

SAGAS BETWEEN FORMER LOVERS:

THE COMPLETE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN JOHN SLATER AND RICHARD

(January 1976 - January 2006)

Aware that we may be the last generation to correspond over distance, here are the first 65 letters of thousands of pages and postcards exchanged with John Slater over the first thirty years of our friendship, over which we lived in different cities, although we did meet in all but one of those years. We report on and discuss art, architecture, politics, gay culture, travel and music, as well as the evolving of our lives and relationships. A few typical images are included. Refer to my biography of John also included here in the 'friends' section, for background on John and his life. Editing and digitization is a work in progress.

PREAMBLE

In late June, having secured my registration as an architect, I left my job with Max May Architect and sailed from from Station Pier at Port Melbourne aboard the **Galileo Galilee** for my first trip overseas.

'...during the era of those streamer-festooned farewells at the wharf, when the great white liners bore us from our provincial outposts to the cultural metropolis.'¹

On the ship I read: Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, amongst other books such as Cocteau and Proust. Venturi was a revelation and caused me to seek out Borromini in Rome, for instance, which I would never have otherwise done.

From May 1973-74 I wrote daily to my wife in Melbourne, Frances. Following detailed written advice on the route to follow from Carl Andrew and following AD Map Guides and Alison and Peter Smithson's Heroic Monuments of the Modern Movement published in AD. In mid-November 1973, I arrived in London.

On 24 August 1975, my brother Stephen, who had been staying with me in my two-bedroom attic flat in Lee, South London, left London. Feeling the need for more company, I rang Lewisham Campaign for Homosexual Equality and Trevor Denham answered. He was later the lover of my later partner Geoffrey Wright. At the CHE gatherings at the Black Horse pub in Catford, I met and began a relationship with Ian Hayward. He moved in with me to Burnt Ash Hill. I was 29.

On 28 December, at the Tricky Dicky Gay Disco at the Hampton Court Palace pub, Walworth Ian introduced me to his lover John Slater, who was then aged 48. He was well paid as an Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, a rather senior civil servant, with special responsibility for the teaching of History and Politics, but worked very hard and though he lived in a flat in Birmingham, constantly travelled. They had met at the Garrick's Head pub, within the Garrick Theatre in Bath, where Ian was the barman. Ian was living in Bath with his lover, another John.

In these letters, I readily see myself at 29, as another person. Of course, I never knew John when he was 29, but seen against me here, he is more whole, more full realised, more like his present self. A fascination for me is to notice scraps of his inimitable characteristics releasing themselves, initially with some inhibition (never quite condescension), which soon fell away. John and I have now been close friends for nearly 40 years and the correspondence between us lasted continuously for 30 years.

These letters are transcribed exactly as they were written, typos, idiosyncrasies, and all. The images, such as those of the photographs on postcards, are not yet included, but they are described. Letter 24 gives some of the flavour of the later correspondence.

1. John Rickard, 'Scholar and Patriot', Australian Book Review, January 2007, p 23.

2. John Betjeman was warned by a British Council official, prior to his hugely successful Australian visit, 15 years earlier, 'not to patronise the Australians, which hadn't been his intention anyway.' John Betjeman, Letters. Volume Two: 1951-1984, p 204. Our John also, has never been accused of that.

LETTER 1

Douglas A. Reed & Associates, Chartered Architects
21, Old Queen Street,
London, SW1 9JA

Dear John,

Just to thank you more formally for your generosity Wednesday evening. I honestly cannot imagine a nicer and more enjoyable way to pass an evening, than as we did.

Yours,

Richard.

8, January '76

p.s. apparently B. Levin agrees!

LETTER 2

[As to Douglas A. Reed & Associates, 21 Old Queen Street, London SE1]

84 High Point
Richmond Hill Road
Birmingham
B15 3RT.
17th January 1976

Dear Richard,

It seems a rather bald and trite [sic] to say that I enjoy our meeting. But it is the truth. I hope you really would like to come to Birmingham for a weekend – brash and ugly though it is.

Can I suggest some possible dates? I am not trying to twist your arm with acceptance but from my point of view it would be helpful to know a bit in advance, as work commitments and visits to my old parents have to be fitted in. What about either 14/15 Feb. or 20/21 February?

There is another possibility but I doubt whether it would work and that is for 31 Jan/1 Feb. The Royal Ballet is in Stratford and I have been invited for the 31st – I am sure we could get another ticket, but we should have to leave London by 4.30pm. Are you ever able to leave early on Fridays? Try to let me know fairly soon.

Oh dear this seems to be a bossy organising letter – not meant to be. I'm not too much of a manager by nature!

I hope you weren't too tired on Friday. I survived – despite four meetings and a quick dash to Harrods' Sale – but I managed a quick nap as well as The Times crossword on the train back to Birmingham. Last night my friend Ian (no not our mutual friend, but Ian Mark I, Scots and beardless) went to see The Romantic Englishwoman, with Glenda Jackson as her usual butch, sexy self. Directed by Joseph Losey i.e. everyone seen reflected in round mirrors and rain-soaked mirrors. Recommended nevertheless.

Incidentally if it would be easier to telephone, please do. Don't hesitate to reverse charges – I hope that doesn't sound patronising. It's meant to be practical! Letters of course are welcome, but slow. I shall be in Birmingham on Monday and Tuesday, and possibly Wednesday but shall be away on Thursday and Friday. If I haven't heard by the time I depart, I'll telephone you towards the end of the week as I need to clarify ballet situation by then. (You won't believe me when I say I'm not managing if I go on like this!

I hope our friendship will continue Richard. The 125 miles between Birmingham and London means that it cannot become too involved or demanding. But I know friendship is important. Acquaintances are easy; friends are rarer and more special, but they do not depend on living together or dramatic statements of commitment – sometimes friendship can be threatened by these.

Enough of these obscure meanderings! What I'm really saying is 'let our friendship continue and develop as it has started.'

Now to action – my parents await me and I must not arrive unshaven or clad just in my dressing gown.

Fond greetings

John

P.s. Have mislaid your card with home address.

LETTER 3

128 Burnt Ash Hill, London, SE 12. (8510965). (aboard Tyne/Tees Pullman bound for Newcastle, Wednesday, **21st January 1976**).

Dear John,

A fleeting vision of the gothic rock of Durham, ghostly, ethereal. I have your letter by me, thankyou. You rang yesterday, I believe but I've been so heavily busy with work and an incredible occurrence that I've left a decision about your kind offer until now and the relative peace of this journey, even at the risk of my reply not reaching you until it was too late for your suggestion of Stratford on the 31st to be possible. (my syntax is more tortuous than most, you will quietly observe!)

It will mean little to you, but on Monday I returned home tired and not in a fit state to be seen by even a draconian concierge (my "coruscation level" at a "record low"!), to a light glowing in my sitting room window, a ruby in the night. Cursed myself blasphemously for having left it on all day and wearily climbed the stairs, opened the door ... sitting, music softly playing, warmth, looking up from January/February "L'Uomo" was ... Paul.³

I remember musing with Ian over us playing that deadly game from "Boys in the Band". If I were to play, it would be Paul who lifted the receiver at the other end of my phonecall. But 5-6 years ago we had a gruesome fight and I've not seen him since, until ... So you see, together with the pressure of preparation for this visit to Site, this week has not been without its emotional demands, and lack of moments to think and write and make plans. So much for excuses! Your invitation to join you at the ballet at Stratford is too tempting to resist. (Although I must now expect that this reply comes to you too late for you to confirm arrangements in time. I hope not but if so then I suggest the dates 14/15 February.) I'm sure Mr Reed can exist for the last hour of the week without my presence!

I loved the fact that you wrote. Correspondence has become such a significant and valued aspect of my life. I agree almost completely with each of your comments on the matter of "friendship".

I saw Miss Jackson in "Hedder Gabler" at The Aldwych. I find her incredibly strong and styalish [sic] and (hence?) attractive. Perhaps she betrayed more of herself than of Ibsen's lady in Gabler? But I love Losey so, following reaction, I feel I must see "Englishwoman". Sorry for this ghastly scrawl. Some would dispute that my "usual" could become even more unintelligible but I insist that British Rail is responsible for this letter being so.

Again, there is such reason to thank you warmly for your generosity.

Best wishes to you,

Richard.

3. On 19 January 1976, **Paul** appeared unexpectedly at Burnt Ash Hill. We lived together there until eventually he moved to 330 Upper Richmond Road, Putney.

LETTER 4

4a
84 High Point, etc
4th February 1976

Dear Richard,

My turn to write, I think. I hope all is well. I gather news broken to our mutual friend caused no problems – I hope not. However the problem of accommodation remains. I hope Ian's presence isn't causing too many strains; it can't be easy – for either of you. When I last saw him he did seem hopeful of finding something, but seemed a little dashed when I spoke to him.

I believe you are away, putting up your northern gaol, this week. I freeze in Brum though I go to Leeds for a meeting tomorrow. I shall freeze there also.

Next week I hit London again; Wednesday and Friday nights. Any chance of your being free? It would be good to see you again. I shall be in Sunday evening + probably on Monday + Tuesday – either early or late p.m. If I don't hear I shall try + telephone you.

This is a rushed, late-night, letter, half-way through a rushed and busy week. Bed now beckons, so does Anthony Powell, or rather the paper-back edition of his 'Soldiers' Art'. Well nobody else is beckoning – unless something bizarre and unexpected has happened in my bedroom since last I was there.

Sorry you didn't make the ballet at Stratford. It was a mixed evening – but much to enjoy. We ate well afterwards, but I was glad to be able to visit my father at the weekend. I hope we can find some happy and beguiling alternatives to Stratford the weekend after next.

Keep warm, busy, + out of mischief,

Fond greetings

John

LETTER 5

Birmingham
5/2/76

Dear Richard

P.s.

Come to hear Reyner Banham (hope you've heard of him!) taking (sic) about, + sharing his film on Los Angeles. Next Wednesday 11 Feb. at U.S. Embassy 6.0 pm? It's free! So are the drinks afterwards, though can't guarantee they won't be spiked by CIA.

Hows about it?

John

AND THEN...

Over 21-22 February we drove to Birmingham; stayed at High Point, Edgbaston with John for the first time. We visited Coventry and looked at Odeon cinemas.

LETTER 6

Hastie Winch & Kelly
Chartered Architects
21, Old Queen Street,
London, SW1 9JA

Our ref: RGP/CECC
24th February 1976

Slater Constructions,
84 High Point, etc.

Attention of Mr J. Slater

Dear Sir,

re: Repair to Cottage4 at Richmond Hill

Further to our communications of 21st and 22nd February 1976, we would confirm our approval of your approach. We advise you henceforth to insert the queen closer as indicated.

Yours faithfully,
For HASTIE WINCH & KELLY

R. G. Peterson 4. Cottage: English gay slang for beat, a pick up place for sexual encounters between gay men. I shied away from naming the company 'Slater Erections' since an office secretary typed it.

LETTER 7

128 Burnt Ash Hill, etc.

25, February 1976

Dear John,

Thankyou warmly for last weekend.⁵ I boarded the train at gleaming New Street feeling a quiet glow of enjoyment in me on several quite diverse levels. I can't think even now of even one way in which two days spent in a place like Birmingham (which everyone without exception seems to recall with a (quite visible) shudder ...) could more (indulgently!) nicer.

