Research Centre at the University of Texas in Austin, as well as to conduct a series of lectures across the States. In addition, he was given a British Council scholarship to give a series of lectures at universities in the United Kingdom on the return leg of his visit to America. He left for this stint abroad in January 1979, approaching his forty-ninth birthday, but as always keen to travel, explore and engage with others about writing and the politics of race.

His host in Austin, Texas, was Bernth Lindfors, who housed him for a few days till he found accommodation for the two-month stay at the University. The research he intended to do at the Centre was on the letters of William Plomer, but his memoir suggests he was even more interested in finding out about racial attitudes, especially amongst ordinary Americans, given the extent of the coverage on this topic in this section of *Writing Black*. Rive seemed to be taken aback by the extent of the segregated urban configurations in both the city of Austin and at the University of Texas, even thirty years after the first black student had won a legal battle to be admitted to the previously all-white institution. Rive was also struck by the extent to which class and colour intersected in the South, noticing in his memoir that “Blacks and Mexicans are on the lowest rung of the socio-economic scale” (159). He was contemptuous of but also irritated by the extremist views of certain black Americans or those he calls “Professional Africans”, who idealised the African continent and whose virulent and self-centred essentialising assertions of black identity or Africanness Rive regarded as “inverted racism” or sheer opportunism (160 -

163). One such man, simply called “Stewart” in Rive’s memoir, becomes the subject of Rive’s wit when used as invective, a form of insult Rive was particularly good at:

...I was discussing Senghor with a shy Kenyan student when Stewart barged in [to Rive’s office] and sat down. I maintained an annoyed silence.

“I hope I am not intruding,” he said, knowing well that he was. The Kenyan looked embarrassed. Stewart realised that he had to add something.

“You know, I love South African girls.”

“Excuse me?”

“I said I love Zulu girls.”

I felt piqued. “It’s a trifle risky,” I replied dead-pan. “They eat their partners after sex.”

“No kidding!”...

He left soon after. (161)

The highlight of this trip abroad seems to have been the affirmation Rive received as a writer and intellectual at a major international literary conference. During his initial stay at Texas University he had received an invitation to be a keynote speaker at the African Literature Association Conference at the University of Indiana in Bloomington. His paper, entitled “The Ethics of an anti-Jim Crow”, was inspired by his reading of Richard Wright’s *The Ethics of a Living Jim Crow*, whose life he found uncannily “emotionally similar” (*Writing Black* 180). His decision to style his address as an autobiographical narrative about his childhood in District Six and in a racialised society troubled him immensely the days prior to the delivery, leaving him “hesitant, uncertain and insecure”

(180) as he wondered to what extent this audience of experts and luminaries would find meaning in his particular story. He would be speaking to contemporaries like Dennis Brutus, Wally Serote, Bernth Lindfors, Jean Marquard, Lenri Peters and Sheila Roberts, as well as three hundred other writers, publishers, politicians and academics. Gray describes what was to be a pivotal moment in Rive's career as a scholar and writer:

Few memorable moments occur in those so efficient and routine scholarly procedures, but evidently Richard's speech was one such. He was cajoled into jettisoning his slagged-out and now outmoded position paper, and so...hailed forth the musty suitcase of childhood souvenirs instead. This was the very material he had relentlessly repressed in his thrust for respectability. This was Baldwin recovering *The Amen Corner*, or Soyinka his *Aké*. This was Richard, funny and tearful and piercing, without grudges and inspired, putting himself back on the world literary map. So unblocked was Richard ... that in the following decade no fewer than five books would flow from that vein. (172)

The reception of his talk, it can be gauged from his own account and that of Gray, was overwhelmingly positive and he had a string of congratulations on his moving address. It was his paper at this conference that was to become his memoir *Writing Black* two years later.

Before his return to South Africa, Rive took the short trip from New York to Toronto to visit the Manuels and their two children. They, like many middle-class 'coloured' South Africans in the decade after Sharpeville, had emigrated to Canada in 1974, and Rive was to visit them a number of times subsequent to this, the first. Their memories of him are

frank and filled with affection. He was adored by their kids and regarded by them as a “grand uncle”. They remember him sitting with their four-year-old daughter and her colouring book. He was caring and nurturing towards their children. He used to write in longhand in exercise books and would proudly point to one of his texts and proclaim “I wrote this!” They remember his attachment to a grey Parker pen with silver top and a fine nib, writing in his fine, diminutive cursive script mainly in the morning or at night. He also introduced them to Athol Fugard and to André Brink, whose wife, they say, was very maternal towards Richard.¹⁶

Rive, in turn, had kind memories of the Manuels and some of the other émigrés, many of them pupils he had taught at South Peninsula High. But he was scathing of many others he met in Toronto whom he felt typified what he called “the South African emigrant” (*Writing Black* 195). This group, unlike the exile, prefers Canada and Australia to England and Africa, and “ekes out his dull, lower middle-class existence in a kind of psychological limbo” and feels “comparatively safe from the Black South Africans he has left behind since they have neither the means nor inclination to join him” (195-196). In identifying quite accurately the unspoken bias underpinning the lives of these emigrants, he is also branding his own cosmopolitanism as patriotic and pan-African.

After four months in America, Rive arrived in London and stayed in Regent’s Park with Albert Adams before he commenced a lecture tour that took him to the universities of Sheffield, Leeds, York, Sussex, Loughborough and Kent. He made a nostalgic trip to

¹⁶ Ariefi and Hazel Manuel. Personal interview.

Oxford and was flattered to know that he was still remembered by staff at Magdalen; much had changed but many aspects of Oxford life remained as he had experienced them. Oxford, London and Cape Town, he claims in his memoir, are the three places that he could envisage as being home.

On his return to South Africa he is met at the airport by some of his closest friends – Gus and Mabel Jansen, Tony Eaton (they were together at Oxford and Rive was godfather to Eaton’s son, Tom), Victor Wessels, Ian Rutgers and Leonard Du Plooy. Rutgers and Du Plooy, in their twenties, were students whom Rive had supported through their education, and to whom I suspect he was emotionally and physically drawn. Rive had met Rutgers in the early 1970s when he had coached Rutgers’s brother and became a close friend of the family. It seems that Rutgers became Rive’s ward when he was in Standard 8 and lived with him at Selous Court.¹⁷

But despite this warm and fraternal welcome back home, he is once again reminded of the fact that he could not say “I am a South African” (213). However, his sense of Cape Town as his first home must have taken an added dimension when, in December 1979, he signed a contract to have his own house built in the suburb of Windsor Park. No doubt it was an amusing irony to him that he had finally come to live at such a quintessentially English and also “regal” address. According to Albert Adams, Rive accused Adams of being “a queen” when the latter asked Rive to take his feet off his antique furniture in his London home. I wonder if Rive, in his private moments, ever thought of himself in the

¹⁷ Information about Rutgers’s association with Rive in this and subsequent sections was gleaned from various interviews and my own knowledge.

jargon of mock-serious camp register gay men sometimes use, calling himself for example the resident “queen” in his Windsor Park? There is no evidence that Rive ever, publicly at least, even in a playful way, styled himself in this manner. His self-parody did not extend, it seems, to his sexuality.¹⁸ Or perhaps he felt he had had enough of being labelled in life, believing like Butler that “identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalising category of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression” (“Imitation” 13-14).

He submitted his paper from the Bloomington conference to *Staffrider* and had encouraging responses from fellow writers Chris Mann, Stephen Gray and his old mentor, Es'kia Mphahlele, who had by then decided to return from exile. They urged him to turn it into a book. He entered the eighties as a well-established and leading member in the community, in education and in the literary world. He was no longer the “Chokka” of years gone by, but to many he had become “Doc”, an affectionate and reverential nickname that was just one of the many spin-offs from his success at Oxford. Rive was entering the most prolific years of his writing life.

¹⁸ My suspicion that Rive would not “play” at being gay, even in private, is confirmed by Butler’s contention that such play with identity “is the way in which that ‘being’ gets established, instituted, circulated, and confirmed” (“Imitation” 18). Rive resisted any such establishing and confirmation of his homosexuality.



**Illustration 6. Rive at the front door of “Lyndall” with its Skotnes carving.
Source unknown.**

2.4 Reinventing Home: 1980 – 1990

The student revolts of 1976 were the most dramatic and visible sign of the manner in which the balance of power was starting to shift from the apartheid state, which had held firm control of the nation since the Sharpeville crisis of 1961, to the forces opposing it. In the aftermath of the 1976 crisis, the apartheid rulers devised new strategies to attempt to maintain control by creating a policy of independent homelands where blacks could hold “citizenship” and administrative power, whereas in urban areas a “tri-cameral parliament”, in which Indian and coloureds would have a stake, replaced the all-white one. For professionals and intellectuals like Rive, one of the consequences of this strategy was that they were suddenly, in the late seventies, earning a far larger salary than they had been until then. But while this widened an already present class divide within oppressed communities, between professionals and skilled workers on the one hand and the mass of semi-skilled and unemployed workers on the other, it failed to buy the allegiance of intellectuals like Rive. The majority of educated leaders of the oppressed remained implacably opposed to this sham offer of citizenship and power sharing.

By the early 1980s there was widespread mobilisation of workers, students and intellectual activists inside South Africa against the various policies of the state. In the movements in exile there was a simultaneous increase in confidence. The formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in Mitchell’s Plain, Cape Town, in 1983, an internal federation of organisations broadly supporting the ANC, was the most popular and visible manifestation of this increasingly organised opposition. This new surge in organised rebelliousness was in fact a mark of the beginning of the end of the

old regime. Rive's own upbeat determination and spirit of defiance in this post-1976 period were a reflection of this larger social mood and he could say in 1980 that, unlike when *Emergency* was banned just a month after publication, "[n]ow I couldn't care two hoots about whether they banned something or not. But then it was quite frightening" (*Wietie* 2 10).

Rive turned fifty in March 1980 and soon after his birthday, in June of that year, took formal transfer of his newly built house at 31 Windsor Park Avenue, Windsor Park, where he was to live till his death nine years later. Group area legislation was still in place and the area was one of the smartest middle-class coloured residential areas, populated by professionals and their families. At Chitter's insistence that the area should really be called by the more generic, less elitist "Heathfield", Rive retorted: "I do not live in 'Heathfield'! I live in Windsor Park!" (Chitter 104).¹ However, Rive did give Heathfield and not Windsor Park as his address on a copy of his curriculum vitae (dated 1989), showing how he could adopt highly rhetorical positions to argue a point but not quite hold to that view as preciously as he implied in polemic.

Gordimer is even more harshly critical of what she sees as Rive's material aspirations. She writes that Rive was intent on "middle-class comfort, its status of swimming pool and fine car, and took unashamed if not defiant pleasure in getting physically as far away as possible from the ghetto, although his best writings remained rooted there" ("On the Murdered" 25). Gordimer somewhat exaggerates Rive's attempts to distance himself from "the ghetto" – throughout his life he in fact taught in segregated and impoverished residential locations and assisted students from these location-ghettoes.

¹ The term "Heathfield" applied to a wide suburban region denoting a number of smaller areas, which included working-class as well as middle-class residential zones. "Windsor Park", however, a zone within Heathfield, was a distinctly middle-class area.

His desire for suburban comfort was, I suggest, combined with the contrary impulse to re-immense himself continually in the life of the oppressed in the civic and sporting arenas or vicariously through the kinds of poorer young working-class men he desired or lured.

Gray is also critical of what he sees as Rive's quite "flashy" lifestyle and describes his new house in a somewhat exaggerated and unfair manner:

...old Rishard of Saloo was no longer. He was now Dr Richard M. Rive of "Lyndall".... Named after Schreiner's heroine, his high-tech custom-built villa nestled in the reeds of a bird sanctuary, a splendid fortification in Cape Town's permitted elite "coloured" area....There his life-style was conspicuously flashy. One fellow "Coloured" writer, to show his scorn for Richard the sell-out, drunkenly pissed through his study window and over the word-processor. (173)

Richard's house was by no means a "villa" but an ordinary middle-class three-bedroom home with quite an unattractive grey, face brick finish. Gilbert Reines, who only saw the outside of the house after Rive had died, thought it looked grey and "severe" (51). It was on a conventional single plot of 594 square metres, quite close to the road and the neighbours either side, and with no front fence. The sanctuary Gray speaks of, the edges of Princess Vlei, was a row of houses away, and was and still is not properly conserved nor visible from his house. The fellow writer who reputedly "pissed through his study window" was none other than the iconoclastic James Matthews, who was always critical of Rive's pretensions from their first acquaintance in the 1950s, but who remained friends with him to his death.

Around this time Rive also bought a new, fairly large model Toyota sedan, the acquisition of which Gray again quite disparagingly spoofs: “Richard drove, in his new air-conditioned Toyota Cressida, and what with head-rests and piped Vivaldi, I suppose he did resemble some new African big spender” (*Free-lancers* 169). Gray’s exaggeration is done partly to make his subsequent punch line work. At a restaurant where he and Rive are dining, it turns out that fawning waiters have clearly mistaken Rive for Joshua Nkomo rather than recognising him as a prominent writer, as the latter had wishfully thought was the case.²

The front door of “Lyndall” opened onto a spacious lounge and dining room area. The walls of the area that greeted the visitor were covered with original artwork – linocuts by Peter Clarke, sketches by Tyrone Appollis, prints by Gregoire and graphics and paintings by Skotnes and others. Rive was most proud of the large painted and incised woodcarving that formed the inside panel on his front door – a specially designed work by his artist friend Cecil Skotnes. Adams claims that Rive got the idea for a carving on his front door from Irma Stern, who had a Zanzibari carving etched onto her front door.³ When Chitter visited the house he was struck by the works of Peter Clarke, whom he had just discovered at an exhibition in Ocean View. When he shared his excitement with Rive, the latter was quite dismissive of Clarke’s work, saying, according to Chitter’s re-imagined dialogue, that “Peter never developed over the years. Township Art they call it. I call it, Stagnant Art....Pure art and the exploration of finer elements of art is what should prevail. Now look at my Skotnes collection ...” (105-106).

