

Jane Rule & Rick Bébout, Private Letters / Public Lives A Queer Love Story

Letters were vital to Jane Rule. She answered every fan letter she received, she appreciated friends and family members who shared her love of letters, and she rewarded everyone who wrote to her with a prompt and thoughtful response. Her correspondence with Rick Bébout holds a special place among all her letters and, I believe, in her work. I am editing fifteen years of their correspondence (1981-1995). The letters tell the story of a movement, of how the work of social change gets done, and of a friendship. They also challenge the way we think about gay and lesbian narratives of the last decades of the twentieth century even as they suggest new ways of thinking about queer narratives today.

The story of the letters

Jane Rule and Rick Bébout wrote each other from the mid-1970s until Jane died in November 2007. The letters began as a professional correspondence. Rick was Jane's editor at *The Body Politic* and they wrote to each other about the pieces she contributed to the paper, many of which were published as a column called "So's Your Grandmother."

From 1975 to 1987 when *The Body Politic* ceased publication, Jane wrote well over thirty essays, reviews, and columns for the paper. Rule and Bébout began a more regular, monthly exchange of letters in 1981 and even before they met in person, the letters provided an important conversation for both of them, independent of Jane's writing for the paper.

At first glance, Rick and Jane seem unlikely correspondents. Their histories resemble each other in some details, but the lives they chose were markedly

different: they were both born in the US and emigrated to Canada in part for political reasons.

Rule was born in New Jersey in 1931 and moved to Vancouver in 1956; from the mid-1970s she and Helen Sonthoff (also born in the US) lived on rural Galiano Island. Skeptical of the “gay and lesbian community,” Jane and Helen were for decades the centre of an active, diverse, culturally rich, largely private, social life. It was important to Rule to have old people and children, people of all sexual persuasions and political views as part of her daily world, her lived community.

Bébout was born in Massachusetts in 1950, and lived an intense, urban life in Toronto from 1969 when he emigrated during the Vietnam War until he died in June 2009. He always lived in and around the “gay ghetto” that he helped to shape. He chronicled Toronto gay life and politics in his memoirs *Promiscuous Affections: A Life in the Bar 1969-2000* and in his history of *The Body Politic* and the community it served; both are found on a web site he launched on his fiftieth birthday in January 2000.

Reading the early letters, it seems that Rick has the most to learn from Jane. She is a wise, famous, older figure and he writes her in a deferential tone; but as the correspondence progresses, she learns from him about the dailiness of gay male urban life in Toronto; he gives her access to a community she feels related to but which is very distant from her daily life on Galiano Island.

At first they talked about the paper and coverage of issues and debates that were important to the gay and lesbian community: pornography, censorship, and youth sexuality, for example. They often disagreed, but they prodded each other to think more deeply and to explore questions from their very different viewpoints. They developed an intellectual and political bond as they grew to respect and trust each other. Eventually the letters became a personal journal for Rick and Jane became his closest confidant. His letters were often written in several dated entries, spanning a week or more. He would begin each “entry” with the date and time of writing. In periods of stress and uncertainty (instability at work, messy romances, and the reality of HIV/AIDS for the community after 1982 and for himself after 1988) words were Rick’s way to contain chaos, to give shape to the blurred intensity of the moment; his descriptions grew longer, more detailed. On medical problems he took, as he said, a “sociological” approach, first watching a close friend die in 1987, then observing the procedures he had to undergo himself, describing such scenes with an air of objective detachment and sometimes unexpected humour.

It was in 1981 that their letters took a more personal turn, ironically enough, after Jane exploded at *The Body Politic* (and more particularly at Rick) because a key paragraph was dropped from a review she wrote of Andrea Dworkin's book *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* for the June 1981 issue of the paper. In March 1981, Jane asks if *The Body Politic* would be interested in her review and she sympathizes with recent raids involving members of the collective:

March 8, 1981

Dear Rick:

Andrea Dworkin has sent me a manuscript copy of her book, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, asking me to do a review, even if critical. I have written a review and sent it to her, saying I'll send it to *The Body Politic* if she wants me to. It is negative enough in places that she may not want it printed. I'm offering her the choice because I don't usually agree to review books I have real reservations about. Anyway, if she does want it printed, I hope you can make room for it in June or July.

I haven't yet read the coverage on the raids. You fellows may get some high energy out of confrontation, but I sit out here and motherly wring my hands worrying about all of you and wishing men could get the romance out of danger and damage.