I'm afraid I could hardly resist daring the little bit of nonsense forwarded under separate cover! Hope you don't mind! (I was proud of myself for resisting the painfully obvious punny synonym for the last word of the first line of address! Another silent titter came over me as I watched from the corner of my eye as the typist laboured over it unsuspecting to the last that "Slater Constructions" were not at least our most valued contractual associates. The poor sweet processed it with the rest of the mail, quite oblivious.

I hope you survived your conference in Ipswich with your accustomed aplomb.

A brilliant gold disc follows us, just skimming the horizon over the broad golden/green exquisite flat landscape just before Peterborough. After "*The Times*" ("... Frank ... memories and love live on, constantly and strong. Dick"), then "*Illustrated London News*" ("Charley's Aunt, Young Vic; showing its age, somewhat.") then on into "*Playguy*" ("Oh, said Des, 'No pants. Ready for action, eh? Christ, you are a big lad.'"), then I turn to write to you ... Peterborough Cathedral – high and dignified and spiky over the railway sheds.

Apart from doing all the things I could possibly have wanted in the way I would have best wanted and really getting the feel of what it is like to live in Birmingham, as you do, I found myself, as the weekend went by, slipping into an enjoyment of just being with you. Thankyou again John, cheers, best wishes to you,

Richard.

P.s. did you notice the editorial of that "Gay Geordies" "*New Society*" issue, John?

P.s. again do excuse the repulsive British Rail induced scrawl!!

⁵. ie. 'Slater Erections.'

LETTER 8

[Envelope decorated by the writer with illustration depicting the recipient on knees before an impressively Streamlined Moderne Odeon, annotated: 'Itinerant cobbler architect worships at shrine of Harry Weedon'.]

84 High Point, etc.

4th March 1976

My Dear Richard,

I left for Stoke D'Aberon on Wednesday morning amiably tired – gently fatigued in a good cause. There an adjustment to serious teachers of social studies: at one level believing they could change society and equalise the inequalities – existing in a state of, what the medieval church would have called 'beatific levitation.' Others were concerned to defend their right to say 'shit' to their pupils! What next? 'Fuck off Mr Chips'? 'The Bugging of Billy Bunter'? (Garoosh! Leggo you rotters! Ouch! Ah! Aaah!)

In the afternoon, we all took part in a role-playing exercise. Divided into two, we had to act out as different tribes with mysterious customs and strange languages. We then had to observe each other guess others' customs. Odd, but entertaining. My theory that the other group was a group of 'gay stockbrokers' turned out to be not wholly accurate.

Now I'm back in Brum and it's good. I'm really quite fond of my flat and its accumulated associations. Some very happy ones are recent.

Your visit was very happy for me. You will come again? Next time perhaps we can do Stratford by day, or walk the Malverns, or maybe Oxford. I shall associate the development - + that is a word that implies a future – of our friendship with buildings. Coventry Cathedral, Harry Weedon's Odeon, redfields, Pugin's St Chad's St Matthews, Perry Bar (and its vicar) to say nothing of High Point, let alone the scarlet décor of 128 Fir Lane, oh alright, 'Burnt Ash Hill'. Buildings can be seductive. Good architecture can cement personal relationships. Who knows what's yet to come. Mies Van der Rohe's Museum of Modern Art [sic]? Schloss Charlottenberg? The Zwinger? St Vitus Cathedral? The Strahov Monastery? Perhaps the Ducal Palace in Urbino. Or the Abbey of Pomposa, surrounded by the marshes of the Po Delta? Even Willis Faber and Dumas or the Granada Tooting?

By the way, what are you doing next Friday? Let's go out. Lets go to a theatre. Let's do it. Ok, pal?

Tomorrow I go to Devon, to Dartington [Hall]⁸, to deliver some old talk, to yet another crowd of history teachers. At least the audience varies so I don't need to change my jokes – or even my ties. But British Rail between New Street and Totnes will impose an opportunity to read, or sleep, or think, or watch the heart of England roll by. (This letter is getting more like a commercial for dairy butter!)

It is now 9.30 p.m. and I had planned to do some more work before taking a sybaritic bath. Perhaps a wee glass of port to get me through the Guertay [?] bye-election result as well.

Fond greetings

John

P.s. If you should want to write or telephone (silly old conceited me) I shall be away from Tuesday morning.

8. Near Newton Abbott.

9. Excessively and infinitely luxurious.

LETTER 9

[Postcard of spunky London policeman and RM bus, no. 53 route: Chingford Cnr, Charing Cross, Elephant, New Cross, Blackheath, Charlton, Woolwich. Undated, but postmarked **25 March 1976**. Addressed to: '128 Burnt Ash Road [sic] (Ok?), London SE18' [sic].


Bournemouth, Friday –

Dull and respectable, like my conference. But the sun shines + brings out the local peasantry: divided between tiny wizened ladies, all darting eyes, pekinese and knitting – and foreign acned adolescents, predatory sex in their eyes, Teach Yourself English under their arms.

Meantime, look forward to Tuesday. Do you like my fuzz?

John

LETTER 10

[**Undated**, un-postmarked postcard depicting four naively sketched scenes: 'Lee Green', 'St Margaret's Lee', 'The Quaggy', and 'Shopping Precinct' annotated 'from Lee Green'. Addressed to John S[], C/c "Redfields", 171ABC Cromwell Road, London, SW5.]

Lee,

Thurs 7.20 pm.

Just arrived. Not very fashionable part of London I must say. Hotel sleazy and shabby but not without colour and a certain arty/studentish charm. Superb view of Birmingham from my window. Fabulous local talent to be found in mirror though ... Vivid experience last night which I don't dare share with HM Mails.

Affection ever, Jeremy [~~crossed out~~] miss you

Rich xx

LETTER 11

[Warkworth. Oil Painting by unknown artist, c. 1850. Postcard].

Thursday, 6 May '76
21 Old Queen Street, St James'

My Dear John

Sitting perilously perched upon this ridiculous high stool in this ridiculous vermilion garret (my life seems to be a series of journeys back and forth, from one vermilion (British Standard No. B.S. 0-005, Munsell Reference No. 7.5R 5/16, Reflectivity value 15%) garret to the other...) amongst these ridiculously boring (obviously I'm not dictating this letter!!), (yet quite pretty, of course...)10 people... yet, for some reclusive reason, quite enjoying my life, and my work and everything.

Welcome to sinful SW5, John!! I'm almost certain I've sent you this card before, but perhaps it can be a "file copy" for record purposes, of where I spend my periodical Northumbrian "Cheap Day Returns". There is a discrete and inconspicuously subtle "gas station" (69.9p for purchases of over ten gallons at pump 7 only between 7.45 and 7.46pm on the second Thursday in the month, cash deals only, if the proprietor remembers) where the "enchanted detached period cottage" appears in the left foreground, and the roads are tarmac, but otherwise... the village is just as illustrated to this day (off-season, that is...). It was nice going from talking with you last evening (hideous line!) to being with Di. I think she'd been in a bed way. (Her hair looked a little too determinedly combed, her eyes a little too drawn, her welcome, waiting by the window, a little too eager). It's nice to have a marvellously impassioned, sensual and tactile relationship (if intermittent) that is utterly contained this side of the frontier into sexuality. A line drawn so fine yet so firm. She was so happy all evening... as ever, Rich...

P.s. Why do I always begin so big and end up so small?

10. My interior of my favoured bar in Melbourne from 1995 until 2006, Rue Bebelons, was also entirely vermilion.

AND THEN...

14 May: In **Cambridge**, met John there next day and on to Audley End.

16 May: John left me at Redfields and flew at 6.30 am to Sweden and Denmark on business for a week, and in that time sent nine postcards. In each of them, he has illuminated the ultimate 'e' of Petersen, a usage which I must have by now insisted upon.

LETTER 12

[Postcard of harbour scene, Elias Martin (1739-1818), Stockholms Stadtmuseum. Undated.

Stockholm, Sunday, 2.20 pm [16 May 1976].

Good flight (only thought we were going to crash three times), large breakfast, including omlette/sausages made of rubber (quite nice).

Hotel situated on the water, though company cannot compare with that left at Redfields. The sun blazes + I amble, amiably inspecting the scenery + think of Audley End and other happy things. See you (at Redfields?) on the 27th.

As ever,

John x

LETTER 13

[Postcard of Kulturhuset, sergels torg, Stockholm. Undated.

Mon 2.50 p.m. [17 May 1976].

That's me for the day. Did you go to Taby(??)

Interesting new town N of here – just returned from a school there. I don't think I could grow to love the Kulturhuset. Typical of Stockholm – brash, soulless modernity. Marvellous setting, with a raped heart.

Affectionately,

John x

LETTER 14

[Postcard of old photograph: Children at play in Kungsträdgården, 1899. Undated, but postmarked: 18 May 1976].

Tues 4.30 pm [18 May 1976].

I like the pram, + the rather elderly child who fiercely guards it. (It may of course be a gnome in drag).

Had a good afternoon accompanying 20 gangling adolescents in a history lesson in old Stockholm. Occasionally they stopped to break into beautiful four-part singing. They made the day better.

Saw Gerard's friend last night, amiable and camp; we drank much; discussed our gay scenes + royal families (separately, that is).

How are you? I feel benign.

Fondly,

John x

LETTER 15

[Postcard of painting by Gustaf Söderberg (1799-1875) depicting urban view, from Stockholms Stadtmuseum. Undated].

Skansen, Wed [19 May 1976].

... and at last someone of fair note in the 'In Memorium' [section of The Times newspaper]. Modern architecture disappoints here, best is the underground station of Technical High School.

Talked about Australia – to a nice girl whose study it was. Discussed attitude to Aborigines + anti-semitism in Melbourne (source: RGP).

Prices are very fierce: [The] Times more than 50p; modest two course meal + 1/2 of wine (very ordinary) about £8.00.

Pasolini film – sketches of Lido(?) more nasty than erotic; my gaze often averted. The Fassbinder cosy by comparison. This evening I go to a party – not swinging, I fear – then to Malmö [Sweden] by the night train. I hate sleepers – perhaps the company will compensate?

Miss you

John x

LETTER 16

[Scenic postcard: 'Hälsning från Malmö'. Undated. Cheekily addressed to 'Dick Petersen'].

Malmö

Thurs 7.0 p.m. [20 May 1976].

I am not sure this place grabs me yet – though it has some charm – modestly displayed. But I've had a frustrating day + the night sleeper from Stockholm was not restful. So here's a rather vulgar card five for the price of one.

Muddle over my hotel, so I stay in a rather dim place in the middle of Malmö's tiny porn belt. I move to grander place tomorrow.

A little bored + horny tonight but I shall recover.

Here's to you, blue eyes

John xx

LETTER 17

[Black and white postcard of painting depicting another urban view, 'Slussen, facing Skeppsbron, 1896', from Stockholms Stadtmuseum. Undated].

Friday 3.0 pm [21 May 1976]

I don't chose to send you another card from Malmö. I like this romantic photoof Stockholm.

Work is now over + I have moved to a hotel more in keeping with my self-indulgent standards – but all rather too kempt + Scandinavian. No bugs in this bed.

Tomorrow I'm free so I shall explore Lund. Am told its pretty with good Romanesque cathedral. On Sunday to Copenhagen. I think I approve of Danes more than Swedes.

Ever

John xx

LETTER 18

[Postcard. Photograph of the dour 'Cathedral of Lund'. Undated].