² As a portly and bumptious, dark-skinned, middle-aged man, Rive in fact bore a strong resemblance to Nkomo who was often in the news in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

³ Albert Adams. Personal interview.

The Skotnes woodcut on the door depicted "the bird of wisdom", inspired by the story "The Hunter" by Olive Schreiner. An illustration of the carving formed the cover of the programme to the memorial service for Rive at Hewat College, and the programme claims the following about the carving:

["The Hunter"] tells of a man who sought the bird of wisdom all his life and at the end one feather gently fluttered down and dropped on his breast. This woodcut was the theme of the decoration on the door of Richard Rive's home *Lyndall*, carved by Cecil Skotnes at Richard's request.⁴

The quest for knowledge symbolised by the motif was what probably held so much resonance for Richard – and also that it was a pukka *Skotnes*; the humility also evident in the work was certainly not characteristic of either Richard the man or Rive the writer.

Rive was good friends with Cecil Skotnes and his wife Thelma Skotnes, and visited them regularly either on his own or accompanied by friends. Skotnes composed woodcut illustrations for the cover and interleaving illustrations in Rive's collection of his short stories, *Advance, Retreat* (1983). This continued the tradition of illustrating short stories with original graphics, initiated in his very first edited collection, *Modern African Prose*, with illustrations done by Albert Adams. In fact, even his earliest *Drum* stories were accompanied by large and often lurid hand-drawn pictures graphically illustrating the human drama.

At this stage in his life Rive was also very close to neighbours of Skotnes in

⁴ From "A Tribute to Richard Rive", held at Hewat Training College.

Oranjezicht, Elsa Joubert and her husband Klaas Steytler. According to Gray, [Rive] was passionately enthusiastic about Elsa's success with *Poppie Nongena* of 1978, the first novel in Afrikaans to carry a convincing black point of view. Much of Elsa's impetus derived from her reading of black African literature, including Rive's *Modern African Prose* so many years after the event. (*Free-lancers* 173)

He had also maintained his long friendships with Jack Cope, Uys Krige, and Jan Rabie and Majorie Wallace, all of whom he often visited. Except for Krige, who died two years before him, these older friends outlived him.

Off the lounge at "Lyndall" was the kitchen, stocked with modern gadgetry, and there were two bedrooms and a sizeable study opening out onto a patio and swimming pool area. Ian Rutgers, then a student at Hewat College being supported by Rive, moved in with him and had a room in the house till 1982 when Rutgers moved out to set up his own home. It was in this entertainment area that Rive often had sessions of chatting, strategising, laughing, drinking whiskey and soda, and braaing with his closest male colleagues from Hewat College where he was a senior member of staff and by this time Head of the English Department. It was in his study or on the pool patio where he chatted to young men like Chitter whom he had invited into his home. He was now markedly overweight, with a protruding belly which made his shabbiness of dress more noticeable in his middle age.⁵

While in its comforts and ambiance this suburban home was a far cry from the

⁵ Rive often wore clothes that he liked till they took on an air of being worn and even shabby. He was noted for wearing, at one time or another, for example, a cream Aran wool jersey, large tracksuit pants, his Oxford tie, and a navy-blue blazer. To the extent that he seemed conscious of clothes as a marker of character, he could be considered a dandy, rather than in the more conventional sense of sporting smart, formal attire.

dilapidated and overcrowded inner-city Caledon Street home in the District, it was, like Eaton Place, regulated from the late forties onwards by apartheid authority – it was still an area reserved for a particular “race group”. The comfort of “Lyndall”, where Rive was composing *Writing Black* during 1980, did not diminish the stridency of the voice protesting against racism and inequality. Turning fifty did however seem to temper his ambition, and in an interview in 1980 with Chris van Wyk in the magazine *Wietie 2*, Rive sketches, in a rare tone of modesty, his writing plans for himself in the years ahead:

I haven't got the kind of view, the wide kind of vista that the novelist requires in terms of consistency. The short story is fine, that I can manage. And I would feel that I should go back to my forte, which is short story writing essentially. I'm going to try another novel to see if I can break the voodoo. But I am sufficiently modest to realize what my limitations are. (10)

The publication of *Writing Black* in 1981 by David Philip must have seemed to Rive like the realisation of a dream he had been nurturing for the best part of the last fifty years – he had indeed become a prominent writer nationally and internationally but he continued to remain a non-citizen in his own country. The publication of a memoir could not have been an uncomplicated decision, for to recall names and relationships and actions in a police state could have meant exposing individuals and organisations to the scrutiny of the security apparatus and thereby endangering the lives of particular individuals or their family members and associates. This was certainly one of the reasons why the bulk of the memoir recounts exploits overseas and why perhaps reviewers like J.M. Coetzee found it “superficial” (“Writing Black” 73). Another reason why it does not delve as deeply into what would have been a

fascinating glimpse of the interconnectedness between a private world and a public writing life was Rive's own deep-seated antipathy, for a range of reasons that I reflect on in other points in this work, towards writing about his inner emotional and creative life, even in fictionalised forms. It is very likely that if Rive had written a memoir from the unfettered vantage point of a post-1994 epoch, he would have produced a far fuller account of a writing life and of struggle inside the country. It is also likely, given his silence on the matter, that an exploration of sexual orientation would have remained equally absent from his work.

Wannenburg wrote a review of *Writing Black* for the *Sunday Times* soon after it was published. He was, he claims, careful to give a favourable review, hoping it would help restore the friendship that had been broken off by Rive a few years earlier. However, what seems to have struck Wannenburg about the book was Rive's conscious identification with what Rive calls "Western European sophistication" (*Writing Black*, 18), as opposed to his dis-ease with Africa which, in his rhetoric at least, was the geopolitical location of home:

Something that struck me quite forcefully, however, was that in his account of his travels he seemed to be so ill at ease in Africa beyond city lights and modern plumbing. Flying across the Mediterranean, leaving Africa for the first time, he felt the severing of the umbilical cord, but in a sense it was more of a return to the intellectual womb. Away from the dust and flies and other discomforts of Africa, there was greater lyricism in his writing When writing about Africa, the only tree he mentioned was the noxious alien Port Jackson, but in Sweden he travelled "through pine, fir and silver beech forests interspersed with quiet farmhouses and an ice-blue lake." (*Memories* 38)

Wannenburgh, as intimate friend who later became an antagonist and *persona non grata*, has an ideal insider-outsider perspective on Rive which makes for trenchant biographical observation. As Wannenburgh suggests in the extract above, Rive's cosmopolitanism had as its imagined centre western Europe, but, I would suggest, with the added strains of Harlem and black America, as well as his own origins in the crossings that constituted urban Cape Town.

Chitter's "Richard Rive – The Man", referred to in the introduction to this research as an observant and wry piece, captures the paradoxical amalgam of traits that marked Rive and which is almost always highlighted in more frank and sharp-eyed depictions of his character. Chitter by chance met Rive again on the University of Cape Town campus in about 1983 or early 1984.⁶ In his prose descriptions of Rive, and his recreated dialogue between the two of them, Chitter displays a remarkable ability to capture physical aspects of Rive during those years, his standard attire that many have come to remember, as well as his spoken idiom and attitudes at the time:

I called out to him, "Dr. Rive?"

Somewhat startled, the Writing Black [sic] author, surprisingly returned, "Hello ol' chap ...!"

... "Are you studying here?!" [Rive asks Chitter]

"I'm an art student at Michaelis."

... "Where do you stay?" [Rive asks Chitter]

I tried to answer the question, but was abruptly interrupted. He continued with his barrage. By the next question he had already invited me to his home

⁶ Chitter does not date this encounter but, after what seems like a good few months of contact between the two men, mentions the date 1984. So I assume this first meeting at UCT took place late 1983 or in 1984.

in Heathfield. We waved goodbye.

Left standing, I watched him from a distance striding down University Avenue in a faded blue tight fitting tracksuit, books held under the arm in typical fashion I could not help but notice that he had grown older. Judging from his extended gut, he had also outgrown the faded blue tracksuit he had worn in 1975. Watching him throw back his head and strut along, I could not help but conjure up the vision of an English Fairy Tale Classic. Beatrix Potter's Mr Toad was marching merrily down University Avenue. The University of Cape Town as an institution for the privileged and educational elite perfectly matched the vision. He owned the world and the world owned him. I could not imagine him other than as a "grand academic" – and he surely acted the part. (103)

Chitter's piece is often gentle and kind-hearted towards Rive, but at other times also scathing and cutting, identifying less desirable traits in Rive in terms that will make many nod in recognition. Chitter succeeds in portraying a compound of clashing qualities that constituted both Richard Rive and the reactions of people towards him.

Chitter recalls a number of visits he made to Rive's house in Windsor Park. The young man never addresses the question of Rive's homosexuality, clearly not of interest to him, but he was undoubtedly aware of it. There are times in the text when one can read the presence of Chitter's silent knowledge of Rive's homosexuality between the lines and in the gaps in the prose. Besides the probably unintended play on Rive as a character in a "fairy tale" or the again unintended but strangely suggestive emphasis on eating in the passage below, Chitter's descriptions of the older and younger man deep in conversation on Saturday nights beside the pool do

possibly hint at shared moments of the intensely personal which remain untold to the reader. The next extract, quoted at length because of the wildly oscillating narrative distances / proximities between narrator and subject, suggests in the last two paragraphs such an intense moment of sharing that nevertheless remains veiled to us:

The air was heavy with the pleasant smell of roasted Frankfurters...and his arrogance. They were the largest sausages I had ever seen! He served me one on a plate....he sat down and started hacking at three of the sausages It would be impossible to find such large, meaty and tasty sausages on the shelves of any of our local supermarkets He gobbled at the meat ... slurped, gobbled and gulped, audibly.

... He was self-righteous and his years of experience as a teacher and lecturer stood between me and him. He needed to make that distinction. However I refused to be intimidated and though at first decided not to take him seriously, later visits proved that he was not joking. With the stroke of a wand Richard Rive declared his place of residence to be 'Windsor Park', no matter where people might believe it to be in the Western Cape. He spoke of Buckingham Palace. He led me to his study. I was impressed. The relevance now permeated my mind as I listened to mention he made to "Buckingham Palace, District Six". The title as a by-the-way-matter-of-fact, referred to a book he was busy writing. The information he shared with me concerning this book filtered out of my saturated mind, leaving no lasting impression. The wall-to-wall bookshelves greeted me. An English study, perhaps? I am not too sure. He was in his element. This was Richard Rive at his best.

He shared absolutely everything with me. His thoughts, his emotions and experiences. He did it in a dignified manner.

“My God, he was lonely ...!” I realised for the first time. I felt sorry for him. (104-105)

“I’m writing like hell now” was how Rive characterised his work at the start of the 1980s.⁷ After the publication of *Writing Black*, Rive continued chipping away at the Schreiner book but also started compiling a selection of his short stories for David Philip, as the interest created by the memoir probably provided a new publishing opportunity. He dedicated this new compilation to Candice Rutgers, Ian’s first child, who had then recently been born. With *Advance, Retreat* (1983) Rive recycled his earlier published stories like “Moon Over District Six”, “Dagga-smoker’s Dream”, “Rain”, “The Bench”, “Resurrection”, “No Room at Solitaire” and “The Visits”. Two new stories, which I discuss below, were also added to the collection.

In *Selected Writings* the short stories were reproduced almost exactly as they had appeared in their earlier versions. In *Advance, Retreat*, however, he was asked or seemed to feel the need to make certain changes to the earlier versions, given the markedly different socio-political context of the early 1980s. Some of the stories were now almost thirty years old. In “Rain”, for example, the “Malay” of the original now becomes the “Muslim” (*Quartet* 142; *Advanced, Retreat* 11). Solly, the Jewish shopkeeper in “Rain”, unashamedly blurts in the original “You coloured people are worse than Kaffirs” (143). In the new collection this is replaced by Solly’s nondescript “You also live in a blerry tent?” (12). These changes Rive makes reflect a language and consciousness more in keeping with that of the 1980s, when the blatant binaries of white / black, master / servant, baas / jong of the 1950s had been

⁷ Rive in an interview with Chris van Wyk in *Wietie* 2, 13, 1980.

undermined by a more self-assured and aggressive awareness on the part of the oppressed South Africans, largely as a result of the impact of Black Consciousness. The changes were motivated in all likelihood by a sense of the need to update them as they had lexical and idiomatic elements which were perceived to be “outdated” or even politically incorrect. However, these changes have the effect of diminishing some of the raw, visceral antagonisms that marked social relations in the fifties and early sixties – the portrayal of which gave these early stories their anger and power. The changes unfortunately then also rob them, to a certain extent, of their value as refractions of sociological and linguistic realities of their time.

The two most recently written stories included in *Advance, Retreat* were “Riva” (first published in *Staffrider* in 1979) and “Advance, Retreat” (first published in *Contrast* in 1980) (Raju & Dubbeld 17). Both stories seem to extend the new direction evident in Rive’s stories, first apparent in “The Visits”. This new inflection entails an overlaying and muting of the protesting voice with reflection on the inner suffering of a protagonist who was even more evidently autobiographical than the character-driven early stories. These later stories were also often more satirical and parodic.

“Riva” of the title refers to the character Riva Lipschitz, a Jewish woman of about forty whom the Rive-like narrator, Paul, recalls encountering twenty years earlier when he was a first-year university student climbing Table Mountain with two school buddies. Initially the story seems to cover the familiar ground of colour prejudice and race politics – the three young coloured hikers have to occupy a separate mountain hut to the white Riva who is overbearingly friendly and assertive, at least to Paul, but not to his two friends, who find her entertaining and friendly, making a genuine attempt to

break barriers. We seem to be in the same territory as in the story “Middle Passage” or its play version *Make Like Slaves*, where the autobiographical protagonist encounters a guilt-ridden white female liberal whose patronising politics and views irritate him but about whose missionary zeal and gumption he is strangely curious. But it soon becomes clear from Paul’s descriptions of Riva, of his acute irritation at her appearance, manner, voice and laugh that the intense dislike co-exists with a simultaneous lurid fascination for this woman. Months later he decides on an off-chance to visit her in her jewellery shop in Long Street, Cape Town, accepts an invitation to her decaying tenement flat for tea but then is overcome by the same initial repulsion for her overbearing and eccentric manner, and abandons the offer of tea, walking out on Riva.