Affectionately, Jane

Next, on May 27, 1981, Jane reads the review as published in the June *Body Politic* and writes a stern letter to Rick and the collective.

Dear Friends:

The understanding I have had with you is that any changes you want to make in my work will not be done without my approval. I cannot agree to publish in *The Body Politic* without that understanding.

In my review of Andrea Dworkin's book, one whole paragraph has been deleted. It is the paragraph most specifically positive about the work she has done and most controversial in its analysis of Kinsey and male sexual motivation. In a comment otherwise strongly critical, the leaving out of this paragraph, tips the whole balance of the review. Whether or not the paragraph was cut simply in concern for space (the photograph could have been smaller), it looks very much like political censoring. Whatever the motive, the exclusion of the paragraph is a serious mistake which must be corrected because I cannot publish in a paper where there is any question of such censorship.

I need the omitted paragraph printed with an apology for its deletion before anything else of mine is published in the paper.

Yours,

Jane Rule

c.c. Andrea Dworkin

By return mail, Rick writes a deeply apologetic letter, saying that he investigated the matter:

My only conclusion is that the typesetter skipped over it in keying, and that this error was not caught in the proofreading. First proofing of all our copy is supposed to be done in comparison with the original manuscript; in this case, that must not have happened. I must bear final responsibility for this error, since I train proofreaders and apparently have not been insistent enough about the importance of a comparison to the original on the first proof.

He ends the letter saying:

You also have from me my personal apologies. I'm embarrassed and truly sorry to have effectively misrepresented your opinion through such a stupid error. I will also send a letter to Andrea Dworkin to reassure her that we had no intention of slanting your review in any way not intended by you. I hope that meets with your approval.

Again, my apologies—and my hopes that this has not weakened your trust in our editorial *intentions* (as opposed to our execution, which I promise you will have less reason to question in the future).

Beat wishes.

Sincerely,
Rick Bébout
for the collective

Andrea Dworkin wrote back to Rick on June 3:

Thank you for yr letter and the other material you sent me. I hadnt seen the review but you spared me at least the pain of encountering it without preparation. You have made it impossible, by yr conscientious explanation, to have "suspicions of politically motivated censorship," but if Freud had not invented the Freudian slip I would have to . . .

Sincerely,
Andrea Dworkin

Rick handled Jane's rage with tact and candor, and the incident—with high feelings on both sides—was resolved swiftly and cleanly. Jane forgave the paper and Rick. Their quick and honest exchange may have established the trust that permitted a closer relationship in subsequent letters.

The story of the letters—how they began with Jane's collaboration with *The Body Politic* and became the expression of a deepening friendship—blends into the stories that the letters tell.

The stories the letters tell

What first drew me to the correspondence was the rich social history the letters provide: two articulate, engaged eyewitnesses to an important social

movement share in private their thoughts about public issues. The letters also tell the compelling narrative of a deepening friendship, an epistolary intimacy that is, simply, a love story.

The letters often begin and end with a conversational gesture; here's an example from Rick from January 1990:

Dear Jane,

Home for a scotch with you, and needing it after one too many funerals.

Rick often writes late into the night, one scotch after another, though he says one can write drunk but should edit sober. Jane more often writes during the day, between the departure and arrival of the many guests she and Helen welcomed on Galiano or as she watched the children who came to swim at their pool every day in the summer. As I was reading through the letters, I was thinking about the extraordinary relationship that was unfolding page after page when I found "Dear Rick, I do love you. Jane" at the end of a letter from Jane to Rick in 1986.

The letters tell deeply intertwined stories about public events and private life, social history, and personal narratives. The correspondence is of special historical interest because they illuminate the twentieth-century discovery that the personal is political. The letters complicate our sense of the ways that selves and communities constitute each other even as the g/l/b/t movement coalesced around sexual identities. The letters are written in the moment, without benefit of hindsight; they tell the story of the gay and lesbian movement in North America as it unfolds, from the point of view of two deeply political people whose ages, genders, backgrounds, and daily lives give them very different perspectives on the communities they share. Jane and Rick are reflective people for whom language matters, who need to explore themselves and the worlds they inhabit through language. They count on each other to be both loving and critical, to be good and attentive readers. The letters offer us a means of capturing and complicating memory, a way to witness the intellectual and emotional complexities of daily life.