Saturday: midday [22 May 1976]

I sit in the sun outside the cathedral. Good, solid, no nonsense Romanesque – nearer to Lombardy than to Durham in feel, though far more distant in miles. Parts a little too clearly + inelegantly restored, I suspect – although so disp[au?]ful as Salisbury.

I spend the day here, gently wandering, looking, sitting, reading (Cobb's 'Tour de France,' bright in Cambridge – style, wit, scholarship: a constant delight. I also think about absent friends. Often I borrow your eyes to look more appreciatively. Your comments + enthusiasm I have to imagine.

Until Thursday,

John xx

P.s. Did you see Friday's 'In Memorium'?

LETTER 19

[Postcard. Photographs of three idiosyncratic spires in Copenhagen: The Exchange, Our Savior's Church and Christianborg Palace. Undated and addressed to: R.G. PÆDERSSØNN, which is footnoted: 'Well, lets be really Scandinavian!'].

Sunday 1.30 p.m. [23 May 1976]

The Oresund looked beautiful as we crossed under the sun. So too does Copenhagen –Stockholm can't compete, as far as human-made environment, that is. It's [?] cheaper! Hotel not screaming (thank God) – something of the Redfields atmosphere. Ballet + Verdi's Falstaff at the opera, though I have just missed Rick Wakeman.

It was good talking to you last night. To miss someone is an odd mixture of pain + pleasure - so the link with your voice was important.

Hope you like these three Danish cornets¹³, these Baroque crinkum-crankums¹⁴.

Until Thursday,

John xx

12. Narrow stretch of water between Malmö and Copenhagen.

13. An English ice-cream cone.

14. In *John. An Informal Festschrift in Honour of John Slater at 75*, Melbourne April 2002, which I edited 26 years later for John's 75th birthday in Melbourne, Richard Aitken contributed the piece: 'On Some Unremarked Occurrences of Crinkum-Crankum'.

LETTER 20

[Postcard. Three Photographs: The Viking Ship Museum, Roskilde, The Corbusian Brutalist building, a ship and a craftsman. Undated].

Roskilde – Mon. 12.30 pm. [24 May 1976]

Am here morning to see splendid cathedral – I like the redbrick, whitewash + faded wall paintings, with miscellaneous baroque pieces applied – but also the Viking Ship Museum. Interesting building on the water's edge, evocative contents. I think Danes have more style than Swedes (not for nothing were they known as the 'Prussians of the Baltic') – applies also to their wickedness! Did you enjoy the Disco? Hope so – you bright young thing, you. In spite of that I still miss you

Danish King called Gorm the O[illegible] for this week.

John xx

LETTER 21

[Postcard. Christen Kobke (1810-1848). Detail of: *A view of a street in Copenhagen (Osterbro). Morning light.* (1836). Statens Museum for Kunst, Kobenhavn. Adressed to: R.G. Petersen, C/o High Point, etc. Undated, postmark obscured, possibly: 28 May 1976].

National Gallery, Tuesday 2.10 p.m. [25 May 1976]

It rains – I wear my mac, almost for the first time in anger. But Copenhagen charms shine through.

Ok, you win – for the time – I pass a minute ago announcing his Danish blood + and his name 'Pedersen' – but perhaps he was trying it on!

Falstaff last night – very decently sung – good sets – but Verdi in Danish is odd (an unlovely language anyway). By the way, welcome back to High Point.

John xx

LETTER 22

[Postcard. Ander Jorgensen (1882-1927). Portrait of the Artist's Wife (1909). Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Copenhagen. Addressed to: Richard Petersen, C/o 84 High Point, etc. Undated, postmark obscured, possibly: 29 May 1976].

Wed 11.40 a.m. [26 May 1976]

My dear Richard,

Its good to see you again – whatever your name is!

John xxx

AND THEN...

29-30 May 1976: to Blenheim, Oxford, Bridgenorth, Ironbridge and Ludlow.

From **May 1976**, Richard was Assistant Director on the **film** *David is a Homosexual*. Directed by Wilfred and produced by CHE.

LETTER 23

[Postcard. Five photographic hand coloured black and white scenes of Warkworth: The bridge, Castle street, Mill Walk & Warkworth Castle, Daffodil Time at Warkworth Castle and The Castle].

7.12 pm, Thursday **3 June 1976**, Warkworth.

John,

I could be told this were the most beautiful place on earth and not disagree. Sitting as the sun slowly falls from the cloud-puffed sky, feet dangling over the green grassy riverbank, sheep grazing opposite, the church bell ringing the quarter hour. (Somewhere near where the fellow stands in the centre picture). Just back from site thirty minutes ago, very tired and drained, yet satisfied not losing any points and gaining some. Leaving you Tuesday lunchtime and that chapter with us: feelings in me strong and sure and quietly happy the weekend asked a lot of you and you flowed with all its demands. I hope its echoes are as good with you as with me. I really so look toward Saturday even, till then,

R xx

Ps: a card from I.H. in Bath!

LETTER 24

Birmingham Airport. 8.0 a.m. 7 June 1976.

My dear Richard,

Here I am, surrounded by package tours to Parma + the Costa Solihull, downing Cokes + devouring The Sun, some even anticipating fun by sporting straw sombreros, made in Wolverhampton.

How happy I was to hear your voice last night. Our friendship is so constantly in my thoughts, but the ringing of the telephone and your voice still surprises, delights + confirms so much that I feel. Belfast now is called.

The security check is now over. I wait in a determinedly anonymous departure space – 'lounge' would dignify too much its modest architectural achievement. My fellow passengers are few in number (one only of interest!) An anxious Indian reads The Telegraph – headline '9 die, 39 injured in Belfast'. Grey-haired white reads The Sun – 'Police HQ in Asian Siege', a parson built like a lumberjack, reads theology.

9.20 a.m.

Finally we move; 20 minutes late, apology but no explanations. The sun shines + I shall have a good view, once we take off!

9.40 a.m.

Liverpool lies below – pier head and the Liver Building stand clear. Now it's the sea. We are told we shall pass the Isle of Man + that Belfast is a little closer than Birmingham. It's being hotter[?] concerns me more! Coffee and biscuits are now consumed + the crossword defeats me – well, the I of Man has concealed its charms (pixies, motor bikes + tailless cats) beneath the clouds, - we are beginning to descend. We bank, and that, I suppose is Ulster. We come in over Belfast-Lough. Tiny green fields + white farm houses + lakes. More later Rich.

11.0 p.m.

At first nothing seemed different. The countryside between Aldegrave Airport and the city looked trim – farms + filling stations. But then a road check – RUC's in bulletproof vests, + [Ialian?] army patrol with sub-machine guns. The mountains came down to the city edge; the gardens were full of blossom, but a house surrounded by one was now a shell; a police station surrounded by concrete and barbed wire. There we were in Crunlis[?] Road – armed soldiers sheltered in doorways; tons of burnt-out houses, barriers aeros[?], side-street showed us the frontier between Catholic + Protestant, + the jail looked through its defences. The rush hour traffic was shared with a troop carrier + an armoured car. The bright sun shone on a terribly scared city. We zig-zagged through a barrier.

A grammar school with RC + Protestant children + a mixed staff was reassuring. Their teacher of politics had been a Stormant[?] MP. Was impressive. My colleague has been barred from activity, so I have to act as chauffeur. This afternoon we drove to Austenstonstown[?] – a bleak, mean, post-war council estate – up the Falls Road + hard under the Belfast Mountains. Stanley says 'this is Indian[?] territory. Here the Provos rule'. The graffiti make this clear - + their attitude to the English. I try not to drive uneasily. Brother Aidan's history classroom in the De La Salle Secondary School overlooks the house of one the Ulster's IRA activists + a Silver City'.

Silver City is above[?] an area surrounded by 30 foot¹⁸ of barbed wire topped corrugated iron. The Royal Marine flag + a gun can be seen. They, + the Provos, are the only law in Austenstonstown; no police come here. I find Brother Aidan moving – but he is obviously tired, though not despairing. His pupils have had to lie on the floor as bullets from one side of the school oused[?] through his history on their way to silver City – 'but not recently' he reassures me. Nevertheless, I look

at the flats which housed the gunmen, + notice that the floor at least looks clean. 'We so admire your colleague (a Protestant) for coming here' says Brother Aidan. 'But at least he's Irish.' I say, 'I'm English!' perhaps they don't admire me for coming here. Just think I'm mad. But it is unreal. Nevertheless many of the boys sitting their 'O' + 'A' Level examinations¹⁹ work with the Provo, march with, perhaps worse. The friendliness, the normality and, I think, the courage of the teachers moves me.

We leave 'Indian[?] territory'. We wait for a funeral procession. Most of the mourners are young men. Some, red-eyed, carry the coffin. One of the ten this weekend, perhaps.

We return to the normality of [?] Belfast, gin + tonic + the evening news. A quiet day here; one shop blown up in the city centre at lunchtime; not mentioned in the national news.

What is it like to be young in Belfast? Or alone + old?

My hosts are good + intelligent + not very optimistic. My hostess tells me not to worry if I hear gun-fire at night – 'It sounds nearer than it is.' Well she meant to be re-assuring!

8th June, 7.0 p.m.

Undisturbed sleep – a little disappointed, today to the Ulster Record Office, to a Ulster[?] Grammar School (buildings still unfinished as workmen left after being shot-up by Prots) to sit in two marvellous history lessons. Finally to Ulster Folk Museum. Beautiful site outside the city overlooking Lee Lough. Good collection of Ulster vernacular architecture. Peaceful; normal.

I drive home. In back street meet car pulled across road – men exiting from it rapidly, soldiers with guns in hesitant pursuit, smoke + dust in a side street. My instinct – to stop + gape. 'Put your foot down + go!' says Stanley. So I do, round the car, + off. 'well they didn't shoot', he added. I enjoyed my gin and tonic. Tonight, guests come to dine. Tomorrow we are off to the country, past Lough Neagh to Euriskillen[?], but to see a school in what is happily called 'murder triangle' – information I would rather have received retrospectively.

I had hoped to get the post tonight but only arrived home after it had departed. Days are full.

Miss you – look forward to Sunday – that sounds like an order – in fact a personal statement.

With affection

John xxx

P.s. 12.45 a.m. **7/6/76** [sic].

A good Irish evening: much drink, more wit, + a deal of passionate argument about Ireland in which, ultimately, seriousness + solutions were held at arms length by more wit. Men perhaps do not really die on the Falls if we laugh at death.

I've said little about architecture. In general an unbeguiling + mean urban landscape. Solid mercantile houses, confidant, restrained + Presbyterian, Queen's university – staid Victorian medieval academic. Nearby [sic] church – splendid late CXVIII spire – Gothic profile with exuberant sub-Baroque detail. Little else except the architecture of Protestant supremacy – restrained + utterly confidant. Oh dear – I repeat myself – but it's late.

There's so much I wish I could share with you here.

J.

18. Almost 10 metres. 19. School years 11 and 12.

LETTER 25

[Postcard. Four photographs of Cultra Manor, Headquarters of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, The spade Mill from Co. Tyrone, The Weaver's House from Co. Tyrone, The Scutch Mill from Co. Tyrone. Addressed to: Rory O'Petersen].

Thursday, 12.40 am. [Undated. **10 June 1976**].

Today - the countryside – Tyrone + Fermanagh – breathtaking views of Lough Eame, [?]and, on the horizon, the Atlantic + Ben Bulbin.