Margaret Daymond, in a review of *Advance, Retreat*, compliments the story as one of the more successful in the collection, and one which demonstrates Rive’s ability as a writer to “attain a many-voiced power to reveal otherwise undiscoverable truths” (“Controlling voices” 15). Daymond states that the reasons for Paul’s dislike of Riva “are not articulated but ... are all there in the action” (16). She accounts for the strange relationship in the following terms: “Rive has captured the meeting of two kinds of racial suffering and their competing claims so well that the story has the power to disturb beyond words” (16).

However, a queer reading, also identifying what is “not articulated”, might account for Paul’s attitude in a less obvious way. The closest Paul comes to accounting for his distaste of Riva is when he finally gets himself ready to refuse the tea she is busy making in her dingy Long Street flat by thinking to himself: “I must leave now. The

surroundings were far too depressing. Riva was far too depressing. I remained as if glued to my seat” (70). But this vague explanation is completely unconvincing to the reader who has to decode the paradox by reading beyond this effete explanation and between the lines of Paul’s story. What was it about Riva and her flat that was depressing? He describes her home:

[A]n old triple-storied Victorian building with brown paint peeling off its walls. On the upper floors were wide balconies ringed with wrought-iron railings. The main entrance was cluttered with spiralling refuse bins We mounted a rickety staircase, then came to a landing and a long dark passage lit at intervals by solitary electric bulbs. All the doors, where these could be made out, looked alike Next to the door was a cat-litter smelling sharply ... I entered, blinking my eyes. A large high-ceilinged, cavernous bedsitter with a kitchen and toilet running off it. The room was gloomy and dusty There was a heavy smell of mildew permeating everything Nothing was modern Dickensian in a sort of nineteenth century way. (*Advance, Retreat* 69-70)

The detail in this description makes Riva’s flat remarkably like Rive’s own childhood home, Eaton Place, in Caledon Street. The abhorrence and simultaneous entrancement, as reflected in the minutiae of the description and his very presence there combined with his inability to leave, are perhaps a symmetrical reconstruction of his own ambivalent sense of the place he imagined or remembered as his childhood home. Perhaps the sense of displacement felt in Riva’s space was a symptom of how far Rive imagined he had moved from the decrepitude and disarray of his origins to suburban respectability, modernity and orderliness.

Or perhaps Riva represented an unspeakably dark side of his being, a Hyde to his

Jekyll, that he now fleetingly, yet nevertheless more dramatically than ever before, confronts in the story but cannot endure for more than just an instant. The name Riva itself is possibly a feminised version of “Rive”. The way she is described when he first sees the “newcomer” on the mountain invokes the image of an aberration and androgyne:

A gaunt, angular white woman, extremely unattractive, looking incongruous in heavy, ill-fitting mountaineering clothes I took in her ridiculous figure and dress. She was wearing a little knitted skullcap, far too small for her, from which wisps of mousy hair were sticking. A thin face, hard around the mouth, grey eyes and a large nose I had seen in caricatures of Jews. She seemed flat-chested under her thick jersey which hung down to her stick-thin legs stuck into heavy woollen stockings and heavily studded climbing boots. (*Advance, Retreat* 62-63)

In addition to this bizarre picture created of her by the narrator, Riva is seen to act in a remarkably camp fashion – seeking attention through provocative repartee and insult, indulging in wordplay and exotic self-inflation, exaggeration and ritual, and constantly styling herself as “a queen” – strengthening the reading that it is her overt claiming of alternative, atypical and transgressive camp identities that both repels and attracts Paul. Paul’s consciousness can, I suggest, be read as a telling reflection of Rive’s own conscious and unarticulated perceptions and dilemmas. In an interview in 1989 Rive in fact encourages a reading of his work as autobiographical or as “thinly disguised fiction” (Holtzhausen 5).

This must be one of the few times in his stories where one sees a Rive-like protagonist lose the position of social dominance, control or moral upper hand. Riva beats him at

his own game and her self-assured presence and volubility silence and displace him from centre stage. She has the last, disparaging laugh as he departs, for the story ends with no verbal retort or attempted reclamation of dignity from Paul. He can only say, like one who is dumbfounded and defeated, “I stumbled into Long Street” (72).

This particular reading of the story “Riva” speculates that Rive unintentionally encodes in the piece dilemmas about his desirability and homosexuality – his strong desire to make it in the world on its hetero-normative and middle-class terms on the one hand; on the other, his persistent silences and his secrecy about sexuality.

Reading Riva as an alter ego, there is in the story his sense of himself as aberrant, and consequently, self-loathing, so remarkably refracted through the loathing of the freakish Riva. The reaction of the narrator to Riva is similar to that of the aging scholar Aschenbach in Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*, who is disgusted by what he perceives to be repulsive older men he encounters, but who in fact could be interpreted as representing his own latent homosexuality and marginalisation which he could not name and confront.

“Advance, Retreat”, the other recently written story in the collection, and which gives the book its title, is also symptomatic of these new emphases in Rive’s style as iterated above. The bulk of his published stories in the fifties and sixties had been written in a style of gritty realism, with compact description of the quotidian and pithy, Hemingway-like dialogue, and with the constant presence of the protesting voice. With “Advance, Retreat” we see Rive moving into a more extended burlesque and satirical mode, not primarily concerned with protest as it is with wit, humour and parody.

In this story, the principal of the coloured Retreat Senior Secondary School is a reactionary buffoon who insists on playing the lead in every annual Shakespeare production put on by staff and students. It is his turn to play Macbeth and in this story Rive uses the allocated character names from Shakespeare's play to refer to teachers who challenge the backward politics of the principal when he wants the play to be staged under permit in the whites-only area of Fish Hoek. His main political rival is the senior English teacher, no other than "Duncan" of course (and sounding very much like Rive himself at times), who rallies support to resist the principal's "racial Macbeth" in favour of a "non-racial Macbeth". Both sides of this political spat are ridiculed and laughed at with the very successful play on the relationships between characters in Macbeth and the tensions between them as represented by staff members of the school. While Rive obviously revels in the literary witticisms, irony and Wildean humour that arises, which are at times hilarious but on a few occasions somewhat forced, the story mocks both the politically opportunist and the politically progressive positions on racialism, non-racialism and culture hotly debated at that time. This indulgent, burlesque style was to characterise large parts of the novel *'Buckingham Palace'*, *District Six* which Rive was soon to write.

It is also noteworthy that just under thirty years prior to writing the story "Advance, Retreat", Rive had made his embarrassingly amateurish attempts at pieces that played with Shakespearean style in one of his student pieces in the Hewat College magazine. Now he succeeds with the flair of a slick and experienced writer. Shakespeare has remained a leading god in his pantheon of writers and it is significant that it is Shakespeare and not an African or Afro-American writer that provides the

constitutive paradigm for the parody. Rive is an African writer working in English, but one who continues to draw on – stylistically and for intertextual allusion – and pay homage to the gurus of the English and American canons.

The waves of popular opposition to apartheid rule inside South Africa ushered in by the student revolts of 1976 continued to grow in the eighties; by 1985 the trade union movement had established itself as a major force in resistance politics locally and nationally, the exiled resistance movements had established internal presences and the ANC-inspired United Democratic Front was launched with widespread support in “coloured”, Indian and African townships. More socialist-orientated groups like the New Unity Movement and the Cape Action League had also started to emerge. The organisations with which Rive was associated, the New Unity Movement (a reincarnation of the Non-European Unity Movement) and the South African Council on Sport, had garnered widespread support within civic and sporting associations, and amongst teachers in the province through the influence of the Teachers’ League of South Africa. Both organised and spontaneous resistance had reached such a pitch by mid-1985 that the government declared a state of emergency in October to attempt to quell the tide. Despite the perception that the military might of the ruling class was unassailable, there was an intense optimism and a confidence that the balance of forces had shifted in favour of the struggles of the oppressed in the country.

Hewat College, where Rive had been lecturing for twelve years by 1985, was surrounded by primary and high schools and the contacts between the schools and the college were particularly strong because the schools were used by the student teachers from Hewat for their practice teaching sessions. In addition, the college, moved from

its original premises in District Six to a site on the Cape Flats in 1956, was quite strategically located between two main arteries, Thornton and Belgravia Roads, that lead from central Athlone, the heart of the Cape Flats, down to the townships in the South. When the schools erupted during the protests in 1985 and 1986, Hewat was equally affected. Hewat, like the schools around it, faced a series of student actions like sit-ins, marches, refusals to write final examinations and demonstrations against retaliatory actions of the state, including the closing of the schools. Rive and some of his colleagues at Hewat played a critical role in helping to support, redirect or defend the actions of the students and the wider civil action that the surrounding communities and political organisations had initiated. Besides the school protests, two historic events of this period occurred on or just next to the Hewat campus. The callous shooting of children by policemen concealed in a truck (what came to be known as the Trojan Horse incident) happened in Thornton Road and the regrouping of the march, led by Alan Boesak, from Athlone stadium to Pollsmoor prison to free Nelson Mandela, took place on Hewat grounds.

Rive used this period and these events as the backdrop for what was to become his last novel, *Emergency Continued*, and also for the last short story he was to have published, "Mrs Janet September and the Siege of Sinton". The latter was only the second story he had written which had a female narrative voice, the first being his very early story, "My Sister was a Playwhite". As in the early story, the female narrator here, Janet September, an old woman who inadvertently joins the protests of students against closure of their school, verges on a caricature of the old "coloured" "auntie", very similar to the comic persona created by the contemporary Cape Town comedian Marc Lottering. It feels as if Rive had great fun writing the story, filled with

the vividly drawn narrator and her quaint idiom, homespun philosophy and naïve yet not inaccurate political views. As with the story “Advance, Retreat” and the novel *‘Buckingham Palace’*, *District Six*, Rive has moved from prose in which race politics and protest are pervasive to pastiche, weaving serious political protest with comic, semi-burlesque character portrayal verging on caricature, gentle parody of social mores, and melodramatic plot structure. All these elements, I will argue later in this section, are present in *‘Buckingham Palace’*, *District Six* and make the work a distinct departure from Rive’s earlier major work.

The rise in interest in District Six as a locus refracting the intensifying conflict between the apartheid state and the resistance to racial oppression is accounted for by Vincent Kolbe, himself a child of District Six and founder member of the District Six Museum, in the following manner:

There was immense internal and external pressure on the apartheid order during the 1980s. These were the UDF years. *District Six, the Musical* by Taliep Petersen and David Kramer had a tremendous impact. The more moderate “Friends of District Six” gave way to the Hands Off District Six campaign. HODS held a historic meeting at Zonnestoep in 1988 that mobilised and re-energised a whole range of people. (15)

Rive was an active supporter of the Hands Off District Six campaign, and, by 1988, his novel was seen as iconic of the resistance to forced removals and as part of the new call for the reclamation of the District and its return to the people who lived there. Siraj Desai, a central figure in the Hands Off District Six campaign, remembers chatting to Rive at one of the organisation’s protest gatherings in the derelict remains of the District in 1986, and recalls that Rive’s witty response to the pamphlets being

distributed (calling for “Hands Off District Six”) was “Aren’t you chaps twenty years too late?”⁸ Symptomatic of the surge of interest in resistance, heritage and reclamation, *‘Buckingham Palace’*, *District Six* appeared in the same year – 1986 – as the enormously popular musical by David Kramer and Taliep Petersen, *District Six, The Musical*.

For the last four decades of his adult life Rive had been campaigning against one or other form of racial injustice. By the mid-1980s he had achieved a reputation as a leading and flamboyant literary and civic figure in local and national anti-apartheid struggles. He continually insisted, in both his novel and his critical essays, that the struggle for District Six was to be seen not as singular but as representative of all forced removals around the country. His fiction and critical works influenced the thought of fellow activists and intellectuals trying to reconceptualise memory, space and identity. Rive’s refrain in his novel, often mouthed by the hero / gangster Zoot but clearly authorial in voice, that District Six “was never a place – that it was a people” (*‘Buckingham Palace’* 198), is a rhetorical articulation of his position that physical space and human dignity are inextricably interconnected. Artist Peggy Delport, for example, in her work on aesthetic memorialising of District Six, “Signposts for Retrieval: A Visual Framework for enabling Memory of Place and Time,” quotes as an epigraph Rive’s notions of the dynamics between space, people and perception:

A sense of place must also be a sense of people or lack of people. If you attempt to destroy a place you also attempt to destroy a people In literature place ... is a locale, a circumscribed area or stage on which something is to

⁸ Anecdote told to me by Desai during an informal talk on 28 January 2006, Kingsley Road, Salt River.

happen. To have a sense of place is to have an empathy and identification with that place, a mental attitude towards and appreciation of it. (qtd. in Delport 31)

The novel *'Buckingham Palace', District Six* started its life in 1984 as a commissioned newspaper story about a child's Christmas in District Six.⁹ It eventually grew into a semi-autobiographical novel about colourful, memorable characters in a row of houses called "Buckingham Palace", a fictionalised version of "Eaton Place", in Caledon Street in the District. The row of houses is inhabited by Zoot, the petty-gangster, bouncer and poet; Mary, Madame of the Casbah; the conservative Mrs Knight, her husband the barber and their three daughters, Faith, Hope and Charity; a Muslim family called the Abrahamses, and a young Rive and his family. Katzen, a Jewish shopkeeper in the District who escaped from Germany during the holocaust, is landlord of "Buckingham Palace." The vivid and often witty descriptions of the characters and the place are filled with affection, humour and a strong sense of irony. "Eaton Place" and District Six have now lost that overriding sense as places of despair that coloured their depictions in the earlier fiction and even in "Riva". They have become places that assert alterity and resistance, and are marked by renewed hope for reclaiming them, against all odds, as the spaces of an imagined homeland.

The novel, spanning a period of fifteen years, traces the effects of the forced removal of people from District Six, which had been declared a whites-only group area in 1966. It is both a humorous reconstruction of character and communality in the

⁹ In an interview with Mark Bowman in *South* in 1989 Rive says: "Five or six years ago a local newspaper asked me to write something about a child's Christmas in District Six. I tried to start something every June for a few years until, in 1986, I got stuck in and it just took off. I realised it had become a novel" (n.p.).