An exchange between Rule and Bébout early on—after the Dworkin debacle and just before they met for the first time in 1982—illustrates a mingling of public and private voices, public debates and private reflections. In these letters we can see how differently they view issues that tended to dominate gay and lesbian debates in the early 1980s—but also, interwoven with their arguments are reflections on their own feelings about morality and about the erotic of the everyday. In February 1982, Jane writes to say that she'd like to write longer, reflective pieces for *The Body Politic*:

February 24, 1982. I would like to do a longer article or two in the next couple of years. I think a package review of several books, not as a way to economize on book reviews but as a purposeful consideration of what's going on . . . I'd also like to ponder the emphasis on the outrageous in some of the lead articles of *The Body Politic* as opposed to some of the more important moral dilemmas of our lives. Compromise seems to me a deeper issue than nipple clips in the baths, swinging drag nuns, or the cynical article on how to be a rejected lover. I know [you are] terrified that the paper might somehow become respectable and dull, and morality never does seem a fun topic, but I may try my hand at it one of these days just the same.

A week later, Rick answers:

March 3, 1982. I'm glad you want to take on larger things—even our own “outrageousness.” I winced a little at that, I must admit—mostly because I know what we have before us for the coming issue: a piece on “outrageous” filmmaker Kenneth Anger, Gayle Rubin on “The Leather Menace,” . . . and something which its author calls “a cautionary tale,” but which is, after all, about fist-fucking. If all this seems a calculated and extreme case of flaunting it, well, it is.

[he then goes on to explain an effort to give sense of direction to the features section of the magazine by focusing on themes] The first four themes we decided to gather material for were “the big four”—pornography, youth sexuality, public sex, and S/M.

[He adds] I think part of the mythology of the gay community (however that may be defined—and I suppose I mean the most public and visible manifestations of the gay male community) is that it has no morality, that it is amoral or anti-moral, I know from my life that that's crap, but I also know that what I mean by morality is very different . . . from what my mother might mean. I think most of the gay people I know are highly moral people . . . but I don't think we yet have a language to talk about that kind of morality in a positive way.

Jane responds—again by return mail:

March 10, 1982. Yes, it is precisely getting at the problem of defining our own kinds of morality that I'm interested in, developing a vocabulary that makes it clearer, that places issues in a context people can understand even if they don't agree . . . I have no objection to continued discussion of what you call “the big four”, even if they aren't the big four for me or I suspect some of your readers and more of your potential readers. Of them the sexuality of the young seems to me a universal topic about which we say and think far too little for its importance.

A week later, Rick answers:

March 19, 1982. You may be right about the “big four” not really being the big four for most of our readers, present and potential. I guess my interest has been to get . . . “dialogue rather than diatribe” going . . . What I was tired of was the “discussion” of these issues in simple pro-con, black-white, yes-no terms. We take a single word to name a hugely varied phenomenon, encompassing a vast range of potential good and bad, and say: Pornography—vote yes or no; Pedophilia—vote yes or no . . . Can you imagine us saying: Sex—vote yes or no?

Part of the problem has been the fixation on all these things as *acts*, not as forms of interaction, as things people do with each other that *mean* something to them. Take any sexual act out of context and describe it technically or mechanically and it becomes completely ridiculous.

Rick returns to the discussion of morality and desire a couple of letters later, in a seemingly unrelated anecdote. He talks about the rewards of working at the paper, particularly watching young people grow up, mature in their sense of self and competence. Rick describes a young volunteer named “Victor” as quiet, intense, having wandered in a year earlier. Victor liked to be called “Squirrel” because squirrels don’t like to be touched. As he learned to typeset and became very adept, the collective gave him more and more responsibility. Rick writes to Jane:

April 28, 1982. If Eddie [another older co-worker] or I put a hand on his shoulder now he doesn’t wince anymore, but he’d still fall into unmoving embarrassment if either of us told him how we feel about him; love isn’t enough of a word, isn’t specific enough; I’d never want to be his lover, but I feel warm, protective—and lustful sometimes, but in a way that doesn’t involve any frustration at the fact that sex . . . is never likely to happen. (I want to take him home and lick him all over like a mother cat, but I can’t imagine that that image made real would be anything but embarrassing for both of us.) . . . I think of it as somewhat parental, but in a way that is clearly erotic, too—an emotion that I’m sure is common enough, but for which we don’t have accepted models, and no name that I can think of . . . I think it could be all us aging activists discovering our children. Maybe we’re discovering—defining—our own brand of erotic parenthood.