Tonight much booze + food in a restaurant – too drunk to worry about bombs – but no-one else was.

Thursday, 7.55 pm.

Belfast Airport. See you soon – Affect.

John xxx

LETTER 26

YY UR

YY UB

ICUQ

4ARP²⁰

20. YY is 'two Y's.' This is a play on the wording of a then current advertisement for undesirable DD (Double Diamond) beer.

LETTER 27

[Postcard. Undated, **19 July 1976**. Photograph of Birmingham University].

New Street, Mon. 12.30 pm.

Here a nice mixture of Florence, Byzantium, North Country [?] Midland mercantile pride, and post-war austerity. I'm en route for Durham until Wed. evening – in theory, as I can't buy a ticket – bomb scare. Boring.

Are you well? Can't wait for the holiday.

I care for you.

John xxx

Ok, I surrender!

LETTER 28

[Postcard. 'London Never Sleeps' from a London Transport poster of 1968. Photograph of Blues and Royal. Horse Guard, saluting, with an Underground sign and Big Ben behind].

21 Old Queen Street, etc. 20 July 1976, Tuesday 5 pm.

Dear John,

My favourite London P.C!!

Thankyou for yours, received this morning. Hope Durham was kind to you. I've seen it too often from 'railway distance': not enough at closer range. Tomorrow we prom to Brahms Symphony No. 4 and Vaughn Williams Symphony No. 6. Friday, its Stravinsky/Firebird... See you Sunday, till then ...ACROSS 1: Perhaps revolve, but don't rev. (4).

... from R.

LETTER 29

30 July 1976, 9 am

John,

Home time!

Rich..

P.s. miniscule alcohol ration in LH cupboard behind. Kitty will buy more opposite?

LETTER 30

[Undated].

John

I am out, for a duck. I have left at 3.15 pm for a haircut at the DOWN 3: First letter is the second letter (6).

Love,

Rich.

P.s. Sheilah Brown rang. She has had a secret yet passionate desire for you for years. She told me to tell you. I said you'd be pleased.

AND THEN...

Over 2-26 August, John drove us to in his mustard coloured Audi to Brugge to Germany: Soest, West Berlin; 4.8: East Berlin; 8.8: Poland: Warsaw, 10.8: Krakow; 14.8: Tyniec; Czechoslovakia: Brno, Telc; 15.8: Prague; 21.8: Germany: Waldsassen, Kappell, Bamberg, Limbourg, Vierzenheiigen, Neresheim, Bruhl, London.

LETTER 31

[Postcard. Hans Memling. The Shrine of S. Ursula – The Martyrdom of S. Ursula. Brugge – St Janshospitaal].

Brugges – Tuesday 2.40. **24 August 1976**

I thought may just care for this rather unbothered martyrdom. No-one seems to be trying.

18 hours non-stop yesterday; better today – with luck 16 hours. But feel good. Wrestling in the morning with recalcitrant projectors for my lecture – helped by willing but uncomprehending Flemings. Brugges is beaut – what I see of it! See you – roundabout dawn on Sunday. You know what I feel, as ever,

Johnxxx

LETTER 32

[Parcel]

29th August 1976

84 High Point, etc.

My dear Rich,

It seems a waste of a parcel not to include a letter. In any case it will help put me on your list.

Outside a gray day reconciles me gently to the end of our holiday. There is much to enjoy, unwinding here at my own pace full of very happy memories of the last 3 1/2 weeks. But a part of me misses the driving, and the tent, and there is little near here to offer competition to Balthasar Neumann, or even to Adolf Loos or Hans Scharoun – though some Birmingham municipal housing might well teach that Le Corbusier bloke a thing or two! Most of all I miss your companionship – the support and stimulus, and trust, of your friendship. How well you put up with my impatiences and other quirks!

I have been dipping into + pouncing on various books to extend the holiday – Lempel's [?] 'Baroque Art and Architecture of Central Europe', Nicholas Powell's 'From Baroque to Rococo, Reyner Banham, Kidder smith, and – my bed-time reading (Waugh has to wait) – the Thames Hudson 'Encyclopaedia of Modern Architecture.' You must know it, although it is aimed at laymen like me. It's good but no substitute for your informed and enthusiastic eyes.

But some snippets from it – the architect of the new Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin, Egon Eiermann is described as 'with Hans Scharoun, is amongst the most discussed architects of Post-war Germany'; that the tower-flats I mentioned as we drove round Darmstadt had been designed by Josef Olbrich, architect of the Sezession Building in Vienna; describes Loos' Muller House in Prague (1930) as 'his finest work;' (did you know that Loos also designed a commercial block in the Michaelersplatz in Vienna? I know it, have no picture of it, did not know it was by Loos).

Behrens, also at Darmstadt with Olbrich, not only designed the AEG Berlin factory, but the firm's packaging, leaflets, letter-heads, lamps, cookers, radiators, etc. Have you any of these illustrated? There is also a very long and adulatory article on Le Corbusier. It ends: 'Le Corbusier is the purest, exponent of the French traditional building in whose noblest creations logic and lyric become one in the service of mankind'. (Is there a string orchestra and celestial choir in the house?)

(It's now 6.0 p.m. I have been to see my parents. My mother is in great pain with her arthritis – she is still waiting to go into hospital).

Hempel (Pelican History of Art) is more value-free, and duller, than Bourke. He suggests a happy partnership between Neumann and Hildebrandt at Würzburg, agrees with Bourke on Vierzenheiligen and Neresheim, + credits B.N. with the solving of a difficult problem with his staircase at Brühl. Why didn't I bring this book? Full of great plans and cross-sections. Powell says Heiligen one of BN's 'greatest technical triumphs' + witness his ability to 'improve on the second-rate'. Oh, well – perhaps you'd better borrow them! But what of Pevsner? – I hear you say. He would not agree with Bourke's comments on Vierzenheiligen's tensions unresolved between exterior + interior. The splendid Nikolaus refers to 'an antagonism of great poignancy'.

I look at my books with new eyes, borrowed from you, nurtured by revisiting familiar buildings. Now always to be associated with you and the new insights you provided me.

Some time is now being spent on resorting (sic) my slides. Many feeble transparencies are being thrown out. Some, Gaevart, have turned nasty + malign with age. Many of the others are, I fear, 'tourist shots'. The rest are being reorganised into chronological (classical/medieval/Renaissance/baroque-rococo/CXIX-CXX)+ geographical basis(?) as you know, I lack your care and system – my envy of it is a source of some inexcusable impatience – so many are unnamed. Attribution is proving lengthy, intriguing and ultimately frustrating.

Postcards too, as you will find, have been partially resorted. Those that I send to you are accumulated duplicates. Do as you want with them, press them between leaves of heavy Le Corb tomes (plenty of weight), wear them around your neck – between skin and winter chill-proof vest, cast them away, or distribute them at random to unsuspecting and amazed members of the public on Leigh (sic, Lee) Station (Charing Cross Line). They are yours.

But enough of all this. Time to pack up your woollie (I am unhappy with washing and ironing) scissors and cards (?) It's now a dour Bank Holiday Monday. Hastings, for those who chase, will be withholding some of its charms. I'm off to meet little Gerard for lunch.

Hope to be able to share Debussy and Bartok with you on Wednesday. If so I shall be round to decypher this letter.

Until then – or sometime – with affection, and much else,

John XXX

QUIZ FOR RICH...

1. An architect son of a stonecutter; worked as mason, floor-layer, dish-washer on US visit and enabled him to see, and be influenced by Chicago school. Who?

Mies

2. His first important building was a shoelace factory. Who was he?

3. He was the architect of a German Embassy in St Petersburg. Who?

4. Who planned a city for three million inhabitants?

Neimeyer

5. Who designed a memorial for two murdered communists?

Mies

6. Whose flats remind us of Veronese lovers?

Scharoun

7. Who has re-designed Piccadilly Circus?

Blomfield

8. Who started by assisting Lutyens in Delhi and later added notably to Midlands Gothic?

Sir Herbert Baker

9. And who notable to 19th century Gothic Revival, and later designed a handkerchief factory?

10. Which marriage produced a fenland school and a home for a thrifty-sounding newspaper – sounding strong and cruel, so to speak?

Alison and Peter Smithson

11. Who links an ice-rink, an air terminal and an embassy?

Eero Saarinen

12. And who links an Antipodean Office, a centre for music and a Caledonian airport?

Sir Robert Matthew

13. Whose building is patronised by a good lady and a wheel?

Arne Jacobsen

14. Who links the name of my residence with refreshment for birds?

Lubetkin

- All answers are twentieth century architects.

- Some may appear more than once.

- All – well almost all – are architects one of whose buildings we have either seen, or at least discussed.

LETTER 33

[Undated].

YAWN SLIGHTER

IN THE

EDUCATION SITUATION

With various apologies to...

Clive James

A GUIDE TO CHARACTERS IN THE EDUCATION SITUATION...

YAWN SLIGHTER	An Innocent ²¹
ANDEVER SLIGHTER	His Brother ²²
SURELY SENSIBLE	UK Education Czar and "Old Flame" ²³
ONLY PLATONSKY	Critic and Satyr ²⁴
JASPER MURGATROYD	Rupert Murdoch ²⁵
BLITHE ELAN	A Mysterious Musical Critic ²⁶
WUNAN TWENTY	A Gentle Polymath ²⁷
PLEASE CALL	A Hysterical Lecherer ²⁸
& CALL	His Friend ²⁹
WHITEWOMAN	A Madam Mandarin ³⁰
LAVENDER LANE	A Faithless Tall Dark and Handsome Thespian ³¹
SOB DOR	A Terse Nurse ³²
LITTLE TEARAWAY	A Seductive Dwarf ³³

BEENTHERE DUNNIT	A Harpers Queen ³⁴
TEN DOWNWARD	A Simple Puzzle ³⁵
RICHLY PUTAPON	A Harmless Plague ³⁶
APPALLING CON	(His Friend). A Guileless Tease ³⁷
COST PRICE	(His Friend). A Diverting Reduction ³⁸
BECALMED	A Sinful Radical Trendy Hotbed of Education Situation Licence ³⁹
BEDSQUEALS	A (Very) Private Hotel in a Meadow of Scarlet ⁴⁰
THE CLEAN BED	A Chelsea Pub ⁴¹
THE SALUBRIOUS	A Pub in Sordid Soho ⁴²
THE MONSTROUS CLUB	A Traditional Zionist Weapon for Effectively Silencing Ideological Opponents ⁴³

So often people say they wonder
Why I've not slipped back down under;
Part of the reason's this little blighter,
Known to the beau monde as Yawn Slighter.

From a passing stork he dropped beneath
And ended (not for the last time) on Hampstead Heath;
But soon he recovered from this nasty tumble
And fulfilled pre-natal ambitions as a Womble.

Of his tender years we know not a thing
Till, on the High, Yawn's seen promenading;
And who's this giving his little red flag such a moderate pull?
Its none other than Surely Sensible.

Yawn's moderate earnestness seems to say:
'Oh Sure, my favourite colour's Donkey Grey'.

But these inverted feelings soon vamoosky,
For upon the scene skips Only Platonsky.

They soon become the best of chums;
Pursuing concerts, ballets and boyish bums.
And another sport, too much fun to avoid,
Is chasing that silly Jasper Murgatroyd.