District and an equally hard-hitting critique of the destructive and dehumanising nature of the Group Areas Act in particular and the apartheid system in general. The villain of the novel is in fact the Group Areas Act and those functionaries and beneficiaries who enforced and colluded with it. The forced removal that ensued after 1966 destroys the homes, lives and friendships depicted in the novel. The narrator in the novel recalls: “We fanned out in many directions like the spokes of a cart wheel Everyone died a little when it was pulled down” (126). Like all the rest of his short stories, novels and critical essays, *‘Buckingham Palace’*, *District Six* reflects Rive’s unflagging opposition to racial oppression. What was initially conceived of as a story about a child’s Christmas in District Six became a protest against forced removals.

The episodic story is told in three parts, set in 1955, 1960 and then again in 1970. This span of time allows Rive to create a sense of the community prior to the ravages of forced removals, and then to depict the destructive effects of racial tyranny as the community is fractured by forced dispersal. The triptych structure, which allows the fate of the community to be mapped from organic integrity to imminent threat to tragic fragmentation, is symbolically reinforced with the fairly obvious naming of the three parts as “morning”, “afternoon” and “night”. Each of the three parts is introduced by an italicised narration that is clearly styled as an individual, largely autobiographical reminiscence of people and places: “I remember” is how the novel starts. The narrator is in fact also called “Richard” (76). Most of the detail of place, character and plot in the italicised interludes is a fictionalised account of Rive’s own experiences in District Six. The main narrative in each part is more patently a fiction, drawing on Rive’s encounters in the District and based on characters he had known,

observed or imagined. The narrator in these main narratives is not Rive himself, as promised in the interludes, but a nameless, anonymous narrator who is equally intimate with the area. The main stories are thus embedded within strongly autobiographical memory, yet at the same time assert a distance and independence from Rive that allow the characters and the locale to become a reconstruction of a past that is concurrently egocentric and nostalgic, eccentric and parodic, as well as generic and emblematic.

The first part of the novel and most of the second recreate life in District Six with “Buckingham Palace” acting as a microcosm of the trials and tribulations of the characters. The narrative of character and place throughout these two sections which celebrate life in the District has a melodramatic quality and sense of affectionate parody. Mary is introduced as follows:

In her days of innocence before her personal fall, Mary Bruintjies lived in her own particular Eden, which was a mission station deep in the heart of the Boland. She was young and buxom and known in those days as Baby-face Mary because of her childlike look of artlessness. She was the only daughter of Pastor Adam Bruintjies. During the day she attended the village primary school where she learnt reading and writing, and at night, when she wasn't at Brigade meetings and was playing instead with boys on the *werf*, she learnt other things which interested her more Her fall was sudden.(8)

Within the very first sentence we face the drama of our heroine's fall from innocence, clearly as a result of her promiscuity. The extended metaphor of creation and fall used to frame Mary contrasts with her humble, rustic origins and her own naïvety, and results in a tension in the prose between high literary allusion and language on the one

hand, and the ordinariness of the comic character and her circumstances on the other. This often results in bathos and humour, and the narrative tone verges on that of farce in places. The obvious sexual innuendo in the description of Mary with the boys, extended later in a stock situation with Mary's handling of her church brigade "baton" and philandering with the married bass-drummer, makes for bawdy, almost predictable humour. Mary thus becomes both mythical and caricatured, as is the case with the other main character, Zoot.¹⁰ A narrative tone that is both idealising but also parodic pervades the descriptions of place, character and event in the first two sections. Perhaps having a younger audience in mind helped Rive invent the attractive pantomime quality that marks the first two sections. When the first real threat to the old way of life in the District arrives in the form of Inspector Engelbrecht from the Group Areas Board, the celebratory, humorous and parodic tone gives way to a seriousness and mood of looming tragedy that dominate the final section, "Night".

In 1955, Rive was twenty-five years old, but in order to convey a sense of a child's experience in the District, the narrator recreates himself as a ten-year-old at the start of the novel in that year. While this juggling with autobiographical and fictional time leads to a few anachronistic details, the mix helps to create an impression of vibrant and imaginative verisimilitude rather than detracting from the authenticity of the work.¹¹ The poetic, lilting quality of the narrator's reminiscences has clearly drawn on the prose of Dylan Thomas who, together with Shakespeare, Wilde and Shaw, was

¹⁰ On the origin of the name Zoot, Stephen Gray's comment is instructive: "*Drum* saw the potential of the posed zoot suit. You know tsotsi's meant to be a corruption of zoot suit ... fashionable clothes, Florsheim shoes, white hats that came from gangster movies By April 1956 there was a character that *Drum* launched, called Willie Boy, which was given to Richard Rive, Peter Clarke and James Matthews to write about. And then Alex La Guma took it up as well" (qtd. in Miller, 5).

¹¹ Robin Malan, in his 1996 editorial notes to the David Philip educational edition of the novel, points out that the comics the young Richard claims to read were completely outdated for a fifteen-year old in 1960 (201).

one of Rive's favourite writers from the canon.¹² Rive was fond of playing recorded readings of Dylan Thomas's work like his paean to his childhood years, *Under Milkwood*, and poems like "Fern Hill". In the opening lines of the novel, Rive's lyrical phrases, which use hard consonant compounds like "the ripe, warm days...split tree stumps and wind-tossed sand ... [w]hen I was a boy and chirruping ten", echo Thomas's alliterative musicality as in "Fern Hill": "Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs / About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green". These narrative interludes in the style of Thomas provide some of the most strikingly lyrical passages in the work. Wannenburg also points to the influence Steinbeck had on the novel:

Reading the novel, and seeing the play, I was however, struck by how little Richard's perception of his subject matter had changed in a quarter of a century. When we talked late into the night at Selous Court, the literary format we visualised for District Six was greatly influenced by Steinbeck's *Cannery Row*, and Richard still hadn't shed that influence when he eventually wrote the novel. ("Memories" 31)

I suspect that rather than trying to combat the influence of Steinbeck as Wannenburg wants, Rive would have deliberately or perhaps even less consciously mimicked the work of Steinbeck and of Thomas – icons in his eyes of great American and British writing.

The structure of the novel – three italicised authorial reminiscences about District Six at the start of each of the three parts, followed by a fictional recreation of those periods – suggests that the preoccupation of the work is the contestation over

¹² The influence of Thomas on Rive's style in the novel was first pointed out to me by Colleen Radus, a colleague of mine at Hewat College.

memory; official narrative and state propaganda are counterpoised with the notion of popular memory as a weapon against tyranny. Both the quasi-autobiographical sections as well as the fictional sections ring with refrains like “And I still clearly remember the characters and the incidents” and “We must never forget.” Rive was writing this novel in the mid-1980s, a time when apartheid, although still firmly in place, was in fact crumbling because of heightened local resistance and reconfigurations in global power relations. Rive was asserting memory coloured in a particular way, contesting what the racist authorities would want remembered or forgotten. At the end of the novel, as the final forced removals from the District take place, we hear Zoot (whose sentiments are clearly those of Rive at this point) using sharply polarising deictic terms to proclaim:

We knew that District Six was dirty and rotten. Their newspapers told us so often enough. But what they didn't say was that it was also warm and friendly. That it contained humans. That it was never a place – that it was a people. We must tell how they split us apart and scattered us in many directions like the sparks from this fire. They are trying to destroy our present but they will have to deal with our future. (197)

As in much of black literature under apartheid, here we find the strongly contrastive “they” and “we”. In Rive’s counterpoint, the dehumanising racism of the regime is being contrasted with the humanising resistance by asserting human integrity and commonality. In one of the last interviews with him before he was stabbed to death, Rive spoke to Evelyn Holtzhausen about what the novel, and the play based on it, meant to him:

I want people to remember what happened to District Six so that it can never happen again. I want people to be proud of the past they have been denied by

official decree. It's not the rubble of their homes that's important to remember but what it symbolises – an ideology that allowed the destruction of lives and homes and attempted to wipe out a people's past. (Holtzhausen 4)

In *'Buckingham Palace', District Six* Rive's non-racial beliefs are refracted through the assertions made by the narrator and the characters. Morality and history, for example, are not on the side of the racists, according to the rhetoric of the narrator: "What men," he asks, "have the moral or political right to take away a people's past?"(128). We are constantly reminded through the pluralising of place and character that the story of the District we are witness to is emblematic of a wider South African and international struggle against racist tyranny. Zoot, in his farewell speech to Mary, the matriarch of the group, declares, "We are not eight. We are eight thousand, more than eight million. We are all those who suffer in this sad land" (188). And again later he says, "they can never destroy our Marys" (191). Katzen, the Jewish landlord who owns the row of houses the characters inhabit, aligns himself with the group in their resistance to the removals despite being classified as "white". He invokes his experiences as a Jew in Nazi Germany to draw parallels and point to ironies which further damn the racism of the National Party and lauds the antithetical alternative of non-racialism as the envisioned social matrix – a place which is home to all, irrespective of colour, class, origin or religious belief. The fiction is attempting to imagine a new world beyond race and racism.

A fascinating correlative of Rive's non-racial outlook was his attitude towards the use of dialect in his fiction and in his play version of *'Buckingham Palace', District Six*. Unlike writers like Adam Small and Athol Fugard, Rive consciously refrained from

using full-blown dialect for characters who would have spoken in a distinctive working-class patois sometimes called “Kaaps”, that mixture of English and Afrikaans and invented expressions. Rive’s NEUM brand of non-racialism insisted that Kaaps was a debased and demeaning language, as was Cape “Coon” culture, encouraged by the apartheid authorities and writers like I.D. du Plessis in order to assert the ethnicity and distinctness of the “coloured race”. As Wannenburg suggests, “Richard was suspicious of any concession to the vernacular of the Cape Flats, regarding it as a compromise with ‘colouredism’ ” (“Memories” 33).

Rive refused to use this local dialect in his fiction, even when the characters he sketched would have spoken it. Characters in *‘Buckingham Palace’*, *District Six* like Zoot, Pretty Boy and Oubaas speak nothing near the full-blown dialect such gangster characters would have used in District Six. Rive finds it sufficient to hint at such dialect through the Afrikaans nicknames (such as Oubaas and Moena Mooies) and through occasionally using Afrikaans nouns like “koeksisters”, “kinderfees”, “stoep” and words like “onder kuffiyeh”. These lexical suggestions of a dialect, together with other details of place and character, succeed nevertheless in giving the novel a strong sense of local colour. Rive’s own joy at playing with words and his penchant for quoting and showing off his large vocabulary give rise to the wit, irony and humour at times but also detract from the authenticity of character as we hear gangsters engaging in very Rive-like talk. When Zoot, for example, addresses the barber Last-Knight as “my worthy tonsorial friend” (85), we can hear Rive himself ostentatiously mouthing these overly literary words. Wannenburg also finds the “educated speech” in the District Six characters inauthentic:

There is something of the sympathetic outsider in [Rive's] writing about the District. The words mouthed by his characters are often studied simplifications of educated speech – as in the American proletarian fiction, written by non-proletarians, in the thirties – homogenized and lacking the colour and rhythms of the vernacular. (“Memories” 31)

'Buckingham Palace', District Six has been read largely as an imaginative reconstruction of life in District Six which concomitantly serves as political protest against the destruction of the community. But the novel can also be read as the imaginative recreation of alternative family structures. Perhaps Rive's new location, comfortable yet alone in his Windsor Park home in the 1980s, made him reflect more deeply about the nature of family.¹³ Perhaps the inscription in the novel of alterity is not a conscious encoding on Rive's part but again a sub-conscious subtext that lurks beneath the surface of the text dominated by authorial intention of protest and reclamation. Or, perhaps, these “alternative readings” are creations of queer readings which realign the dominant reading eye to unveil new meanings that would otherwise have remained hidden by hetero-normative discourses. As Brenna Munro claims, “queer theory destabilises our ways of thinking about subjectivity and the social” (2).

Examples of such a queer reading could see, for example, Mary's family as being constituted by the women of her bordello, the Casbah, and Zoot's as creating an all-male home with his fellow outcasts Pretty Boy and Oubaas – both marginalised groups yet the most caring and humane social structures in the book. These two gendered families are separate yet joined together in a row of units in the same

¹³ Even though Rutgers lived at the house for the first two years, his presence must have been a frustrating one in that, like the student in “The Visits”, Rutgers was no doubt often absent, especially over weekends when he visited his girlfriend and family.

physical structure, and there is constant movement between the two. It is Mary who most often provides the real maternal care and refuge. She takes in the young Moena Mooies when she has been abused by Mr Wilkens, and it is to Mary whom Faith turns, and not her mother, Mrs Knight, when she has been molested by Elvis. Zoot tries to date the upper-class Jennifer but the relationship fails, and Zoot realises he is happier and more comfortable living with Pretty Boy and Oubaas. All families, including these reconfigured ones, are destroyed by the apartheid bulldozers. It is from these alternative families though that the primary resistance to the forced removal originates. Zoot and Mary play leading roles in organising the resistance to the forced removals. Rive's childhood home at "Eaton Place", filled with trauma and alienation, has been reinvented in this fiction as an ideal form, where the marginalised are at the centre and where love is defined by communal compassion rather than conventional heterosexual relationships.

The novel has become Rive's best-selling work. It was a prescribed work for matriculants in the Western Cape from 1997 to 1999 and is still set by teachers at other grade levels throughout the country. It has been published in Holland, the United Kingdom and America, and translated into Italian, French and Spanish. It is, I think, Rive's most successful work of fiction, both in terms of sales and in terms of impact and critical reception.

I now want to examine the novel transformed into its various versions as a play. In 1988 I worked as an English lecturer at Hewat College of Education where, as I have mentioned, Rive was Head of the English Department. Colleen Radus, a colleague in the department, and I decided to stage a Bernard Shaw play with the students. Rive

overheard this and berated us for clinging to the canon, for not doing something more local. Rive remembers this incident in an interview in *South*:

In a moment of rashness I said I would re-write '*Buckingham Place*', *District Six* from book form into a play. It took me about seven weeks of writing morning and night and then it still had to be cleaned up.