Answering that letter, Jane says:

May 3, 1982. I think maybe I should write [a piece] on taboos which seem to me good. Your description of your relationship with the beautiful Victor is very like the relationships I’ve had with some of my students. I’ve always been troubled by the casual (for them) sex so many men at the university have with the women students, not on narrowly moral grounds but for the blurring and confusing of the particular relationship there is between a student and a teacher, at its best with an erotic component, held in abeyance in order that the mind stays free, trustful, acknowledged for itself. For years I was only able to acknowledge that eroticism with my male students and taught them better as a result. Both Helen and I needed the women’s movement to understand that we needed to communicate our love for women students, too.

A pattern emerges here that recurs in other letters as well: beginning with an attempt to comment on “the issues of the day” they discover their differences, which come out of their very different locations in the world. But gradually, freed from the constraints of having to make these arguments in public, of having to express “acceptable” or “correct” feelings, they reach

toward a more candid morality that acknowledges rather than represses the erotic without exploiting the young and less powerful. In the process, they grow closer to each other.

Theoretical work on sexuality and gender has tended to sanitize emotional complexity and minimize the contradictions of the unconscious. Biddy Martin noted this phenomenon as early as 1996 in *Femininity Played Straight* when she wrote: "I have become frustrated by the excesses of what has been called postmodern or discourse theory, especially with the thin language of subject positions and critiques of 'the subject' that evacuate interiority altogether . . ." (15). The letters restore the interiority of the "queer subject," and deepen our understanding of the work of sexual politics. One example comes out of an exchange about work.

Rule and Bébout often used each other as sounding boards for their work—she wrote several novels, he moved from *The Body Politic* to other centres of community activism between 1981 and 1995. A conversation in 1984 sheds particular light on how they each understand the meaning of their work. Rick's work had become even more urgent with the advent of HIV. By 1984, HIV and AIDS were a constant in gay life and had taken a toll among Rick's friends. He had not yet been diagnosed as HIV positive; that would come four years later, in 1988. Because AIDS was a major issue by 1984 in the mainstream press, Rick's parents asked him about it and he decided to send them an article he'd written for the December 1983 issue of *The Body Politic* called "Is There Safe Sex?" He writes to Jane about the letter that he wrote to his parents when he sent the article:

In the end, it was a coming out letter—not coming out as gay, which they knew about already, but coming out as committed to what I do and to the people I do it for, including myself. I've always suspected that when you tell your parents you're gay, huge parts of your life disappear from their view, from their imagination: they know what you *don't* have, but they rarely have a grasp of what you *do* have, since it's something they've never known and probably can't imagine . . . It was the first time I'd ever told them what this all means to me, and that's perhaps because it's been coming clearer to me myself. It's partly a continued . . . amazement at the way this place [*The Body Politic*] works: right now . . . there are ten people here working away, most of them unpaid (and the paid ones working overtime) . . . I told [my parents] it was often insane, but that it's an insanity put together by people working for each other, not for anybody else, taking what they earn and using it to do a better job, not to pad anybody else's pocket, and deciding together how they want the whole thing to work instead of taking orders from anyone. All that is nothing short of astonishment to me—except as my vision of the future, of how people should, and maybe someday will, all work together. . . . hard-headed me finds himself sitting at a typesetter at three in the morning

with tears coming to his eyes over a sappy sentiment that—what can I say?—I know is true. Not uncomplicated by all the messes of life, not lacking in ambiguities, but, fundamentally, true. Which is why I could tell my parents that “I guess it’s time I told you that the way I live my life makes me happier than anything else I could imagine.” I still have no idea what they’ll make of it.

Jane wrote back the following:

I’m so glad you felt free to write to your parents about what your world means to you. It is true that parts of our lives are simply out of the range of our parents’ imagining. Mine visit often enough to have some sense of the domestic richness of my living, and they are very good at making friends with my friends, gay and straight, but they have no idea of the time I spend writing for the alternate press, and they find it very difficult to accept the fact that I am outspoken about things they have been raised never to discuss even, I suspect, between themselves.