Now, hovering over our heroic fenomenan,
Was musically titillating Blithe Elan.
But, a new Captain of Punts had Pembroke to find,
Our Yawn's found playing soldiers and more of that kind

Of thing: so occupied Austria, round '51
Learnt its intelligence from Please Call and Yawn.
A cuckoo-clock cottage by woodland lake,
And progress worthy of a rake,
These soldier lads were on the make.

Good food, wine; to local lads the come-on:
They barely noticed the lack of wom-en.
And Weiner Oper by the plenty
Was our Yawny seen with that Wunan Twenty.

Alas, halcyon army days draw soon to a close.
Its to wicked Becalmed School, our Yawny goes
Imbuing our youth with a sense of what's past.

29. His friend, Paul 30. ? 31. ? 32. Bob 33. Gerard 34. ? 35. Ian Hayward 36. Richard Peterson 37. Paul Connor 38. Rosalind Price 39. Bedales School 40.
Redfields Hotel 41. The Queen's Head Pub42. The Salisbury pub 43. The Melbourne Club

LETTER 34

[Postcard. Clifford's Tower, York] **10 September 1976**

Wentworth College

University of York
10.40 pm. 8 September 1976

My Dear Rich,

Here is a nice piece of medieval functionalism/proto-brutalism for you. It's good to be in York – the Minster surely is one of the great Gothic triumphs of Europe? Exterior beats Chartres. But boring meetings. Tomorrow we go to the Railway Museum - I rather care for it, particularly royal Edwardian dining cars, jolly Rococo runabouts for Tum-Tum.* Let me hear from you. See you next week. Love, Johnxxx [*Who was Tum-Tum?]

LETTER 35

[Postcard. The Houses of Parliament and the River Thames. E. Ludwig, E Hinde Studios. Two young men loitering with intent in the foreground. Stamp's 'Queen's Head' gazes towards the 'John' in the address].

5 pm, Friday, >**10.9.76**

Dearest John,

Received your card this morning. A strange incommunicable mood has engulfed me this week. **No** matter.

Another favourite 'family' postcard for London tourists, Mrs Whitehouse missed. Slater of 50s clutches ankles and dreams!!

Another guest (Carl, the gallery director) to arrive in October!! You and your seamen! (Recherche Cocteau) Tum-Tum be damned! You know I know nothing of history. I wasn't around in 1901-1910, anyway!!

Love, R.

AND THEN...

11.9.1976 Finky returns to London, to Walthamstow.

15.9.1976 I received my **Divorce Nisi**.

LETTER 36

[Postcard. St Hilda's College, Oxford, South Building and Garden Building]. 22 September 1976

20.9.76, 2.0 pm

Dearest Rich,

In the Smithsons' Garden Building. Remember? The company was better last time, although on this occasion I can test the rooms. Are the beds Neo-Brutalist? But – Q' horrible adictu - bed-side light cannot be extinguished from bed*. But nice corridors, unassuming furniture, + pretty bog-seats. But little to reconcile me to three days of discussions on teacher-training. Dreaming spires beckon. Unattainable over Magdalen Bridge. [*3/10 Alison + Peter, see me!]

Love Johnxxx

Ps: See you 6.0 pm (or thereabouts) at the [towards stamp embellished with 'Queen's Head'].

Pps: Bring Paul, if he'd like.

AND THEN...

30.9.1976	Hastings.
16.10.1976	Waddeson Manor. The Lee, Bucks.
16.10.1976	Divorce Absolute received
4.11.1976	Ulgham, Gloster Hill, Longhoughton, Morwick, Howick, Amble, Warkworth in snow

LETTER 37

[Telegram. Stamped: 5 Nov 76. SLATER 84 HIGHPOINT RICHMOND HILL RD BIRMINGHAM YOUR RESERVATION AND ENTERTAINMENT SELECTION 10 APRIL CONFIRMED PENSION PIERO

LETTER 38

[Greetings card. David Hockney, *Mr & Mrs Clark and Percy*, 1970-1. Tate Gallery, 1971].

Chez moi

3rd November 1976

My Dear Rich,

A letter is due, don't you think? In my case, it will serve merely to create in you a sense of guilt, and unease resolved by a letter winging itself from SE12 to B15 3RT.

The main reason – pretext rather – is to confess to a confusion in my diary. I fear I am in London next week – it's the week after that other parts of the country claim me. Wednesday night – might you be free? Gerard suggests we might meet. If you think this is an idea worth considering, it might be nice if Carl the Picture, Damien the Dish and Paul the Programme [sic] joined us. Possibly for a film, + some food and a wee drink. No – I'm not offering to take 7 people out, but it could be a happy group. Make the suggestion – if you would like to – but don't twist arms. We can talk later about it. But perhaps you already have plans for Wednesday – if so I shall be brave and bear it.

How was the northeast? Beautiful, still chilly I suspect. I hope the loss of the 8.58 (or was it 48) was not too unhappy a start to the day. I hope too Rich that your inside settled and that it cast no disagreeable physical shadows over your trip, or did over the previous evening. It was a good evening wasn't it? I enjoy meeting your friends, + your companionship remains as comforting, sustaining + reassuring as ever. But enough of that old stuff – dear thing.

Tuesday was busy. I managed to squeeze in *Sebastienne* (he prefers it to those arrows) between Ealing Technical College and The English speaking Union election night party. As for *Sebastienne*, well much prettiness is revealed though the queue around the cinema provided as much interest as the film and it didn't last nearly as long. Not worth a long diversion – and it doesn't do much for martyrdom either.

Party was amusing. Lots of American razamatuzz – buttons and boaters, + beautiful people. Long queues for drinks, but good hamburgers. Cheers + groans from Fords + Carters. I departed at 2.0 am with still the sniff of a Carter victory in view. As I am not sure that it matters much whether it is Ford or Carter, one could a change (sic?). Ford again would be dull. Enigmatic, divisive and plastic, Carter at least has the interest of uncertainty.

Went this morning to Election Centre at the Embassy. Results on big screens. Squealing girls, typical right-wing Mid-westerners sharing prejudices with a Tory lady (hard mouth and good tweeds), and miscellaneous expatriates variously celebrating and lamenting. Walsall, Worthington + Newcastle will be less pleasing I fear.

Paul (the hotel, not the programmer that is) asked fondly after you. He hopes you will be about if redfield's throws another party.

Now sleep beckons- there has not been too much during the last two nights – but it was good causes which diminished slumber.

Greet all those other colonials,

Love, Johnxxx

Ps: I should have left those sheets shouldn't I?

LETTER 39

[Postcard. From Lee Green, The Quaggy, St Margaret's, Lee, Shopping Precinct.].

To: c/o Redfields, 171ABC Cromwell Road, London SW5. [Undated, un-postmarked]. Lee, Thurs, 7.20 pm.

Just arrived. Not very fashionable part of London, I must say. Hotel sleazy and shabby, but not without colour and a certain arty/student-ish charm. Super view of Birmingham from my window. Fabulous local talent to be found in mirror, though... Vivid experience last night, which don't dare share HM Mails. Affection ever, Miss you Jeremy,
Richxx

LETTER 40

[Card, Andy Warhol, *Fragile - Handle with Care*].

To Richard,
from John, with love,
for his birthday, and as a
reminder of the buildings and
pictures we have enjoyed together.
30 November 1976.

AND THEN...

LETTER 41

[Letterhead: Department of Education and Science
Calthorpe House,
Hagley Road,
Birmingham B16 8QS. Undated].

The Rt Hon Mrs Shirley Williams MP thanks Mr RICHARD PETERSON for his kind gift of his socks and underpants. She is conscious of the rare honour done her. She regrets however she is unable to accept gifts from odd members of the public, despite Mr PETERSON's assurance that the aforesaid garments, if shrunk and contained in a locket about the neck of Mrs WILLIAMS, would act as a charm against various and divers ailments. His assertion is, of course, veritable balls.

She directs her well-beloved and right well-trusted servant STAFF INSPECTOR, JOHN SLATER, to dispatch this message.

[Sketch on reverse].

In December, Richard went with John to **Bath** (stayed and sharing a bed with Ian and John) at Clifton in Bristol, John was very drunk and received a parking fine.

LETTER 42

[Postcard. Esbo, Finland. Hanasaari, Swedish-Finnish Cultural Centre]. **7/8/77**

Dearest Rich,

Helsinki shone under blue skies as we landed, 2 1/2 hours late (engine fails at point of take-off – brakes slammed – tiny apprehensions – back to waiting – new plane – free drinks because we were good).

Hanasaari's on an island on edge of Tapiola – already walked to, inspected and *approved*. We live in luxury – my room looks through the pines to the lake beyond. My room – or rather petite suite – wraps one in tasteful Finnish luxury – white wood (what else?), canvas upholstery, peasant bed spread, + one terra cotta wall. There should be Sibelius on radio – in fact it's Finnish sub-Garfunkel.

Love, Johnxx

LETTER 43

[Postcard. Esbo, Finland. Hanasaari, Swedish-Finnish Cultural Centre. Architect: Veinko Malmio].

(A name to conjure with).

8/8/77

Dearest Rich,

This card is more your genuine spatial – location – situation shot: Tapiola/Otanemi 20' walk off to left. Idyllic and on going, don't you think?

[Tour of Helsinki this afternoon led by Professor, with a sense of the past, but less visual sensitivity. Hugger-mugger city built to defend itself, it sells things, to receive and despatch people, to educate, cure and bury them, but only rarely to beguile (Leave that to nature?) fascinating ingredients – Romanov Imperialist: Jugendstijl: the Fascist Brutalism: Nordic Romantic whimsy: flashes of serious inward-looking domesticity. All well stirred but no sign of recipe. Couldn't afford a master-chef. (Poor Aalto).

Miss you, Johnxxx

LETTER 44

[Postcard. Monument to Jean Sibelius, 1865-1957, Sibelius Park, Helsinki, Finland].

9/8/77, 4.55 pm.

Dearest R,

Here are people trolling the Sibelius monument, or perhaps as it is Scandinavia, it is trolls peopling the Sib. mon.

I've now delivered my lecture (ok, I suppose) + now chair a workshop of mixed, but amiable Scans.

Now we are off to a cocktail party at the British Council. I hope plenty of free, strong liquor – can't afford to buy it here. Fear it may be dry sherry, crisps + polite talk about the Test Match. However, I have a bottle of Bells in my wardrobe to keep me going,

Love J.

LETTER 45

[Postcard. Swedish Culture Centre in Finland].

10/8/77. 1.0 pm.

Dearest Rich,

Well, this place does not have many cards, so regularity and variety becomes one of life's little problems.

Party last night not sherry and cricket, rather Scotch and gardening. Did you know Finnish soil particularly good for radishes? Life continues to be a giddy whirl of knowledge.

Afterwards to Taivalahti Church (Suomalieren) – the one built in the rock. Clever, but a little slick.

Back here for a long boozy session – glazed eyes, loud laughter, weak jokes – about the Irish, the Russians, the Lapps, the Norwegians.

Tonight another party at a farm in the country. I survive – gently pickled.

LETTER 46

[Postcard. Hvitträsk: Gesellius, Lindgren, Finland. [Eilel] Saarinen Interior view, tiled fireplace with wrought iron].
11/8/77. 5.50 pm.

Dearest Rich,

You would approve. Hvitträsk – built by G, L + S in 1902 as a joint dwelling/community for themselves. Now a marvellous Jugendstijl museum/restaurant/open-air sculpture museum; it peers through pine + birch trees over a lake 25 miles N of Helsinki.