Rive spent his summer vacation of 1987 / 88 transcribing his novel into a play for the Hewat production in September 1988. He then reworked this adaptation in collaboration with Fred Abrahamse into a script for the Baxter production in 1989.

Grand but accurate claims were made in the programme notes about the import of the production at the college:

The play could claim to be the first entirely indigenous drama production in the history of College theatre in this country. Members of the Hewat staff and students are responsible for everything from the script to the designing of the sets. ("Hewat College Presents", n.p.).

The production lived up to the hype and a committed cast with huge amounts of energy made the play a resounding success. The other dimension that made the play work so well was the use of period song as well as original music composed by music lecturer Alvin Petersen and two of the students. This achievement and the tremendous enthusiasm unleashed in the lead up to and during the production were primarily a result of the vision Rive had to foster local literature. The student cast was encouraged by the fact that the play drew on the very histories of their families, neighbours and themselves, and the experience generated a great deal of interest in local history, musical tradition, literature and politics.

Two aspects of the script reveal how Rive worked and thought. For the student cast at Hewat, director Colleen Radus and I split the large chunks of narration by the narrator into two parts, a male and female, mainly to help create some variation in voice in what were often lengthy speeches. Rive seemed merely to have transformed huge chunks from the italicised interludes in the novel into monologues for the character-narrator. This would have resulted in large, undramatic periods in the play and slowed down the pace of the production enormously. His one-act play *Make Like Slaves*, the one-act play from his short story “Resurrection”, and his Hewat script for the ‘*Buckingham Palace*’, *District Six* play reveal the work of a prose writer who, while often producing dramatic and striking dialogue, was not really a playwright by instinct.

The other intriguing feature of Rive’s script was that he refused to use dialect in the dialogue of the District Six characters. For the Hewat production, Colleen Radus and I encouraged student actors to introduce local Cape dialect into the play. Rive was not happy with the way we altered his script for the Hewat production, not only cutting the lengthy narrator’s speeches but also changing some of the standard English lines of the characters into dialect. He was infuriated when we claimed that we needed to create authentic speech for the characters and he retorted: “I write so that people all over the world can understand” (or words to that effect). In the professional production at the Baxter, the actors conveyed a sense of dialect mainly by inflecting Rive’s standard English dialogue with local accents.¹⁴ While the characters in Rive’s fiction were often drawn from the local poorer classes, he saw his readership as being a broader, more intellectual and international one. On the use of popular dialect, he

¹⁴ Basil Appollis, who played Rive in the 1989 Baxter production, shared this information with me in a talk I had with him in May 1998.

differed from his mentor Hughes, whose life-long use of the language of the blues in much of his poetry and plays was an indicator of his desire as a writer to write constantly about and for “his” people. Rive felt he could do exactly the same by using largely standard forms of English with mere hints of dialect. Unlike Hughes, Rive, the cosmopolitan humanist, was not a proponent of “the blues” – idiom of the black soul.

Rive quite liked the student who played the part of Zoot in the Hewat production, Rowan Esau, and Esau in turn paid due obeisance to Rive, in which of course the latter revelled. Esau’s cousin happened to be Milton van Wyk, who then finally got to meet Rive when he accompanied Esau and Rive to a play at the Baxter, at Rive’s invitation. Van Wyk tells the story of this meeting and of Rive’s response:

The first time I met Richard he unceremoniously boomed: “Do you know who I am?” I was really in the fortunate position not to be humiliated, so I responded in the affirmative: “Yes, you are Dr Rive.” One dare not call him anything but Dr Rive. “And have you read any of my books?” was the next salvo. I explained to him that I had read everything that he had published thus far and we became immediate friends. I became known to him as “that good UCT student”.¹⁵

One sees here Rive’s slipping into a role – that of the celebrity / writer – and thoroughly enjoying the game he is playing. He plays this role so slickly and predictably, so self-consciously, that the performance begins to have the feel of parody or even farce. Yet, at the same time, he seems to be taking himself seriously and is truly thrilled at the idea that his works are known to the young man. Parody and self-inflation become indistinguishable to the viewer and perhaps even in the mind of

¹⁵ Van Wyk. Written response to a personal interview.

the performer. Literary and psychological conceit conflate to create the literary dandy Rive so often became.

Van Wyk continues his account of the night out with Rive, and his story quite consciously captures the role Rive often played in company where he ruled the roost, but also aptly depicts the talent of the raconteur able to spin his experiences into memorable tales. The account also conveys a particular kind of behaviour, vocabulary and manner Rive adopted when in company where he felt completely at ease and able to be over the top:

After the theatre production he would always insist that he buy the penurious students supper. I vividly remember a meal at “La Grotto” Seafood restaurant in Plumstead. I thought it impolite to impose on Richard even though he had thrown a brace of impressively looking credit cards on the table while trumpeting: “Order anything, I’m rich!” I suspect it was not so much a gesture of magnanimity as much as a word play on his name. I ordered the smallest item on the menu and when it did arrive, dwarfed by his portion of Lorenzo Marques king prawns, he rolled his eyes and in a belittling way bellowed: “You ordered that?” An evening out with Richard always meant ending it at his home for coffee and a heated discussion / argument on the merits and demerits of African writing. He would entertain us with stories of writers coming to his home and ending up physically fighting with other writers. The famous story was about James Matthews bringing then unknown poet and author Pascal Gwala around to meet Richard. After drinks James and Pascal got into a heated argument which ended up in fisticuffs all around Richard’s library. Richard meanwhile sat back, as he was prone to do, and surveyed the

fracas, mildly punctuating the brawling duo with: “Mind the computer! Don’t break my table! Put that chair down, James!” Apparently while driving the two home later that night the scuffle broke out again and Richard was forced to stop the car as the duo resumed their fisticuffs on the pavement.

The Hewat version of the play had been such a success that the Baxter Theatre decided to stage it. The Baxter production took place a year after the one at Hewat and was the first fully professional performance of a stage play written by Rive. That it was to be held at the Baxter must have given him an even greater sense of both cultural and political achievement. A University of Cape Town-affiliated theatre, the Baxter was boycotted by Rive and those aligned to non-collaborationist principles in the 1970s as a result of a government permit it had to have to allow for “multi-racial” audiences. Because of his involvement in school and college sport in the 1970s, Rive was a member of the South African Council of Sport, the most popular expression of non-collaborationism at the time. From being a protesting voice outside the bounds of the Baxter to taking centre stage in its largest theatre just a decade later was a crowning achievement of his writing and, as he would have styled it, his “thespian” life. Like his early hero Hughes, he was now short story writer, essayist, novelist and also playwright. And as he worked with Basil Appollis, who was playing “him”, in preparation for the run and opening night, Rive surely felt the ironic echoes of thirty six years earlier when as an aspirant writer he accompanied Hughes to the Strand Theatre in London to see *Black Nativity*:

I arrived first and soon afterwards a taxi pulled up and a beaming Langston alighted. Overhead, neon lights flickered “*Black Nativity* – Langston Hughes. *Black Nativity* – Langston Hughes”. He beamed more broadly Langston

grinned at the ticket clerk and said conspiratorially, “I would like two tickets for Dick and myself. I am Langston Hughes, I wrote the book.” (*Writing Black*, 104)

He was not to see the opening night on June 19. Appollis claims that “[o]n the afternoon of his death, Richard left a dress rehearsal at the Baxter Theatre saying: ‘Now I can die’” (“A Writer’s Last Word” Programme n.p.). Was this a strange prescience of what was about to happen, or just a case of how with hindsight we attach import to the colloquial? Later in this section I suggest there was possibly another such instance where he had an uncanny premonition about his fate.

The opening night of the play was one of the strangest theatrical experiences of my life. There was such a pervasive sense of absence, of death, and such a searing sense of presence, of ghostly reincarnation, as Appollis, so much like Rive in looks, voice and manner, became Richard in his absence. Reflecting on the experience,

Wannenburgh recalls:

Basil Appolis [sic], who portrayed Richard, the narrator, wandering through the scenes of his childhood, played him so true to the original in appearance and manner of speech and movement that it was difficult to shrug off the feeling that the portly figure in blue blazer, grey flannels, black shoes and outsize cricket jersey – the uniform he wore when we first met and was wearing still when I last saw him a month before he died – was in fact Richard. (“Memories” 29)

Rive, it seemed that night, was not going to let us forget.

The University of Cape Town production of '*Buckingham Palace*', *District Six* at the Little Theatre in 2000 was based on Rive's Baxter script but with a few more cuts, more varied narration and a few newly scripted scenes. Under the direction of Basil Appollis and a cast of drama students, the characters were given a vibrant, larger-than-life quality through the use of vivid and changing lighting and imagined rather than real spaces. Unlike the previous productions, the emphasis in this one was on the theme of memory and the necessity for telling and retelling stories. The set was not the conventional realistic depiction of a District Six row of houses but instead bare, angled walls and the floor space had plain platforms at various levels. Both lighting and set reinforced the interpretation that the play was about memory, nostalgia and imagination, rather than about a particular time and place. It has been, for these reasons, the most striking production of all the versions of the play I have seen.

The 2002 Artscape production of the play was the second large-scale, professional production since the first one at the Baxter thirteen years earlier. The cast included well-known actors like Soli Philander as Zoot, Shaleen Surtie-Richards as Mary, Royston Stoffels as Father Rowland and Denise Newman as Moena Mooies. Basil Appollis both directed it and again played the role of the narrator. The performances drew packed and appreciative houses but the critical reviews were mixed. The play went on for too long – a problem common to many of the various stagings as they tried too hard to trace in detail the storylines of various characters – and the production would have been improved by making cuts to the script. The play won a Vita award for best ensemble performance, reflecting how it succeeded in conveying the sense of community that is at the heart of the work. The production captured a wide range of the emotions and tensions in the novel, illustrating what for Appollis,

quoting his favourite Rive lines, is at the heart of the writer's work: "You learn, if you reject [Jim Crow], how to feint, how to dodge, how to mask your resentment, how to insulate yourself against hurt by laughing too loudly or shouting too wildly" (*Writing Black* 8).

In contradistinction to this reading of the work as a complex and nuanced fiction, Mda dismisses it as purely nostalgic when he criticises it as typifying the wave of "removals theatre" (214):

[these works are] of varying merit that look nostalgically at life in the townships and where people are forcefully removed. These include *Sophiatown* by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company, *Kofifi* by Sol Rachib, *Buckingham Palace*, *District Six* by Richard Rive, and *District Six: The Musical* by David Kramer and Taliep Peteresen (sic). (214)

It is not clear which particular production of the novel Mda is referring to or if he is making this criticism of the actual novel, but all four major productions I have seen as well as the two school productions,¹⁶ while varying in quality and also in the emphasis placed on realistic interpretation of place and character, inevitably combine nostalgia with wit, parody and, unavoidably because of the original plot and ending, political protest.

¹⁶ The major productions I refer to are the Hewat College production under the direction of Colleen Radus with Shaun Viljoen and Marina Lotter acting as assistant directors, and scripted by Rive (1988), the Baxter production under direction of Fred Abrahamse with script by Rive (1989), the University of Cape Town Drama Department production under the direction of Basil Appollis with script adapted from Rive's original and the novel itself by Basil Appollis and Shaun Viljoen (2000) and the Artscape professional production under the direction of Basil Appollis with script adapted from Rive's original and from the novel by Basil Appollis, Shaun Viljoen and the cast (2001). The two school productions I refer to were by Garlandale High School, under the direction of and with original music composed by Basil Snayer and Edmund Bourne (2002), and an Artscape-funded school production called "Caledon Street, District Six" under the direction of Fahruq Valley-Omar with choreography by Christopher Kindo (2004).

Ann Smith and Claudia Mitchell provide a more useful though not entirely accurate account of the macro socio-economic context for the production of Rive's novel and thus a more productive way of seeing Rive's text than the categorical dismissal by Mda. *'Buckingham Palace', District Six*, it could be argued, is a recreation of a child or adolescent perspective on the course of events portrayed. Smith and Mitchell, in looking widely at southern African and African fictional depictions of childhood, argue that, in line with a view taken by Lekan Oyekgoke, "the material and social conditions of South Africa since 1976 have meant that childhood has also come to be linked more and more directly to political activism and social change" (289-290). While the post-1976 period in South Africa did foment a resurgence of political expression and activism, social change and political activism had been settings for rites of passage narratives in very striking ways in the 1950s, with the publication of autobiographical fictions by Abrahams (*Tell Freedom* in 1954) and Mphahlele (*Down Second Avenue* in 1959). Both these books had made a lasting impression on Rive and encouraged the imbrication of autobiography in fiction from very early on in his writing career.

For Rive the staging of his novel, first at Hewat, then with the prospect of the professional show at the Baxter, was a landmark in his career as a writer. That Rive died at the peak of his literary life, and at the hands of two young men not dissimilar in social standing to his petty-gangster hero Zoot are sad ironies that all too often marked his life. Those of us who knew Rive during the build-up to the Baxter production in June 1989 remember his puckish, puffed-up pride at the fact that his creations like Zoot and Mary and of course Richard-the-narrator had finally become "thespians", as he liked to say in his mock-Oxford accent.

Sensing renewed interest in the work of Rive in the wake of the publication of *Writing Black*, the pending work on Schreiner, and the great success of ‘*Buckingham Place*’, *District Six* from a publisher’s point of view at least, David Philip also republished Rive’s first novel, *Emergency*, in 1988. It is likely that Rive had by 1988 agreed with David Philip to do the sequel to his first novel and republication of the prequel would thus make sense.

Of Rive’s creative energies in the eighties Gray says that “he could not stop writing, and rewriting, his past, feeling the future close” (*Free-lancers* 158). The period of creativity and productivity Rive had just come through seemed set to continue into the nineties as he had a number of projects on the boil – he had to complete volume 2 of his book on the letters of Schreiner; he was to compile a comprehensive history of black writing in South Africa which he had written about on a number of occasions; and he was working with other writers like Sepamla on a project to get local writing published at prices affordable to local readers (Holtzhausen 5-6).