In *Passionate Communities* I argued that Jane Rule’s fictions provided a site for resisting the erasure and distortions of lesbian lives that shaped public (and much private) discourse until the feminist and gay and lesbian movements of the 1970s and 1980s. I also argued that her work provided a site for resisting the regulatory demands of gay and lesbian communities as they emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. As a writer of fiction, Rule was always more interested in ambiguities, contradictions, and the unexpected than in politically expedient, community definitions of what sexuality means and how sexuality and the erotic should be represented. The letters exchanged between Jane and Rick give us another site for resisting reductive narratives of queer life and work. Returning to the archive returns us to ambiguities, contradictions and the unexpected. The form of letters as well as the content provides a way to rethink identity, community, the public and the private, how we write our histories. Which leads me to the third and last story: how letters change queer narratives.

How letters change queer narratives—letters as life writing

Letters—especially private letters between people who live public lives—are a hybrid genre. In a 1995 essay, Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner explored what queer theory has to teach us. They characterize queer theory as “the labor of [articulating] sexual practices and desires” and complicating categories of identity. They further write that the work of queer theory “has animated a rethinking of both the perverse and the normal: the romantic couple, sex for money, reproduction, the genres of life narrative.” In the Rule-Bébout correspondence, each letter writer seeks in different ways to put sexual practices and desires into language, and at the same time seeks

to complicate “categories of identity”—both received categories and newly emerging ones. The letters become a new “genre of life narrative,” queering life-writing while incorporating elements of memoir, diary, and essay.

These letters are hybrid in that they are written for multiple readers: they write for each other, of course, but they also write for themselves, to give shape to the chaos of daily living. For example, in a June 1990 letter, muddled because of new medication for HIV, numbed by the death from AIDS of a former lover, Rick wrote: “My letters to you . . . are my chief means of memory, tying things down in words I can find again later.” A third audience in the letters is the eventual reader of archives, an anonymous future reader to whom the letter writer seems, at times, to appeal. Will you be interested in our lives? Will this story make sense in a way that I hope it will? Will it matter?

Letters like these are hybrid in that they bring together the private and the public, they expose “private” lives to public view, and at the same time these letters in particular question where the lines are drawn between private and public—by whom and in whose interest.

Thinking about eventual publication of these letters, Jane wrote in February 1994:

I don't think much about the public these letters may eventually have. Years and years ago I figured out that the only real privacy I had was in my head. That was when Helen found our first landlady in Vancouver going through our waste baskets and reading anything she could find. Helen was outraged. I found myself feeling sorry for the woman that her life was so narrow she was looking for it in our waste baskets.

The gay and lesbian movement (like feminism, which both Rule and Bébout claim and critique) calls into question the seemingly clear lines of “public and private” that map our social worlds. As the raid on *The Body Politic* in 1977 (or the Stonewall Inn in 1969) illustrates, the state has a keen interest in regulating desire, using public force to invade private lives. Phillip Brian Harper and others have argued that the line between “public” and “private” shifts according to one's race, class, and sexuality. Certainly the Rule-Bébout letters show that to be the case.

Jeffrey Weeks in his analysis of the emergence of “sexual communities” in the late twentieth-century characterizes those communities as “sites of conflict. . . . ‘Community’ provides the language through which the resistance to domination is expressed” (92). These letters bear out Weeks' argument; the “community” that read *The Body Politic* and Jane Rule's fictions did develop a language of resistance. Between 1981 and 1995, this

“community” faced the new threat of HIV and AIDS and Rick, especially, looks for ways to keep that threat from tearing the community apart, diminishing its vitality. We can get a glimpse of the toll of AIDS on the community in a letter Rick wrote to Jane in September 1990 after she told him she’d just finished writing an essay. He wrote: “Is your essay something I can see? I ask because I see so little these days that reminds me there was once something we called gay thought—intelligent reflections on life shaped by the ways we’ve lived, possible only because of the ways we’ve lived, and yet valuable beyond us. AIDS has not stopped that so much as pushed it aside, submerged it, made it timid.” The letters offer resistance to the numbing omnipresence of illness and loss.

Private documents like these letters show us a site within the community that allows for a different kind of resistance—a resistance to facile, expedient opposition to domination and its effects, as illustrated in the passage I quoted earlier where Rick urges a more thoughtful debate than “simple pro-con, black-white, yes-no terms” that framed much discussion of pornography, youth sexuality, and public sex. We can discern at least four kinds of resistance in the letters: to domination from outside the community, to the regulatory demands of the community, to the numbing effects of illness and loss, and to fear that risks undermining the community itself.