Earlier, investigated Tapiola +, Otaniemi (... horrible ...) chapel has been burnt down, + C15 parish church at Espoo. Thus driven through architectural centuries by my BBC/Finn. He offers to fly me (alarmed I am) to the country next week. Tonight to his Tapiola pad for more boozing. I become slowly + pleasantly pickled as the week proceeds. Meanwhile Finland begins persistently to beguile.

J xxx.

LETTER 47

[Postcard. Hvitträsk: Gesellius, Lindgren, Finland. [Eilel] Saarinen. Exterior view: red half-hip roofs, tall pylon chimneys, render walls, on towering stone base-work].

13/8/77. 12.03 am.

Dearest Rich,

Today, a coach trip to the East. Miles of hypnotic Birch forest. Tour of paper mills of mind-bending boredom, compensated by good lunch. Day improved with tour of old timber/paper mill, now an industrial museum, Porvoo (Medieval cathedral + good C XVIII wooden houses, with subdued Baroque town hall) + dinner, exceeding lunch. Back here for sauna (odd Finnish sport) + swimming. Even I swam four lengths of the pool! Then endless melancholy + often indistinguishable Nordic songs sung raucously around log fire – thank heavens for the beer + Scotch to dull my senses + blunt my critical faculties. Now exhausted + pickled.

I'm missing you,

John xxx.

LETTER 48

[Postcard. Joseph Alanen (1885-1920?). Drawing: The Eagle and the Pike. 'O my eagle, bird I fashioned, Seize the pike, so huge and scaly'.

(Kalevala XIX: 197, 201)].

13/8/77. 6.50 pm.

Dearest Rich,

Two cards in one day – first just after midnight – so who's a lucky boy?

.... over – results: amiable differences + predictable inconclusiveness. Now another party – Bacchus vincultomania. Speeches, I fear: I have learnt one in Finnish – includes one tiny joke. Sounds quite pretty. I'm mad of course. Hope we never have a conference in Japan.

Tomorrow to hotel in Helsinki. Second impressions will be conveyed in later cards.

J xxx.

LETTER 49

[Postcard. Finlandia Hall, Helsinki, Finland. Architect: Alvar Aalto. Contextual exterior view].

15/8/77. 10.30 am.

Dearest Rich,

A day missed, I think. sun blazes and I am one third of the way around the architectural walk. This is not an obviously beguiling city, but it does not bore. It reveals itself very slowly, + begins to grip. Times bought in AA's splendid bookshop, but from where I sit, his Enso Gutgert disappoints, though contrast with the perky Cath. Is good. Finlandia Hall is splendid; it nests + crouches so well in its surrounding contours. Engels [is] one of the best Neo-Classacists I have seen.

Conference ended well, Saturday night. I (a) made prepared speech, (b) danced (tango?) with pretty Finn lady, (c) led + conducted vigorous sing-song. Charming results of your absence, I assume. Helsinki's only gay bar exhibits talent ranging from the indifferent to the inconsequential, so we're both safe.

As ever, John xxx

LETTER 50

[Postcard. F. Liewendal (1851-59), 'South Harbour', (black and white drawing), Helsinki City Museum, Finland].

Dearest Rich,

It was very good to hear you yesterday. It's only partly true that I miss your eyes – after 18 months, I have already gained a part of them.

This morning to Ainola – Sibelius house – small domestic and still very liveable, built 1904 in Nordic restrained - romantic. On to another artist's home – this time of Pelter Halounen: Finn/Imp. (friend of + influenced by Gauguin). Use of wood + size of windows attempts to destroy the barrier between man + nature (a running weakness) than try to relate men to each other. Museum of Architecture has (you would be pleased) exhibition of Le Dreaded-Corb. I looked with my expected shudder.

In spite of Finns, I look forward to Sat, J xxx.

LETTER 51

[Postcard. Alvar Aalto, Museum, Jyväskylä, Taidekoelmat, Finland (1972-73). Sleek, boomerang plan, buff brick with vertical ribs and rich rust doors].

Jyväskylä. 17/8/77. 6.35 pm,

Dearest Rich,

I shall probably reach you before this (who's still a luck boy then?), although the card might be a less exhausting + distracting alternative. Flew here in a tiny plane – Lambretta with wings. I was marginally more excited than alarmed. Fascinating to compare this late Aalto with some v early stuff here (1920s) – whimsical neo-Classical.

Tomorrow back by boat to Lahti, but first a bus to Säynätsalo 44 to see Town Hall. Its all your fault, but I not really complaining. J xxx.

44. Alvar Aalto, 1949-52.

LETTER 52

[Postcard. Keski-Suomen Museo, Jyväskylä, Finland. White 1970s Modernist, low-pitched roofs, two-storied central section].

18/8/77. Soon after midday.

Dearest Rich,

The wind now blows from the North, a of sun and rain. It begins to remind me that here we are on the latitude of the Faeroes⁴⁵. However, I have done the town – or much of it with help of the excellent map of the Assoc of Finnish Architects. Took the bus to Säynätsalo to see Aalto's blunt and quirky town hall – worth the detour.

At 3.0 pm, I take a hydrofoil south for three hours to Lahti, so I shall be back in Helsinki tonight. Tomorrow, another crushing drive.

This card is of Aalto's central Finnish Museum, built 1960 + next to its neighbour the Aalto Museum, a good group. Love, J xxx.

45. Both are 62°N. The Shetlands are 61°N.

LETTER 53

[Postcard. The Church of Sammatti, Finland. Indian Red-stained shingle gable-roofed timber traditional building, with three-storied detached campanile with ogee roofs, on the axis, amongst trees].

19/8/77. 7.58 pm.

Dearest R,

This is your last – you don't get a postcard and me tomorrow.

Visited this nice little C XVIII church today, also another at Lohja with splendid C XV wall paintings. Then on to Turku – in not really time to explore...

Long lunch in fine Jugendstijl⁴⁶ hotel. Sibelius Museum⁴⁷ (good) + old Turku Museum. Did not spot Aalto's newspaper's office (not according to my information his first building: rather his 5th). Turku felt good. Did you see the marvellously failed pomposity of riverside café? Or was this the chemist shop? Anyway, I enjoyed it.

Love, John.

46. c1900, Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts style.

47. I visited it in 1973.

LETTER 54

[Postcard. Head of Christ, detail from The Raising of Lazarus, Anglo-Saxon, c1000, or Norman, c1130, one of two panels, Choir, South Aisle, The Cathedral, Chichester, West Sussex. Photograph, b/w: Edwin Smith⁴⁸].

10/9/77. 4.00 pm.

In the sun, on.... Chichester....

Dearest Rich,

I am not used to looking at churches on my own. I wish you were here with me. One of England's tiniest and most exquisite cathedrals. As well as marvellous Romanesque carvings, there is a John Piper tapestry and a Graham Sutherland altarpiece – an odd little work.

Have delivered my lecture, + now feel more relaxed (in my new grey trousers).

Heard Jessye Norman on my car radio, launching herself magnificently into death. Would love to have been there.

Love, John.

48. In my view, the greatest of architectural photographers.

LETTER 55

[Postcard. Graham Sutherland (born 1903). Noli me tangere. Altarpiece in the Chapel of St Mary Magdalen, The Cathedral, Chichester].

Chichester No. II. 10/9/77. 11.45 pm.

Dearest R,

Here is the GS – odd don't you think? But rather beguiling. Do come back to Chichester with me.⁴⁹ Much to delight – and I've saved [buying] you two postcards.

Was tempted to buy a Patrick Prockter⁵⁰ – good exhibition in local gallery. But the one I really wanted - + by a stretch could afford – had been sold. So I was saved – but how I regret the salvation! Nice lady in gallery – long talk about pictures. Posh dinner tonight; sat next to aged, but lively ex-cabinet minister; acceptable gossip. Thought you'd like to know.

J. xxx.

49. We never did.

50. When Richard had to return to Australia, in July 1978, John gave him *My Gardenia*, an original lithograph

AND THEN...

On 10 September 77, I first met **Geoffrey** Wright.

LETTER 56

[Postcard. The arrival of Christ at Bethany, Anglo-Saxon, c1000, or Norman, c1130, one of two panels, Choir, South Aisle, The Cathedral, Chichester, West Sussex. Photograph, b/w: Edwin Smith].

Bristol, **12/9/77**. 9.30 am.

Dearest Rich,

Another Chichester card saved. Serves also to anticipate our visit and, I hope, somewhat to sharpen your appetite for it. As you can see while Burgundy has much, it has not quite all.

I hope the other arrived in time to keep financial worries dancing happily at bay. No hurry about this. My worries usually snarl in my half-Scots mind.

Love, John.

AND THEN...

Political Education and Political Literacy, Longman, London, 1977, was published on 25 November 1977 by the Hansard Society with the Politics Association, the result of a three-year report chaired by Professor Bernard Crick. One of the report's recommendations, that a Senior Inspector at the Department of Education and Science, Mr John Slater be given responsibility for political education had already been implemented. There were various articles and correspondence on the subject in the British national press, focussing on whether teachers could be trusted to teach politics without bias.

LETTER 57

[Card. Offrande de Cœur, 15th Century Tapestry. Musee de Cluny, Paris].

To dearest Rich, with my love, John.

LETTER 58

[Card. For, 'hot-lips' Peterson].

LETTER 59

DOCUMENT

This is to certify that this objetd'art is a genuine antique comb, as 'borrowed' by a well-known* Antipodean ARCHITECT, and, at one time, in the possession of a well-known and close friend of Mistress SHIRLEY WILLIAMS.

Signed:

Corb (F.R.A.U.D.)

Mies (G.U.R.U.)

*well – at least in Edgevale Road!

AND THEN...

On 4 March, 1978, I Stayed in **Exeter** with Geoff.

LETTER 60

Wednesday **10 May [1978]**.

Dear Richard,

I was out for a short time on Tuesday evening, so I may have missed your promised telephone call. I have had to deduce therefore that my invitation for dinner, before my concert + your film on Thursday was not accepted. I hope you found some entertaining alternative.

I shall probably look into Gordon's sometime between 6.0 + 7.0 pm for a wee drink.⁵¹

John.

51. Gordon's Wine Bar, Villiers Street, entered from Victoria Embankment, Charing Cross. John holds out an olive branch.

LETTER 61

[Postcard. York Minster, 'The Tree of Jesse' Window. Not 'The Five Sisters', as John implies].

23.5.78. 10.30 am.

Dearest Rich,

York in the sunlight calms + soothes and helps dispense shadows. The Minster moves me more than I can remember. The Five Sisters must be some of the most austere overwhelming Medieval glass in Europe, no card can capture their mood.

I look forward to sharing this great mysterious city with you – germs permitting! I hope the heady wine of Willesden has not blunted our prospect of York.⁵²

As ever,

J. xxx

52. Most controversially, York did not happen and I went to Exeter with Geoff.

AND THEN...

25 May 1978 was a famously **ultimatum argument** evening with John, Geoff, Richard, and Johanna McGregor, the concert pianist, moving across London between the Lamb and Flag and the Red Lion, Duke of York Street.

LETTER 62

[Card. Undated].

JOHN SLATER

requests the pleasure of

RICHARD PETERSEN

And

GEOFFREY WRIGHT

at a performance of 'EVITA' and at dinner

on the 31st of July 1978.