It is a strange twist of fate that one of the last recorded pronouncements we have from Rive reflecting on his writing was a fleeting tribute to the very writer who was his foremost mentor and champion, Jack Cope. In the week before he died, Rive commented to Holtzhausen that he was working “on something” and that “[i]t was Jack Cope who told me always to leave something to go on with and I have made a habit of doing that It was the best advice, as a writer, that I have ever been given” (6). He was most likely referring to *Emergency Continued*. Wannenburg considers this last work his best achievement: “Andrew Dreyer ... is more perceptive, more introspective, more innovative; his talent has matured” (“Rive’s last word” n.p.).

Emergency Continued, as the name implies, suggests that the novel is a sequel to Rive's earlier novel, *Emergency* (1964). Set during the emergency of 1985 described above, it is a continuation of the story of Andrew Dreyer, now a middle-class "coloured" deputy principal who lives with his wife, Mabel, son, Bradley, and daughter, Ruth, in suburban Elfindale, Cape Town. Abe Hanslo has become a professor of African Literature at York University in Toronto, Canada, and Justin is an ex-Robben Island prisoner and UDF activist living in the working-class suburb of Manenberg under house arrest. Like the prequel, and like *'Buckingham Palace'*, *District Six*, the novel is structured in three parts, each part centring on a day of intense political and student protest in late 1985 – the march to free Nelson Mandela from Pollsmoor prison (Wednesday 28 August), a day of protest to re-open schools in the Western Cape closed through emergency legislation by the state to prevent protest (Tuesday 17 September), and the Trojan Horse incident (Tuesday 15 October). Like the earlier novel, the main character in age, profession and creative output bears some resemblance to Rive. One of the main post-modern preoccupations of the writer Andrew Dreyer in the 1990 novel is with the interchangeable, slippery notions of fact and fiction.

The heady days of protest in 1985 were marked by the leading and often fearless role played by young school, college and university students, not a feature of the earlier 1960 emergency in which workers and activist intellectuals played the leading role. *Emergency Continued* is primarily about the crisis of identity experienced by Andrew Dreyer, who is torn between, on the one hand, continuing his comfortable and mediocre life at work and in his home, disengaged from active political struggle, and,

on the other, like his activist son Bradley and his girlfriend Lenina (Justin's daughter), becoming a committed part of the social movement to resist apartheid. The claim made by Andrew at the end of *Emergency*, "[m]aybe I've been running away from myself" (229) becomes the main existential angst of the older Andrew in *Emergency Continued*. In the first part of the novel he begins to go to political rallies in search of Bradley, who has gone missing. He writes to Abe, speculating about his attendance at this particular meeting:

So, Abe, after two hours of haranguing and rhetoric my ears were singing. All the time I was trying to work out why I had really come. There must be a complexity of reasons both conscious and subconscious. Of course I wanted to find out what these meetings were all about. I wanted to find Brad. I wanted to find myself. And I ended up mentally confused and incoherent. My intellectual self rebelled against the apparent disorganisation, the sloganising, the political clichés, and the populist nature of the meeting. But my gut reaction was that this was all me.¹⁷ (45)

By the end of the novel Andrew has taken an active stand. This is revealed most dramatically by his paying tribute to the slain Justin at the funeral rally, where he establishes his own little-known credentials by pointing to his close association with Justin and struggle in the fifties. Andrew's alienation from his son Bradley, from school colleagues who often think of him as a sell-out, from Justin's world of popular struggle and most importantly from himself, disappears, and he becomes an accepted member of the struggle family. In the closing pages, there is a somewhat sentimental rapprochement between father and son who has now decided to stop running from the

¹⁷ Italics are used in the original, as all letters to Abe are marked by italicisation.

cops and return home. Andrew, also a writer of an obscure novel and a few short stories, opens his forgotten novel and reads to his son a passage that is also of course from Rive's *Emergency*:

You know, Abe, all my life I've been running away Maybe I've been running away from myself. But that's all over now. I am determined to stay.

"I don't know whether I am the one speaking, or whether it is the character in this novel, or whether it is you now, or the fictional character in my new book. Maybe we are all the same person saying the same things in the same voice."

"I never knew you like this, Dad."

"Yes, I am like this."

"You know, I am really beginning to understand you."

"I am at last beginning to understand myself." (183)

Self-actualisation seems to occur for Andrew by the end of the novel through a greater sense of his own place in history and through a new awareness of the power and relevance of his work as a writer. But Andrew as a character in this novel remains by and large unconvincing, far too absorbed in his own existential angst which he seems almost deliberately to create at times by not talking about his past with family and colleagues, for inexplicable reasons. Whereas the younger Andrew in the first novel was inhabited by a searing energy, filled with what often seemed like convincing dilemmas, this older Andrew faces what ultimately feels like an adolescent dichotomy recreated by Rive to match suitably the template of the earlier novel. If Barnett felt that, in the first novel, "[t]he reader never really becomes involved in Andrew's dilemma" (130), this is even more of a shortcoming in the sequel. The last four lines

of the exchange between father and son quoted in the extract above are not only feeble in the quality of dialogue but what, one asks, constitutes the father's self-discovery? When the son claims to understand that his father is "like this", he refers to the extent of Andrew's political involvement; the son had not quite realised how committed his father was and only now begins to understand. But what is Andrew referring to when he claims he is beginning to understand himself? Surely not his active political past, which he has of course been aware of all the time. Perhaps he realises that he has always been a part of the struggle, rather than apart from it, as was the case with his life at the start of the story. Yet this latter perception of being apathetic was the questionable perception of others, and not his own. It is neither a convincing nor a momentous self-discovery, but rather a formulaic one imposed on the character through this clichéd claim of revelation.

It was the events of 1985, especially with Hewat becoming one of the epicentres of the local struggles, that catapulted Rive back into street-based struggles. Unlike the much more spontaneous student-centred struggles of 1976, the events of 1985 were partially spearheaded by adult activists and intellectuals who were based in emerging organisations. The schools, and de facto the teachers, became immersed in the battles between students and police, naturally and instinctively in most cases taking the side of their young charges. Rive, with his keen writer's instinct, must have been moved to capture the texture of those consuming and historic events of 1985, especially with Hewat and its surrounds often pivotal to the course of the events. As the refrain in *'Buckingham Palace', District Six*, "[w]e must never forget" (198), keeps reminding the reader, the impulse of Rive the writer-activist is to record, fixing a historic moment in popular memory.

For the first time, then, since 1960, Rive becomes immersed in popular flashes of mass struggle. Perhaps the dilemma of the older Andrew was to a certain extent at least the dilemma of a writer like Rive, whose earlier work and political principles of non-collaboration and programmatic struggle seemed largely irrelevant to this new phase of militant struggle. Perhaps the old dualities expressed by the younger Andrew, being torn between notions of principled struggle and the actions of popular struggle, persisted in the older man and author himself, torn between “my intellectual self” on the one hand and “my gut reaction” on the other (*Emergency Continued* 45). But while the younger Andrew and his creator seemed to be using the work as a medium for a genuine exploration of these dilemmas, the older Rive seemed to be posing the problem more for the literary end of creating a neatly fitting sequel rather than exploring a considered, existential impulse.

The novel, attempting to utilise a more reflective narrative form so successfully utilised for the first time in “The Visits”, becomes too conscious of its own artifice, particularly in the sections relying on the epistolary narrative form. This I suggest alienates the reader. The supposedly autobiographical, italicised letters to Abe frame expanded, fictionalised constructions of the lived experience in these letters. The same device was successfully used in his previous novel, ‘*Buckingham Palace*’, *District Six*, to contrast italicised autobiographical reflection with fictionalised transmutation of that autobiography. This contradistinction between intimate reflection and fictionalised engagement has been seen by Lee to perform the following function in *Emergency Continued*:

The meta-discourse of the novel, in the form of Dreyer’s letters to Abe

Hanslo, provide (sic) a non-realist space in which to deliberate upon the critical questions involved in historical fiction which claims a political orientation and social role. As such, Rive creates a structural tension in his text between commentary and testimony, which might be redescribed as between reflection and action, by which he hopes to reveal a fuller picture of the pressures faced by progressive writers in the state of emergency. (298)

Lee provides an instructive account of what seems to be the intention in this particular form of the novel, emphasising the authorial view that the writer of historical fiction needs to be *involved* and not disengaged – not writing from a position of “seeming indifference” (*Emergency* 5). In addition, the narrator continually emphasises his belief in a dialectic between fact and fiction, asserting that truth can be told through fiction, but fiction wrought from fact. As Andrew writes to Abe, “I mean to tell the truth through fiction, taking incidents directly from experience, embellishing them a bit and then passing them off as fiction, or faction” (5).

Rive remained committed to the struggle even in his last years, despite being ensconced in middle-class comfort. Nevertheless, he also believed that while a writer should not be indifferent, he needed “distance”, even when writing socially relevant stories. In *Emergency Continued* Rive dramatises the strain that, in his view, typified the position of the writer in apartheid South Africa – tossed between the need to be committed and the need to maintain a distance. Perhaps the events of 1985 renewed the old tension felt even in the early sixties by Rive between what he later came to call “writing” and “fighting”, between the role of the writer and that of the activist. *Emergency Continued* becomes a reassertion of the position that the writer also needed to be a fighter, a position though that Rive never did finally believe, despite

his pull to activism in times of crisis like the early 1960s and the mid-1980s. Rive resolves this pull between “writing” and “fighting” in terms he fashions in his *New York Times Review* article “Storming Pretoria’s Castle – to Write or Fight? (1988). Rive quotes and agrees with Arthur Nortje that the two domains, while sometimes happening together, are of necessity separate:

Like all black South African writers, because he was both black and a writer, he faced the cruel dilemma of whether he should write, or fight, or do both: “For some of us must storm the castles / some define the happening.” In those lines he seemed to suggest that although these functions may happen simultaneously, the different activities are performed by different people. (1)

Andrew’s transformation in *Emergency Continued*, then, is contrary to this stated position and perhaps the novel is, like *Emergency*, a reflection of how Rive’s own stated positions are reconsidered in his fiction during times of social upheaval.

Perhaps the less than credible transformation of the protagonist is also reflected in the forced feel to Andrew’s journey of discovery. Overly conscious authorial moulding is evident from various forms of repetition that mar the text. There is the repetition of events outlined first in the letters and then expanded in the “novel”. There is also repetition through extracts of passages from the earlier novel, somewhat indulgently self-referential, but probably necessary assuming most of the readership of *Emergency Continued* would not have read the earlier novel, banned for almost thirty years. Another jarring repetition occurs through the detailed recalling of polemical debates and defending of political positions at the numerous meetings described in the novel – the stuff of life and death in reality, but tiresome if occurring in large swathes in fiction. But perhaps the most self-conscious repetition in the work is the manner in

which Andrew time and again resorts to listening to Smetana's *Ma Vlast* – with its obvious symbolism of patriotism and nationalism – for inspiration. It becomes an overburdened device already overused, as I have argued, in the first novel, and now recurring on numerous occasions in Rive's last work.

The ending is an extremely hopeful if tentative one – Andrew has established his reputation as comrade, writer, colleague, father and friend. The militant young like Bradley and Lenina have become sensible without being cowed. Justin's life-long heroism has been honoured. But in the home, however, the same "seeming indifference" that marked Andrew's stance towards the struggle at the start has continued to be the tenor of the relationship between him and his wife Mabel. Their clearly unsatisfactory marriage – she dissolves into a world of religious fervour, he into his work, angst and writing – remains just that at the end. It is the one relationship not transformed by the crisis. Even Florence, Justin's wife, who has degenerated into prostitution and alcoholism, is redeemed by her appearance at Justin's funeral. More so than even his earlier relationship to Ruth in *Emergency*, Andrew's relationship with Mabel is all form and no substance.

Rive writes into Andrew's story the continued association with Eldred, the young student I argued in section 2.2 held some homoerotic lure for Andrew. In *Emergency Continued*, Eldred becomes Andrew's closest and most supportive colleague at the school where they teach. At the height of the crisis at the school though, Andrew alienates Eldred's allegiance because Eldred finds his obstinate insistence that they teach for the school inspector despite the abnormal conditions prevailing, a betrayal of the cause. Eldred initially refuses reconciliation and this pains Andrew:

The rest of the week he sat in his study and thought about Eldred and the snub at Rocklands. Andrew had looked on Eldred as his protégé. He had followed his career He had been the master-of-ceremonies at Eldred's wedding reception in the Wynberg Town Hall. And when their first child, Chesney, was born, he was asked to be godfather. He was very pleased when Eldred decided to join the staff of Eastridge. And now this thing had come between them.

(139)

Andrew reminisces about their first meeting, and Rive chooses to describe the first moment he noticed Eldred in again mainly physical terms, very similar to those used in the first novel: “[a] bronze, athletic youngster with laughing green eyes” (138). Andrew and Eldred are both greatly relieved when they re-establish their old relationship, “an old intimacy fully restored” (143). The character of Eldred seems to be loosely based on Ian Rutgers, with the Eldred-Andrew relationship reflecting the close bond between Rutgers and Rive. As was the case with Rive's fondness for Rutgers's first born, Candice, Andrew is said to be godfather to Eldred's son Chesney. Andrew takes delight in the presence of the boy as well as the rapport between father and son. Like in *'Buckingham Palace', District Six* there seems to be more meaning and hope in unconventional, extra-marital forms of familial and intimate relationships. At the end Andrew has been accepted into the family of struggle, clearly more important to him than his lifeless marriage to Mabel, and he does not look to her for a re-invigorated family, but to Abe whom he hopes will be “an additional father” to Brad (185). The failure of conventional marriage, the fraught nature of heterosexual love, the almost constant strains of family life, the allure of male friendship and value imbued in alternative family configurations, are a subtle valorisation on Rive's part of alternative relational and familial structures.

At the end of the novel, Andrew reflects on the possible staged nature of endings in fiction and muses that “[r]eal life is unpredictable and less dramatic” (184). Rive’s own death was of course unpredictable but it certainly had the dramatic and tragic quality of imagined endings in film or fiction. Both Wannenburg and Hauke understand the tragic, ironic and dramatic qualities of his end, and start narratives on Rive’s life by reconstructing in distinctly dramatic terms the night of the murder.