The letters give both writers a chance to be critical of the communities that they value, that they have worked for and been nurtured by. Rule was always skeptical of the notion of community based on sexual identity and said repeatedly that if Galiano became Lesbos she’d move. And yet when more lesbians moved to the island she welcomed their real and varied presence. And in a 1991 letter in which she thinks about the virtual community that she and Rick shared she wrote:

In my few opportunities to experience that sense of community in the flesh, it has been for me a nearly overwhelming affirmation. The night I got the Human Dignity Award in New York. The night we went to Fruit Cocktail in Toronto. Though it’s an unusual experience for me, I have a nearly daily sense of community that the building of our history and our present has given me over the years.

And you’ve been a good teacher over all these years, sorting ideas through, not taking anything for granted. What very good company you are.

To value the gay and lesbian community, they write, one needs to be critical, to reject glibness and complacency. In 1994 when Lynne Fernie asked Rick to think of ways of including the letters in *Fiction and Other Truths*, the documentary film that she, Aerlyn Weissman and Rina Fraticelli were

making about Jane Rule's life and work, he started to reread them and got quite caught up in what he found. Rick and Lynne were at odds about what to take from the letters. Lynne wanted material that would emphasize the struggle against oppression. Rick wanted to include conversations that would show debates within the community. He wrote the following to Jane:

I got to look more carefully than usual today at how we talk in letters, or rather what we talk about. Lynne called this morning to say she wants me to be writing something that can be used to "wipe" to a demo—so I should be on about right-wing homophobia, violence, oppression, some such; surely we've talked about such things often. I do recall talking about the bath raid demos in '81, worrying to you because [my young lover] was out on one while I was stuck putting the news together at the office. Lots of morality and power, lots of love and death—but where there's anger it's not aimed at easy targets.

This is no surprise: we'd have been very smug company for each other indeed if we'd simply been rehearsing brickbats meant to be tossed over the barricades. (If we'd wanted to do that we'd have published tracts, not written letters!). All the us-against-the-world stuff has been our subtext, taken for granted and finally not very interesting except when it casts light on why people might be the way they are. (When I did toss brickbats they were aimed at liberal straights—or liberal homosexuals!—not the right wing.) I see I was always more interested in why *we*, and not our opponents, are the way we are.

Shielded from the eyes of the mainstream, straight reader who always seems to hover around even the most "outrageous" publications, the letter writers are free to be vulnerable in their internal contradictions and changing views. As a result, the archive that these letters offer us complicates our sense of what resisting communities were all about. A rhetoric of political debate and opposition (shaped by a hostile and often brutal environment) is offset by a rhetoric of confession and exploration (made possible by the protected environment of the correspondence). The archive becomes more richly layered and yields more complex readings and understandings. The letters change queer narratives.

As early as 1989, Jane and Rick first started to think that their letters might one day be interesting to others. Their hope was that the letters would add depth and a real sense of dailiness to the history they were a part of, that they wanted to keep alive.

Jane wrote in August 1989:

Sometimes when I read a letter of yours, I think you really should try your hand at fiction . . . because it's a form that reaches out to a larger audience. And I do use what you teach me in my fiction, not in very recognizable ways, but your way of seeing is often with me when I'm thinking about characters. What you ponder becomes part of my pondering . . .

[a few paragraphs later] I expect our letters to be some day public property, and, though I write with little self-consciousness about being overheard at some future date, talking intermittently to you and to myself, it seems to me what has concerned us is richly human and significantly focused on the concerns of our time and our tribe, to use a Margaret Laurence term.

Rick responded by sending Jane a recent article from *Harper's* about writers' letters. He commented:

I don't know the author, though like so many American writers these days he gives the impression that I'm supposed to—or rather, that I'm supposed to know his *work* and only as much of his life as he's willing to go on about in magazine articles (usually quite a lot, ego outpacing oeuvre).

[later in the same letter he says of *this* correspondence] The use of these words in the world (if they ever have any beyond you and me!) will not, I think, have much to do with anybody's reputation, will not expose anything normal life hasn't already. What they will expose is just that: normal life—ours, now—as you said using Margaret Laurence's term, 'the concerns of our time and tribe.' And *that* I very much want people in the future to be able to know, should they want to, and I hope they do. Not to know me, or even to know you (a more likely desire) but to know our tribe.

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