RSVP

DRESS INFORMAL

LETTER 63

[Menu. The Connaught Grill Room. Dejeuner a la Carte. Mercredi le 2 Aout 1978].⁵³

53. This remarkable meal was the gift of John to Richard, before his departure for Australia and to the grip of the Family Court.

LETTER 64

Place des Unterlinden

Colmar

Alsace

France

[Letter addressed to: 28 St Hubert Road, East Ivanhoe 3079].

7.45 pm, **3rd August 1978.**

Dearest Rich,

How to begin? It's a new chapter in our friendship. Chapter 2 ended with an exchange of smiles and waves yesterday at Burnt Ash Hill. This chapter begins here in the evening sun – lime trees, half-timbered houses, two rambling Gothic churches – and the museum.

Now in [an] old convent, it sits opposite me and my jug (well, more a juglet, really), of wine. In it (museum, not juglet) sits a masterpiece: Grünewald's *Isenheim Altar*. The crucified Christ dominates. This is no Italian Renaissance figure who triumphs over death, serene, with only symbolic wounds on a body of Grecian perfection. On Grünewald's cross hangs a dead man – tortured to death, contorted limbs, festering gashes. It could only have been painted North of the Alps – a world apart from Raphael's *Crucifixion* in the National Gallery [London], but painted almost at the same time. Italian painters told the people Christ loved them, but was above + beyond them. Grünewald – the Germans + Flemings – told the people that Christ was like them, + suffered as they did. Well you didn't expect all that did you now?

Perhaps the wine on an empty stomach – a so-called Continental breakfast in my Ramsgate hotel (it was acceptable, although the interior seemed to have been constructed from several disparate kits + Spronks⁵⁴ abounded) at 6.15 am + one Mars Bar is less than my usual intake. Managed to catch an earlier hovercraft – crossing of unbelievable discomfort – barely able to read the headlines of *The Times*, let alone the 'In Memoriams' (no interest anyway). A drive – almost non-stop – of 375 miles (500 kms?) will mean a good dinner. I stay on the edge of the town – I think I found the last empty room with its view over the water meadows leading down to the Rhine, with the Black Forest heaving gently beyond. Journey dull – you would probably have persuaded me no doubt rightly to take in Amiens Cathedral, but I pressed dourly on. The last forty miles (55 kms?) twisted and turned magnificently through the Vosges Mountains to Colmar – still in France, but at least one architectural foot in Germany – many street- and shop-names confirm this, as does the speech of the older inhabitants. Next to me in the restaurant (where I now am) both languages are spoken. The menu couldn't make up its mind which side of the Rhine its loyalties lay, + ended up pleasing neither. But anything, after one Mars Bar is welcome.

It is now 9.45 pm. Vivaldi fills my room, but fatigue is winning. I realise that....

I have written one barricades against my feelings. Until yesterday, morning, so much of my thinking + planning - + sometimes sorrowing – had been of you. It will take time to to see you encapsulated in envelopes. Sleep must come. It may soothe. Tonight the air already feels Mediterranean, + the Alps are still ahead. But before they move?? I shall pay homage to Grünewald and his tortured Christ. Goodnight dear Rich.

Bergamo. 8.40 pm. 4th August

A postcard written earlier this evening.⁵⁵ I sit, dining alone under the trees. A bossy waiter determined to reject my Italian in favour of his own lumpish English, prepares a salad. Parma ham + melon has been consumed + I wait the veal. I think of you at Heathrow, but even jet lag will be behind you when you receive this. I'm missing you a lot tonight.

Most of today was spent driving through Switzerland. I don't approve very much. Too many mountains – mountains do not improve as they grow bigger (like marrows + cucumbers). I'm no size queen. Valleys rather untidy in a clinical way – full of pylons + depots for the distribution of un-named products. Roads clogged with mad Swiss in Mercedes, or dawdling grey haired Luxembourgers wearing double chins at the back of their necks, or proud peasants riding high their tractors, savouring their measured pace and fuming traffic jam behind. I cross by the St Gotthard Pass – some would call it spectacular. At the summit, my car radio spits + snarls, stops speaking French + playing Debussy + changes to Italian + third-rate pop. How clever of God to create the Alps just where the frequencies change. I write this as I eat my veal (well-cooked, but a trifle bland) + excellent salad. I read a much-admired new writer called Ian McEwan – his first collection of short stories: *First Loves, Last Rites*. His obsession with sex makes master Amis⁵⁶ read prim. But a marvellous sense of farce, - in the style as well as the situations – allows laughter to cover dislike of his nasty characters. Something of Chaucer + Rabelais here. He brings the dirty storey out of the closet + flourishes them with style and fun. (They are published in paperback, but don't please give them to Finky,⁵⁷ or your father as Christmas presents.

But sometimes, at least of a hilarious, scatological, bleak relationship, lies the ruin of something good. Tears insinuate into giggles. He writes of a once-loving couple. She kisses him under the ears; he thinks 'her breath smells of toothpaste and toast'. How comic, how cruel, how sad. It made me audibly snort with guilty laughter here in Bergamo.

Tomorrow will be Florence. I am not sure how it will be. We were going to love it so much together. That is postponed. I shall probably post this sprawling effusion from there.

Florence
Piazza della Signora
5th August, 8.0 pm.

Are you home now? The miles between us have grown so much since last I wrote. The mathematics of our separation – how many miles? – is no longer important. I shall need a bond that cannot be measured. Do I matter? The last few months have battered me – perhaps more than you realised. Perhaps I looked for some sign before we parted. I am self-sufficient, but this distracts from my need for re-assurance. I feel a little ashamed that I need deeds as well as statements.⁵⁸ Perhaps too much indifferent new Italian wine, and Florence, have [sic, has] made me maudlin.

Should have I come here? Memories can be deceptive. Prices are higher. Pensione Adria has changed hands. The summer season means shut shops + closed restaurants. Italian seems as rare as English in Oxford Street. Yet – my room overlooks the most beautiful bridge in Italy⁵⁹ + Giotto's tower⁶⁰ and Brunelleschi's dome⁶¹ rise over the rooftops. From where I sit – now slightly and happily blotto – the Palazzo Vecchio still puzzles. Everything is off centre. Why? Did the architect (who?) mean it? If so, why? If not, how careless!⁶² This a very stern and serious city. I think I shall sit and read in it. Culture must claim me – I shall not strenuously seek it. Masaccio, yes. San Miniato al Monte, certainly. What else?

Pensione Adria
6th August, 1410 pm.

Slowly Florence insinuates again. All I do is amble, and sit + read + drink. I read *The Times* + the poor wretched Jeremy's arrest, in the cloister of San Marco. Fra Angelico calms, as does Michelozzi's cool + couth library. I simmered greatly in the heat of the Boboli Gardens + read Isherwood. Christopher ('George') sits alone in his house in L.A., missing his friend, observing neighbours, discovering himself + learning.

I descended through the cool dark streets of the Borgo San Jacopo + the Borgo San Frediano⁶³ to the Carmelite Church + the Masaccios. Closed. The square is always empty, scoured by the sun. Reminds me of Mexico. Only a melancholy youth sits - exhausted, perhaps defeated on the steps of the church. I think we can do nothing for each other.

I shall return later. Masaccios will wait. Then in the cool of the evening, I shall climb to San Miniato al Monte. Sat, read some more, + look over the city.

The Italians cannot do gardens.⁶⁴ Those bossy pretentious Grand Dukes governed nature with compass and ruler, + precisely placed statuary. Nature conforms. They should see Hidcote, or Sissinghurst (still to be seen by me) or learn from the genius of Capability Brown. The Renaissance garden does not charm, it commands. Perhaps Villandry is different, remember? Then I don't really care for the Pitti Palace. It borrowed the style from that of the Medici Palace in the centre of the city, inflated it and de-humanised it. The earlier Medici did not seek titles, although their power was real, but their home was in the middle of the town + the people. The later Medici sought titles + married well outside Italy. The covered corridor from the Pitti Palace, along the top of the Ponte Vecchio, to the offices of their beavering + apprehensive civil servants in what is now the Medici Gallery, remains a monument to their secretiveness + separateness.

I have decided to go to Siena for two days. Hotel, recommended in the *Good Hotel Guide* sounds nice + restful. It has been recommended by among others, Guy and Wendy Payen-Payn. Can there be people really called that? Outside Evelyn Waugh, I mean. My mind speculates on them. Perhaps they will be staying in the Palazzo Ravizzo. Perhaps they will have children called Tristram and Tanya. (The cat, called Dante, has been left at home). I hope they are these. More reports will be sent.

You now will be surrounded by friends + family. Perhaps you will have seen Selby again. Greet them from me – Manuel whom I haven't met, but am beginning to know. Carl + Damien whom I have, + want to know more. Stephen – not only because he is your brother. Of course, Betty + Lene. If appropriate, your father.

In the meantime, from Italy, my love as always,

John.

54. ????

55. No. 59

56. Martin Amis.

57. Miss Frances Ethelberta Watts (born 1906), the now elderly housekeeper employed by my father and the person entrusted with principal responsibility for my upbringing, since the age of nine.

58. John's statements here (even inebriated) are not entirely clear, but of great interest. The triangular relationship between me and he and me and Geoff had been resolved, as Geoff insisted, with my choosing Geoff, but by my being grateful for his magnanimity in wanting his and my relationship to survive, despite that choice. After that John took Geoff and me to Evita and dinner presumably as a symbolic gesture to confirm that resolution (refer: 56). He did feel free to sleep with Geoff whilst I was in Australia. Geoff was to confirm his commitment our relationship by his action in leaving England behind and making his future in Australia with me. John seems to be looking for an equivalent gesture from me, here, which he appears to feel I have not provided.

59. Ponte Vecchio. Bernini's Ponte Sant' Angelo in Rome would be my candidate!

60. The Campanile, 85 m high was begun by Giotto in 1334, continued by Antonio Pisano from 1343, and completed by Francesco Talenti over 1348-59.

61. The dome of the Duomo, Santa Maria dell Fiore, 1418-36. 62. Because it's a medieval fortress, with unaltered facades and a 95 m high defence tower, built on the site of the Roman Theatre (1 C AD), in 1298-1302. The design is traditionally attributed to Arnolfo di Cambio.

63. Immediately parallel to the Arno, on the South side.

64. !!!!

AND THEN...

I flew out from London on Geoff's birthday, 4 August, to return to Melbourne and stayed with my father, Gordon.

LETTER 65

[Postcard. Bergamo, Palazzo della Ragione and Colleoni Chapel].⁶⁵
Addressed to: 29 Andrew Street, Northcote, 3070.

4th August 1978. 7.15 pm.

Here I sit, Campari in front of me, in the square recommended by Lloyd Wright. Perhaps he enjoyed the eccentric flamboyance of the Colleoni Chapel, which I see to my right.

The *Good Hotel Guide* led me to my C XVII hotel – Angello d'Oro: cool, dark and kempt. I sit in a tiny square shared with a grocer's, a church + a fountain. Hotel restaurant (also recommended) tastefully encroaches on the limited space. I'm sad that you are not here to share the beauties of this hill town, with Alpine foothills overlooking the Lombard Plain. I have always wanted to stay here; it could compete with Urbino – and that is an accolade.

All my love, John.