Hauke’s rough and incomplete draft of her biography, marked by blank spaces for information she had yet to ascertain, begins:

Richard Rive had not expected to die Saturday night. He’d had a good week and was riding high. By his wits he had raised himself out of the Cape Town slum of District Six and become the best educated “coloured” writer in South Africa with a Ph.D. from Oxford. His mentor had been Langston Hughes and only the spring before he had taught at Harvard for a semester. They wanted him to come back for a semester every year ...

The Friday before his death, he had attended the dress rehearsal for a play based on his life at the Baxter Theatre, University of Cape Town.

Director ___ said, “___.”

Saturday evening he had invited a pretty boy, ___, age __. whom he had befriended to come for dinner, and bring a friend if he liked. He fetched ___ and his friend, ___. After dining and enjoying a few drinks, Rive loosened up and told the boys he might be able to get them parts in his play and that they could earn money in “blue movies” in Europe or America. As he

warmed to his subject, he stroked ____, and the boys, seeming to have hatched a plan before they arrived, made their move.

With a kitchen knife, they stabbed Dr. Rive multiple times. The once athletic but now out-of-shape Professor Rive struggled, but his friends were stronger. Afterwards, his blood was spattered over the living room, library and hallway of his posh home in the Heathfield section of Claremont, an area only recently integrated.

When Rive's housekeeper came in the morning, she discovered his body.¹⁸

Hauke has drawn on newspaper reports of the murder, particularly on Wannenburg's, or possibly second-hand accounts told to her through correspondence or in interviews. While Hauke gets a few details of identity, place and politics wrong, she sketches a scenario that seems to be fairly accurate, gauging from a number of accounts and court records.¹⁹

Wannenburg also begins his *Mail and Guardian Review* article with an account of the night of the murder, using it to frame the rest of his critical, biographical narrative on Rive's life:

On the evening of his murder, Dr. Richard Rive, a prominent black South African writer and academic, picked up two unemployed young men from lodgings in one of Cape Town's poorest suburbs and took them to supper with

¹⁸ Taken from Hauke's electronic database, from a file called "Richard Rive Draft", last reworked on 12 July 2004.

¹⁹ Hauke's claim that Heathfield is a section of Claremont, and that it was recently integrated, is wrong. It was not his housekeeper who discovered his body but a woman called Elaine Cloete who had been contracted to do some catering for him. She had visited him the Sunday morning to finalise catering arrangements, only to find his body.

him at his home in an elite coloured suburb. He had no reason to suspect malice. The elder of the two, Vincent Aploon, 22, had visited him every weekend since being given a lift home from a nightclub by him six weeks before. The younger, Suleiman Turner, 17, whom Rive saw that night for the first – and last – time, accompanied him. Rive had suggested that Aploon bring a friend. Rive certainly had no inkling that shortly before he fetched them they had borrowed a meat knife from a neighbour.

On that Saturday evening, June 3, 1989, Rive was in a buoyant mood. He had just completed his third novel, *Emergency Continued*, a sequel to his first, *Emergency*, written 25 years earlier. His first major play, an adaptation of his second novel, '*Buckingham Palace*', *District Six*, was due to be staged in two weeks' time. He was, he and his peers felt, at the peak of his power ...

Exactly what took place at Rive's home that Saturday night is blurred by the contradictory testimony that Aploon and Turner later gave at their trial for his murder. If, as Aploon claimed, he had on previous visits permitted Rive to achieve sexual climax by letting him kiss and fondle his chest, the two young men could hardly have been in ignorance about what to expect. It appears, however, that, while discussing the possibility of their getting parts in his forthcoming play, Rive said something that Turner interpreted as a sexual overture. Seizing Rive's car keys, he threatened to take the car if Rive would not drive them home. When Rive tried to retrieve the keys there was a struggle in which a cut-glass whisky decanter was broken over Aploon's head. It ended with Rive lying dead in the passage, with 22 stab wounds. Any one of the six knife thrusts in his heart and lungs could have caused his death. The two then loaded Rive's valuables into his Toyota Cressida and drove off.

Rive's body, covered with blood, was discovered at noon the next day by a teaching colleague. There were signs that he had put up a desperate struggle, with bloodstains in every room. Ten days later, a thousand miles away in Johannesburg, Aploon and Turner surrendered to the police.

What exactly happened that night will never be known as we have only the untrustworthy accounts of Vincent Donald Aploon and Suleiman Turner. What is clear from court records, Rive's diary entries, newspaper reports on the trial more than a year later, and from those who knew or sensed more about Rive's private sexual life, is that Rive knew Aploon and they had had sexual encounters, probably in exchange for promises and money, over a number of weeks. What is also clear is that the two young men had planned to rob Rive that night, having brought along a kitchen knife from a backyard house behind the one in which they boarded in the working-class area of Bonteheuwel. That it was a sexual advance from Rive that sparked the violent retaliation as claimed by the men, and as sketched by Wannenburg and Hauke, is perhaps a less likely scenario, invented by the accused to "explain" the stabbing. It is unlikely that Rive would have made such an advance when *two* young men were present. Most other sexual encounters with young men, as suggested in court testimony or in photographs taken by Rive of young men, seemed to occur when he was alone with just one other person. Another possible scenario is that, as the night progressed, and the real intention of the robbers became clear, Rive told them to leave but they insisted he drive them home. They provoked a fight and struck him down.

What is also evident from photographic and narrative accounts of the state of the rooms and spread of blood was the ferocity of Rive's retaliation – he fought bitterly to

the very end.²⁰ He might even have had a premonition that something was going to happen that night. His desk calendar, on which he noted forthcoming appointments, had an entry for 3 June stating “change Aploon / friend?” One can perhaps interpret the uncertainty about keeping the date as ominous and presentient. Was he uncertain about this unknown “friend” whom Aploon was bringing with him for the first time? Or did he simply need to change the date for some other inauspicious reason?²¹

Rive’s death made headlines in the *Cape Times* on the Monday morning – “AUTHOR RICHARD RIVE MURDERED”. There was an eerie silence in the staffroom at Hewat as we arrived for work and stood around in groups talking in strangely hushed tones. Colleagues like Ivan Abrahams had to cope with a barrage of questions from newspaper reporters about Rive’s homosexuality in the week that followed. He refused to confirm or deny that Rive was gay.²² The press that week was filled with numerous articles on the murder and tributes to Rive. J.M. Coetzee was quoted in the *Cape Times* article of 5 June as saying that Rive was a “distinguished writer and critic, although not adequately recognised in South Africa” (2). As there was no next of kin to whom those who wanted to pay homage could write, the College took on that role.

A very small and private burial and cremation were arranged by some of Rive’s

²⁰ I have examined the police files on the case, including police photographs of the scene, held at the Police Museum in Pretoria. All information I have used in this research has already been made public through newspaper reports or by Wannenburg, who I guess must have been at the trial or used the fairly extensive newspaper reports on the trial.

²¹ I have a birthday on 2 June, the night before the murder, and had planned to invite Rive to join me and friends for a drink, but changed my mind about asking him. I of course wonder if the course of events would have been different, and the tragedy averted, if I had asked him.

²² Ivan Abrahams. Personal interview.

closest and most loyal friends on 10 June and a memorial service was held at Hewat College on 13 June. Present and on the panel paying tribute were Es'kia Mphahlele, Ivan Abrahams, Richard Dudley, Jan Rabie, Edward Pratt, Peter Meyer and Harry Hendricks. Obituaries and tributes by fellow writers in the form of poems and short recollections appeared in a number of publications. Typical of the anger and admiration that characterised many of these is poet Deela Khan's "Man of Letters"²³:

Man of letters

While you've sung your

Life's song before noon:

You laughingly swore you'd

Sing again before dusk! Now – your

Death's written Black, as papers display the

Mindless brutality

Endemic in our time.

You fleshed the razed tenements with

Bustle and tune in your ends to

Chronicle the Lives who struggled

Lived and Loved, in your

Living Ghost-town

Spinner of yarns and dreams, it's the

Hurting void that wounds. Yet your

Voice and effervescence drums on.

²³ Khan's poem is used as an epigraph in Johnstone's M.A. dissertation on Rive's fiction.

That you were hacked down in

Ghetto-terror. It's this that

Knifes the Gut.

Khan interestingly foregrounds Rive specifically as a chronicler of District Six, as a storyteller and visionary, and as a having “voice and effervescence”.

The trial of Aploon and Turner more than a year later found that they had gone to Rive's home with the intention of robbing him and when he resisted, they attacked him. Aploon was sentenced to thirteen years imprisonment and Turner to ten. Glen Retief, in an article examining state repression of homosexuals under the apartheid state, highlights the trend in apartheid courts for judges to accept that the killers of homosexuals were sexually harassed by them and consequently acted in self-defence. Rive's case, Retief thought, was an exception in that “evidence suggesting the murder was premeditated swayed the judge into finding the killers guilty” (108). The two, however, secured an early release, serving only five years of their sentence.

The police investigation also revealed that Rive had taken polaroid photographs of more than 200 young boys and men whom he had asked to strip and pose naked or semi-naked for him, sometimes using the ruse that he was writing and illustrating a book on athletes.²⁴ Many of the males he lured in this way were athletes he had met at training sessions. The sexual activities they participated in appear to be, from the photographs, affidavits and evidence at the trial, predominantly fondling, fellatio or sado-masochistic piercing of muscular parts of the body of the young man with sharp

²⁴ This and other information in this paragraph is taken from the police file on the case, kept in the Pretoria Police Museum.

objects. To what extent were these sexual preferences linked to childhood experiences or to the condition of having financial and rhetorical power on the one hand, and complete lack of power in the socio-political context on the other hand? To what extent did the preference for not just homosexual encounters but for a subset of practices that are generally perceived to be atypical and deviant prevent him from forming more lasting relationships? What is clear though from court records of the trial is that Rive's secret sexual life was a substantial one.²⁵

Within a year of moving into his Windsor Park home, Rive drew up a will that bequeathed all books autographed by him or by other writers, all personal copies of his books and all books on Schreiner to Magdalen College library. He left all his paintings, manuscripts, private papers and future royalties to Leonard Du Plooy. Du Plooy in turn donated the manuscripts and papers to the University of Cape Town Library and Archive. The house, contents and car he willed to Ian Rutgers – Rive had in his last few years become extremely devoted to Rutgers's two young children. Rutgers lived in the house for ten years after Rive's death, before selling it and moving elsewhere with his family. And Rive now resides in his creative work – his living and most likely lasting legacy.

²⁵ This latter observation was made by David Medalie when reading a draft version of this study.



Illustration 7. Rive backstage at Hewat production of ‘*Buckingham Palace*’, *District Six*. 1988. Source unknown.

Section 3: Legacy and Image - Concluding Remarks

In a commemorative article in the *Mail and Guardian Review* a year and a half after Rive's death, Nadine Gordimer begins: "When someone of marked individuality dies and those who knew him give their impressions of him, a composite personality appears that did not exist simultaneously in life" (25). This biography has attempted to depict such "a composite personality" of Rive by outlining the widely acknowledged contribution he made to non-racialism with his often angry protest fiction, and through his interventions in education, sport and civil society. It has also attempted to identify and analyse some of the strange contradictions that pervaded his public and private personae, especially those around colour and sexuality that have marked or masked his sense of self. Even while nodding at particular, familiar aspects of the portrait, it is a composite that I suspect few who knew him would recognise. "His cultivated urbanity," Gordimer continues in her article, "glossed over but couldn't put out a flowing centre of warmth and kindness within" (25). Others could find at his centre only arrogance, self-centredness and abusiveness. I see Rive as the composite being suggested by Gordimer, an amalgam of intriguing aspects and opposites. The more I have uncovered about him, the larger he has grown in my esteem, tempering an initial ambivalence about him as a writer and a person.

His body of work between 1954 and 1989 – twenty-five short stories, three plays, three novels, critical articles, three edited collections of African prose, the doctoral work and edited letters of Schreiner, poems and memoir – recounts the iniquity, brutality and absurdity of life under apartheid. His counter to apartheid philosophy was an angry egalitarianism that, in his last two decades, became somewhat muted and refracted through an introspective rather than a declamatory voice. Even his edition of Schreiner's letters reflects his interest in a writer

who opposed colonial oppression with insistent liberalism. In some of the earlier works, the cry against injustice is too strained and obvious but, even in these, his flair for telling a dramatic, clever and nuanced story is unmistakably apparent.

Tracing his educational achievements and the development of his potential, Lee claims that

[b]y any standards, Rive was an extraordinary South African. In the light of his deprived origins and circumscribed social position as a black (coloured) South African, Rive was exceptional. His academic achievements alone placed him in a category of his own. (15)

By the end of his life, Rive had, according to Wannenburg, lectured and conducted seminars at some fifty universities around the world (“Death” 25). Wannenburg adds however that “[d]espite his intellectual radicalism in politics, Richard was ‘square’ in most other respects, and this was perhaps his major limitation He was often pompous, sometimes arrogant. While many of us found these traits less offensive than amusing, they were bitterly resented by a few” (“Death” 34; 37). Milton van Wyk confirms these polarities highlighted by Wannenburg in describing how others responded to Rive the man, when he says that “Richard was a generous man if he liked you. Scathing and arrogant if he didn’t. He enjoyed belittling people and loved attention, but there was a side to Richard very few people saw and that was of a man wallowing in loneliness” (n.p.).

The legacy he leaves with his creative and critical output, I have suggested in this study, is vast and varied. The ideas of non-racialism and the attendant assertions of a common humanity are most strikingly evident in his early short stories and in the 1986 novel set in District Six, his best-selling work. The play versions of this novel have continued to be immensely popular, especially in the Cape. His critical prose contributed to the establishment

and extension of a canon of South African writers. While he helped champion black writers in this country and from the rest of Africa, he also worked to see beyond narrow racial classification and assert the integrity of all writers across lines of colour. Heneke suggests that many feel his critical work was his outstanding contribution. She conveys how Wessels assessed Rive's work:

I remember Victor saying, many years ago, that he thought Richard was better at writing about other people's work, than at writing himself. That his novels, his short stories weren't as good as when he was writing about other people, whether he was being a critic, or whether he was analysing other people's work. I remember that very clearly. (16)

Wessels, who died in 1979, did not however get to read the work produced in the last and most prolific decade of Rive's life. Heneke also insists that Rive had an enormous amount of courage to pursue a fairly independent line of thought and action, when many of those closest and dear to him subscribed to organisational principles that required a great degree of allegiance.