65. Colleoni Funerary Chapel, 1470-73, an early work by G.A. Amadeo, exhibiting a virtuosic decorative vocabulary.

LETTER 66

[Postcard. Awaking Prisoner (1521-23) for the Tomb of Julius II, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Galleria dell' Accademia, Firenze].

Florence, Piazza delle Signoria, **8/8/78**, 12.15 pm.

Dearest Rich,

Tired + failed to find card of my favourite Masaccio, colour inadequate; so here's another accolade; better than David, + much superior to those Medici Tombs (I'm not sure if M.A. cared for those either). In fact, I'm not doing much culture. Shall skip Uffizzi + Pitti this time – too many people. But Masaccio has been visited (Berenson's tactile values are alive and well) + San Miniato al Monte still catches the breath. I feel irrationally superior, and free, deciding not to go into the Uffizzi. Perhaps this afternoon I shall drive out to the peace of the Carthusian Monastery at Galazzo + enjoy the eccentricities of the Pontormo frescoes + read Isherwood in the cloisters. The monks would not have approved; Christopher would. Do read A Single Man. Clichés are changed⁶⁶ if considered and felt so. Wish you were here.

John.

66. Unclear: 'charged'?

LETTER 67

[Postcard. 'Lucca, Roman Amphitheatre, aerial view'. The vernacular housing takes the form of the former Roman amphitheatre]. Addressed to: 29 Andrew Street, Northcote, 3070.

Piazza Ss Annunziata, Florence, 9 Aug, 9.30 pm.

Dearest Rich,

I leave England: Jeremy⁶⁷ charged. Arrive Italy: Paul* dies .⁶⁸ What is this mysterious power?

Read the papers after I arrive Paris. Today, Lucca. Sleepy, crumbling walled, sun-baked. Churches - nearer to Pisa than Florence.

One genius has left his mark: Jacopo della Quercia. Accompanied by nice Danish student (he picked me up – and he's not). Now I sit in Florence's most beautiful square – no tourists. Brunelleschi's Foundling Hospital dominates.⁶⁹ Arcades; fountains; statue; church. Peace. 10 years ago I was here and saw the headline that Czechoslovakia had been invaded.

*The Sixth, not Connor. Give him my fond greetings.

Love, John. xxx

67. Jeremy Thorpe, Leader of the British Liberal Party was charged with the murder of his male lover.

68. Pope Paul VI (23 June 1963 - 6 August 1978).

69. The Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1419-45 (the arcade was completed in 1425) is Brunelleschi's influential first building, and the first orphanage (as it still is) in Europe. The Piazza was replicated on the facing side by Antonio da Sangallo, the Elder and Baccio da'Agnolo from 1517 and on the North, the loggia of the Church of Santissima Annunziata in the seventeenth century. This formed a bi-laterally symmetrical piazza on the North-south axis of Via dei Servi, aligned from S Annunziata to the Duomo to the South, from which roads seep out at the North to West and East. A central equestrian statue is the last work of Giambologna (1608) and the pair of grotesque fountains by Tacca were added in 1629.

LETTER 68

[Letter addressed to: 28 St Hubert Road, East Ivanhoe 3079].

Pensione Palazzo Rarizzo

Siena

10 August 1978. 3.30 pm.

Dearest Rich,

I'm not sure how much we would have enjoyed Florence. The Pensione Adria still has a nice air of faded gentility, but the atmosphere is now distanced from that enjoyed by EM Forster's characters in *their Italian* pensione. It's now run by a gauche and probably lazy Italian + his brisk American wife. A smile could be excavated from him with some effort. The place is now in the *Europe on 20 Dollars a Day circuit*: gawky, ackneyed (sic) students, querulous divorcées, rotund culture-vultures eager + uncomprehending. The traffic roars down the Via Maggio trying to beat the traffic lights. Sleep is achieved ultimately with some difficulty. The city is jammed. Charabancs queue outside San Marco, docile perspiring crocodiles of tourists are relentlessly lead at a pace past the glories of Renaissance Italy – injected into the waiting leather-shops, bled, retrieved, + packaged into their coaches. Giggling + shrieking German matrons pose outside the cathedral with pigeons on their pink shoulders; sixty years old American adolescents with baseball hats are flashed leaning against *David*⁷⁰ – who has been flashing it with somewhat more dignity for almost 500 years. a gaggle from Yorkshire clatter past, deep in loud + shared outrage at the price of ice-creams and fail to see Cellini's *Perseus*.⁷¹ But it still is a magical city. Santissima Annunziata, where I wrote the other night hardly has a tourist at night; the cloister of San Marco stills their chatter; no-one seems to have told them about the Ghirlandaio in Santa Trinita; the Masaccios need a walk into a poorer district; san Miniato al Monte in the early evening still profoundly moves; + Perelé No⁷² still sells the best ice cream in Italy.

70. It was commissioned by city of Florence from Michelangelo for the Piazza della Signoria in 1501-04 and is now replaced there by a copy. 71. Benvenuto

Cellini, 1500-71. The bronze Perseus is the original, commissioned by Cosimo I Medici in 1545. 72. Now closed? Time Out recommends Vivole, Via Isole delle Stinche 7r (8-1am, closed Mondays).

AND THEN...

14-15 August, I attended the Family Court Hearing at 500 Collins Street.

AND THEN...

LETTER 69

[Letter addressed from: 28 St Hubert Road, East Ivanhoe 3079].
September 5, 1978. 8.30 pm, Tuesday evening.

My dear John,

This evening you phoned, as Dad was making dinner and as I was sitting at the Kitchen table writing letters. After we had spoken, I became deeply emotional, began feeling jittery inside then walked about the house and began to cry softly a little. I was very moved to think of you there, as I could imagine, and how you must be feeling. Yesterday, I had received your typed letter with its enclosures. And I sent a postcard to you in response. (Or rather to acknowledge its receipt. I tend to send postcards to convey specific brief information, like how I feel at that particular time, or some piece of news or acknowledge a long letter received I know I won't to reply to at length immediately, though I do suspect pc's do take longer to arrive than letters – but they are jollier!!) so thank you for your phone call, it caught me completely by surprise, although I had hoped you might ring when you got back, of course. Your phone call caused me to realise how deeply I missed you too, and how much you meant to me. And to think that you had been earlier with Geoff for the period of a ride to Brum, and at Coventry. It gladdens me to think of you talking with him and even showing to him things you once showed to me. I have just written to John Foot (as you phoned) – that man has been responsible for more joy and feeling and sharing in my life than he could ever know!! Is it possible to say one thinks causally (ie. from cause to cause), I do sometimes!! It's a curious musing. About your letter. (Incidentally, glancing at the log, this is my third letter to you, John; and there have been 2 cards.

The *D Tel73* article on the [Royal Institute of British Architects] awards was of surprising excellence and comprehensiveness. Hmm... [Ian] Nairn (as I say in my card) is consistently excellent, interesting and of sufficient inimitability of vision, to cause one inevitably to think again about one's long-held predujuces. I can just imagine that huge bulk of a man clambering through the high chain-link mesh fence beside the canal in some outpost of Aston in order to escape his sinuous watery prison. Is the Rotunder Rotunda (God I am getting thick!) at the Bullring that drum-like concrete 60s tower they had the bomb explosion in, in 1976 or so? If it is, then is it 'elegant'? see what I mean – he encourages me to go back and look again. More Nairn, please!! Don't worry about the Colmar postcard. (F got all mine from Italy, eventually – one, I know of the Coliseum had sufficient postage took 9 months, though...) Why is the Palais Royale so sacred (ie. untouchable?) – I >adore it as it is, and feel that one restaurant would diminish its perfection, but surely it has not always been so? Would Collette and Cocteau have lived there if it were? And after the 'royal palace' left, wasn't its reputation almost seedy? Claude's flat does sound superb, but not quite Act 1 of Bohème!! You must have your studio flat one day. Perhaps your next job will be ludicrously high-paying – like with the Americans in UNESCO again and even you Will be able to save on it!! Still, your present one would do me quite nicely!!

Of course now you know what the case result was between you and the London representative of the 'Save Space 1999 Committee', you probably have most of the details by now.

Geography Notes

& How dull
of Ian
to be in
Mull!!!

XX
28 St Hubert Road,
Five minutes to midnight, Friday evening, 2 February 1979.

My dear John,

Just glancing again at the latest batch of photos of you, extracted from today's viewing of slides: John with umbrella and cream trench-coat, striding purposefully along Quai de Bourbon, on Ile de Ste Louis; John very stern, reading newspaper at little table outside café in Montmartre; John reclining in roof-garden of No 8, Square du Docteur-Blanche, 16e,⁷⁴ a determinedly flat pebbled roof amongst so many slack old mansards.

John – a rare shot this one, open-neck shirt – smiling for the camera in the Hansaviertel, John being rudely stopped at the Brandenburg Gate, East Berlin; John determinedly hands-on-hips, almost directly opposite, in the Western Sector; John about to drive off from the Kurfurstendam in his smart canary yellow Aston Martin; and one for your father; John, cheeky chappie, slithering down the bannisters of the Berlin National Gallery with not so much as a by-your-leave to unsuspecting Mies.⁷⁵ This has been my day, in part! It has been 106°F here today. Now it is still 85°F, in this room. I sit clad only in football shorts, a pint mug of iced water before me, and I turn to your letter. Outdoors the air is heady with gardenia blossom.

In recent weeks there has been a controversial scandal about Melbourne's Community Broadcasting Station, 3CR. I have enclosed a couple of cuttings which refer to this, because I am extremely interested in your views. An aspect of incidental interest is that the general manager is an old Sunday school teacher of mine, Bevan Ramsden. (Perhaps the Christian name is even significant, he'd be about 40. His mother, a vast evangelistic Methodist lady of awesome presence, was also a Sunday school teacher of mine. When I knew him, he was very much mother's son, but very gentle, quietly spoken and intelligent). (I haven't seen him for 20 years, but Meg,⁷⁶ who worked for 3CR, knows him well and is devoted to his defence). It is very difficult to find objective reports of the matter since all the press is so biased unceasingly against 3CR. It is consequently impossible to discern 3CR's view of the matter. 3CR is (or was to be) truly community access radio, as I understand it. Anyone could make a taped programme & offer it for broadcasting. But it soon became 'controlled by the extreme left' and, hence propagating Arab viewpoints at the expense of pro-Zionist views in its coverage of the Middle East, which apparently occupied a disproportionate amount of broadcasting time. I'm not sure how the station is financed and whether public money is being used. And there does seem to be confusion between 'censorship', and 'balance' – equal air time to each side of a question.' But it is interesting that the ACCL has now taken up the station's defence. To my mind, freedom of speech is all. It's the same argument in reverse used against the NF in England. They must not be denied a platform, whatever their views, or it is us who become totalitarian. Am I being imprecise or impractical in this?

Much later, Friday 9 February 1979

73. *The Daily Telegraph*, a serious broadsheet London newspaper never approved of by John.

74. Le Corbusier & Pierre Jeanneret, Raoul La Roche-Albert Jeanneret Houses, Sq du Dr-Blanche, Paris 16e Arr, 1923-25, now Centre Le Corbusier.

75. Mies van der Rohe, New National Gallery, Berlin, 1962-68.

76. Meg Renfrey, a former girlfriend of mine, but by then an out lesbian, living at Warburton with Bernie (Bernardene) Sward (who is now librarian at RMIT Carlton Library, Building 94, Cardigan Street).