The exploration of Rive's silence about his homosexuality, and my queer readings of various texts, are the aspects of this biography Rive would have undoubtedly deplored. Yet these are dimensions of the study that I found most engaging and which have not been explored, except to a limited extent in a chapter on '*Buckingham Palace*', *District Six* by Munro in her doctoral dissertation. At the start of this research I was convinced that the homoerotic and non-heteronormative encodings I find in some of Rive's fiction were unintended and unconscious, but the extent of the patterning in this regard suggests instead that Rive, in his later works from "The Visits" onwards, must have been consciously creating these meanings that lay beneath the more obvious social commentary in the pieces. Ultimately though, queer

reading, like any other interpretive paradigm, is not dependent on conscious authorial intention. In exploring homosexuality in Rive's life, I have attempted to avoid gratuitous detail about sexual predilection, and see instead the troubled relationship between sexuality and creativity evident in his life as one dimension linked to other aspects of his life and also as symptomatic of his time in an intolerant country.

The symbiosis between context and individual was another aspect of Rive's life in particular, and in biography more generally, that the research attempts to highlight, guided by historical materialist precepts. The trajectory of Rive's creative output, such a focus suggests, closely shadows that of the fortunes of the mass struggle against apartheid – he was at his most barren when authoritarian rule was at its peak; he was most inspired when the oppressed were fiercely fighting back. In the introductory sections of this study, the national and international contexts and traditions within which my biography is located are examined in particular ways, revealing the reason for my focus on Rive as a subject and justifying the choice of particular elements of my narrative technique and the form of my biography.

The photograph at the head of this section is of Rive backstage during the Hewat production of *'Buckingham Palace'*, *District Six* in 1988, a year before his murder. It is a most telling image of these contradictory fluidities that constitute Richard Rive, a condition, as Fanon, Bhabha and others have pointed out, not atypical of the post-colonial intellectual during the period of anti-colonial struggle. In attempting to “conclude” without reducing the multifaceted composite and subjective portrait I have designed, I end by reflecting on this photograph. The image has Rive in half profile, in English gentleman's jacket, collar, and over-long tie resting on his protruding pot-belly, lips half smiling, eyes at an angle looking reservedly, gently out, but ready to defend, to mock and parody the onlooker who dares to

outstare. On his head is the Cape coon / minstrel straw hat with red band, used in the Hewat staging for his District Six gangster, Zoot. The coon hat is iconic of Cape Coon revelry, which Rive regarded as a debased ritual revitalised by the apartheid authorities to affirm a segregated identity. The ceremony, such a view insists, was born out of a condition of colonial slavery. Yet he wears the hat. It is simultaneously an image of Rive in his boater from Oxford – that quintessence of Englishness and, incidentally, the idealised space where he desired to retire.¹

This simultaneous co-existence of reticences, ambivalences and proclamations about “race”, colour and sense of self, of oppressions and contestations about citizenship, of colonised outsider and Oxford insider / outsider, of acclaimed son of the Cape and abandoned son of America – these interleaved, tense and messy multivalencies are what made the life of the man intriguing. His large presence in the image is also iconic of his immensely influential role in the realms of sport and education, and of course, in literature on a local, continental as well as global scale. These dimensions in Richard Rive, although magnified way beyond the ordinary in his particular case, typify a truth that holds for all children of apartheid – the manner in which the constructs of racism and our retorts that attempt to refute them, or that reveal how we have succumbed to them, have infiltrated and marked our innermost sense of self.

¹ Grant Farred. Personal interview. Farred says Rive expressed this wish in conversation with him. I wondered whether Rive was saying this partly tongue in cheek, but Farred thought it was a serious comment by him.



Illustration 8. Rive with Ursula and Gilbert Reines, and Albert Adams (far right), circa 1985. Courtesy of Albert Adams.

Section 4: Addenda			
4.1 SHORT CHRONOLOGY OF RICHARD RIVE'S LIFE			
YEAR	DATE	EVENT	SOURCE
1930	01-Mar	Richard Rive born in District Six	Birth Certificate
1930	28-May	Baptised at St. Mark's Church, District Six	Baptism Certificate
		St. Mark's Primary School	
		Trafalgar Junior School	
1942		Awarded municipal scholarship for studies at Trafalgar High School	
1942		Encounters Langston Hughes for the first time, reading "The Ways of White Folks."	<i>Writing Black (WB)</i>
1943	30-Nov	Confirmed at St. Mark's Church, District Six	Confirmation Certificate
1947		Matriculates at Trafalgar High School	Hewat Tribute Biography
		Moves to Flat 3, 17 Perth Road, Walmer Estate	
		Works for two years at Phil Morkel? (Harry Hendricks)	Tribute
1950		Attends Hewat College, Athlone	Ivan Abrahams
1951		Graduates from Hewat College, Athlone.	Ivan Abrahams/ Magdalen
1952/53		Teaches at Vasco High School	
		Helps found the Western Province Senior Schools Sports Union	
1952		Enrols for a BA degree (part-time) at University of Cape Town (Completes English I)	
1954		Wins second prize for <i>Drum</i> Short Story competition for "The Return" (submitted late 1953)	LH letter to <i>Drum</i>
1954		Teaches at South Peninsula	UCT Records
1954	May	Receives first letter from Hughes and begins a long correspondence lasting till Hughes' death in 1967	Letters/WB (1956-1967)
	Oct	Spends a month in Johannesburg	
		Completes History I and English II	UCT Records
1955		Wins second prize for <i>Drum</i> Short Story competition for "Black and Brown Song" (submitted late 1954)	
1955		Completes History II	UCT Records
1957		Completes Economic Geography	UCT Records
1958		Completes Economics I	UCT Records
1960		Completes Political Philosophy I	UCT Records

1961		Completes Political Philosophy II	UCT Records
1962	14-Dec	Completes B.A. (UCT) Economics 1, Economic Geography 1, English II; History II; Latin 1; Pol. Philosophy II.	UCT Records
	Dec	Leaves by ship on Farfield Foundation Fellowship, up East African coast to Europe	
1963		Spends time in Paris	
	Sept	Returns to South Africa from London	
1965	July	Ingrid Jonker and Nat Nasaka commit suicide	
1965	Aug	Awarded Fulbright and Heft international scholarships for M.A. at Columbia University	
1966	01-Jun	Awarded MA by Teacher's College, Columbia University	Columbia record at Magdalen
1966	June	Returns to South Africa from Columbia University	
1967		Enrols for B.Ed (according to WB)?	WB / Magdalen
1968	12-Dec	Completes B.Ed. at University of Cape Town	UCT Records
1969		First meets Stephen Gray at Selous Court	
1970		Arthur Nortje dies	
1971	Aug	Awarded Junior Research Fellowship at Magdalen College, Oxford	WB
	25-Jan	Admitted to Probationer B. Litt at Magdalen with possibility of changing to D. Phil.	
	22-Sep	Leave Cape Town for Oxford	
	04-Oct	Arrives at Magdalen College	Magdalen records
1972	June	Returns briefly to South Africa to meet Cronlyn Schreiner	
1974		Returns from Oxford	Tribute
1975		Appointed lecturer at Hewat College	Hewat Publication
1976		Soweto Uprising	
1978		Awarded second Fulbright Fellowship and British Council Scholarship	
1979	Jan	Rive on lecture tour of USA	
	Mar	Keynote speaker at African Literature Association conference at Bloomington, University of Indiana	
1986		Lectures at Havard	
1989	04-Jun	Murdered at his home in Heathfield, Cape Town	

4.2

**INTERVIEWS ON RICHARD RIVE
INFORMATION SHEET**

Dear Interviewee

Thank you for agreeing to share your views, stories and materials with me. The research is aimed at producing a PhD thesis on the life and works of Richard Rive and possibly thereafter a book as well. I aim to complete the work by the end of 2005.

Please be assured that:

- Your contribution will be treated with full confidentiality and will only be used in the research/book and for no other purposes;
- Your contribution can remain anonymous or be given a fictitious name or be fully acknowledged;
- Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any stage.
- You are not obliged to answer questions;
- You may choose not to be recorded on tape;
- Tape recordings of your interview can eventually be returned to you by post or you may choose to donate them to the District Six Museum Sound Archives where I will deposit all sound recordings on completion of the research.

Questions

- Do you consent to being quoted?
- If yes, do you want me to use your real name or a pseudonym?
- If no, do you mind being paraphrased anonymously?
- Can the recording be given to the museum?

I welcome any visual material (photographs, messages in signed copies of books, documents etc).

- Do you have any photos, letters, documents, tapes you can share?

These can be copied and the originals returned to you. Any donations of original material will be donated to the District Six Museum on completion of the research.

If at any time after the interview you remember something you would like to share / forgot to tell, please contact me at the following numbers:

Home: 021 696 5833

Work: 021 808 2061

Cell: 082 789 0439

Email scv@worldonline.ac.za

Thanks for your cooperation.
Shaun Viljoen

16 Station Road
Athlone
Cape Town 7780
South Africa

Or

Department of English
University of Stellenbosch
Private Bag X1
Matieland 7602

4.3 List of Interviewees

This list includes those who have been interviewed formally or informally or by e-mail, as well as those (marked *) whom I still plan to interview for purposes of turning the research into a book. The location given is the place where the interview took place, or where the proposed interviewee resides.

Abrahamse, Carol. Ex-student of Rive who kept in touch with him and the school. Toronto.

*Abrahamse, Petra. Rive spent time with her and her husband Karl in Outshoorn.

Abrahams, Ivan. Colleague of Rive's at Hewat. Member of the Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA) and Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM). Cape Town.

Adams, Albert. Artist, close friend to Rive. London.

Appollis, Basil. Actor who played Rive in first Baxter production of '*Buckingham Palace*', *District Six* and who tailed Rive for weeks to train for the role. Co-writer of play on Rive, *A Writer's Last Word*. Johannesburg.

Barrows, Clive. Ex-teacher in Cape Town, director of plays. Friend of Rive. Pretoria.

Cicero, Lionel. Teacher in Malmesbury. Taught '*Buckingham Palace*', *District Six*. Also studied Rive's murder docket as police reservist training.

Combrinc, Irwin. Doctor and Non-European Unity Movement activist. Trustee of District Six Museum.

*Currey, Bill. Actor in same drama group as Rive. Johannesburg.

Daniels, Noel. Colleague of Rive's at Hewat. Pretoria.

*Dudley, Richard. Ex-President of New Unity Movement i.e. the NEUM restructured. Cape Town.

*Eaton, Anthony. Writer, editor. Rive was godfather to his son, Tom Eaton, journalist and editor. Cape Town.

Ebrahim, Joe. Attorney to Rive and ex-president of South African Council on Sport (SACOS). East London.

Farred, Grant. Professor, Duke University, United States of America. Writer on Rive.

*Fester, Gertrude. Colleague of Rive's at Hewat College, writer and friend of Rive. Cape Town.

*Gerwel, Jakes. Ex-rector, UWC. Cape Town.

*Gordon, Nancy. Wife of writer Gerald Gordon, attorney who acted on occasion for Rive. Friend.

Gray, Lynn. Student of Rive's at both South Peninsula High and Hewat College. Cape Town.

Gray, Stephen. Writer and friend to Rive. Johannesburg.

Hallett, George. Photographer and student protégé of Rive. Cape Town.

*Haresnape, Geoffrey. Writer and fellow editor on *Contrast*. Cape Town.

Heneke, Maeve. Friend to Rive and Victor Wessels. Ex-TLSA member. London.

Jaffe, Hosea. Writer, historian, political activist. London.

Jaffe, Ada. Befriended Rive when he visited Hosea Jaffe in Luxembourg. London.

*King, Wilfred. Colleague to Rive at Hewat. Rive was godfather to his son. Cape Town.

Lotter, Carl. Banker to Rive. Pretoria.

Lotter, Marina. Colleague at Hewat. Cape Town.

Manuel, Ariefi and Hazel. Close friends to Rive. Toronto.

*Matthews, James. Poet, novelist and oldest literary colleague of Rive's. Cape Town.

*Meyer, Peter. SACOS member, WPSSSU member. Cape Town.

Mphahlele, Es'kia. Writer and literary mentor to Rive. Leboa.

Mphahlele, Rebecca. Wife to Zeke and friend of Rive's. Leboa.

Parker, Latief. Businessman. Writer for *Critique*. Friend to Victor Wessels and Rive.

*Paulse, Graham. Colleague of Rive at Hewat College. Cape Town.

Petersen, Sydney. Student at Athlone High. Remembers Rive as a teacher there sometime in the mid sixties under his father and Afrikaans writer, S.V. Petersen. Cape Town.

*Philip, David and Marie. Publishers of Rive's work. Literary executor to Rive's estate. Cape Town.

Radus, Colleen. Colleague to Rive at Hewat. Directed Hewat version of his play, *'Buckingham Palace', District Six*. Cape Town.

*Ramsdale, John. Actor, friend to Rive. Cape Town.

Reines, Gilbert and Ursula. Friends of Rive. Ursula was also his teacher at primary school. London.

*Rutgers, Ian. Athlete trained by Rive, ex-Hewat student, heir to Rive's house. Cape Town.

*Skotnes, Cecil. Artist, friend of Rive's. Cape Town.

*Van Wyk, Chris. Writer, poet and interviewed Rive for *Wietie*. Johannesburg.

Van Wyk, Milton. Ex-South Peninsula High teacher who researched Rive for the school. Cape Town.

Visagie, Mark. Student at Hewat in the last years Rive taught there. Colchester.

Visagie, Val. Student of Rive in the late 1950s at South Peninsula High. London.

Zinn, Alan. SACOS member, athlete and ex-member of Western Province Senior School Sports Union (WPSSSU). East London.

Zinn, Denise. Cultural activist in 1970s and friend to Victor Wessels. East London.

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