

CORRESPONDENCE

Editor's Note: After finding Pinder alive and well in Vancouver, I expressed my pleasure in discovering her work, my delight in reading her wonderful novels, and my concern that her work had received so little attention in the United States.¹ I expressed an interest in publishing *35 Stones* in *LSF* and the hope that she “might have all kinds of writings that we might consider for publication.” In the exchange of correspondence that follows, Pinder becomes Leslie; I am to be called James (to which I posed no objection).

Before we take up again the story began as a preface to this issue of *LSF*, I want to thank Leslie not only for her writings—for entrusting them to me and allowing me to re-edit them for publication for a U.S. audience—but for her friendship and for this edited selection of our correspondence which she prepared, and appears here at her instigation.

■ *March 16, 2006. Leslie to James.*

What a lovely letter. Thank you so much for your interest—and your persistence—and your appreciation of my work. I was really chuffed to read your letter.

I've gone to the web sites to which you refer. You're doing amazing things, and you write so well. You animate important issues in such interesting ways in your journal. I would be honoured to be included in your publication.

As of two years ago, I turned to writing full-time and practicing law part-time. It makes it easier on the writer (although certainly not on the pocket book). I've just finished my third novel (I really had to get into this position of reducing my time as a lawyer in order to complete it). The novel is titled *Bring Me One of Everything*; I sent it out to a publisher a few weeks ago. Hopefully, it will find a home soon. I could send a précis of the novel, if you'd like.

¹ Hein Online does not contain a single reference to Pinder's writing in U.S. law journals.

While the novel is prose, the narrator of the book ends up writing—through the course of the book and then completing it at the end—the libretto for an opera—really a long poem in dialogue form. Would you like to read the libretto?

As you can tell, I am, given your interest, greedy to take all your time and attention.

■ *March 17, 2006. James to Leslie.*

I'm quite pleased to hear that you have a new novel finished, and that it must now only find a publisher. If the world works in the way it should—it doesn't—you'd have a publisher for the new book by end of the day. If I had a publishing house—I don't—I'd take it, unread, based on your earlier work.

And yes, by all means, send the libretto. I recall, somewhere in my rambles, that the first libretto written was by a lawyer. I have no experience reading librettos and may not be able to make any headway reading yours. But I'd certainly like to see it nevertheless, just to see what you're doing.

Are you amenable to seeing "The Carriers of No" [your article], in print again?

A new day calls . . .

■ *March 23, 2006. Leslie to James.*

Here is the libretto. It comes as the finale to the novel *Bring Me One of Everything*. Here's a description of the book:

When Alix Smith was a teenager, she made a plan for her own death that was, unwittingly, foiled by her mother. Many years later, as an adult, Alix is trying to unravel the mystery of why Austin Hart, a renowned anthropologist, killed himself at the pinnacle of his career. She wants to place herself at the scene of Hart's death, to triangulate the events which intersected at the moment he put a gun to his head and pulled the trigger. She wants to understand his state of mind at that settled point of no return.

Alix has been hired to write the libretto for an opera about Austin Hart. She sees her task as transmuting the incomprehensible loss of his life into art.

Alix comes to know Austin's daughter and son, his friends and colleagues. She is given access to his early journals, kept in the university archives, that focus on the expedition which Hart led to the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1957. That expedition cut and removed the largest stand of totem poles in the world. Eventually, as Alix works deeper into the mystery of Hart's life and death, she is led to his unofficial diaries that only one other person has read. At the centre, Alix learns, is Hart's love for a woman thirty years younger than himself.

Alix's pursuit also takes her into the secret places of a native society where men and women heal through the power of winter spirit dances. She witnesses these dances as an artist and encounters ethical problems of both an anthropologist and writer: her sense of transgression and wrong-doing associated with entering a place of privilege and extracting a story that never really happened. She is a collector.

Alix comes to face the dark drop-offs within herself. And this leads her, ultimately, to contend with the treacherous relationship she has with her own witty, clever and ailing mother whom she realizes had actually saved her life at her own settled point of no return.

Austin Hart was a collector of native art. Many people in the novel are collectors. The book examines 'collecting' on many levels: object, memories, lost loves. The book's characters walk the line between keeping things, and hoarding and coveting them. Alix comes to understand, as a writer, what Austin meant when he said "it was as if I came upon a burning building and I chose to save the treasures inside rather than the people caught in the fire."

Native cultures almost collapsed when outsiders arrived. What happened to these cultures resonates for all of us now. Austin Hart was with people who were feeling the after-shocks of terroristic invasion. Ultimately, it is Alix's deft but uncertain ability to follow the true-line of her unknown story that enables her to gain insight and reprieve from terror and loss.

■ *March 25, 2006. James to Leslie.*

I read the libretto from *Bring Me One of Everything* this morning;² it's stunning. It is as powerful as anything I've read in many a year. It would be a great and high honor to have it appear in *LSF*. And it fits ever so beautifully with your other work.

We've never published anything quite like the libretto in *LSF*, and that makes the idea of publishing it all the more attractive. The other striking thing about the libretto is that, surprisingly, I found it quite readable. Most important, it's moving; a reader would have to be soul dead to not see the poignancy, sadness, and power in it.

I suppose it would be too much to hope or expect that the *LSF* issues I sent you might have arrived!

■ *March 26, 2006. Leslie to James.*

I'm so delighted that you appreciated the libretto. What an interesting idea to publish the libretto as a stand-alone verse drama. If you think it works, then I'll consider it.

Can you bear reading the entire ms. if I send it?

No, the *LSF* issue has not yet arrived.

Thank you so much for your generous encouragement.

■ *March 26, 2007. James to Leslie*

I have been working on the in-house galley version of the libretto and will have it ready for your inspection in a few days. And, I must say, I'm looking forward to seeing the rest of the novel which introduces the libretto.

² At this junction, Leslie has sent only the libretto; I have not read the manuscript of the novel she describes in her March 23rd note.

I've taken another look at *On Double Tracks* and in my view there is a rather good stand alone excerpt possible from the parts of the novel devoted to the trial.

I think the excerpt from *On Double Tracks* will work with the libretto, the essay, and the poems, and I'm hopeful that we can take a go at it.

■ *March 27, 2006. Leslie to James.*

Hi James—I'm sorry I've been slow in getting back to you. I'm in the midst of moving house and in chaos for a few more days. I'll respond asap when my head (and all the boxes—well, at least some of them) clears. Probably by Thursday? Hope that's okay.

I'm delighted with our projects . . .

■ *April 12, 2007. Leslie to James.*

Hi James, the tide of boxes is receding so there is hope but no sanity as yet. I'll write right after Easter. Hopefully I can then see the shoreline.

The two *Legal Studies Forum* volumes arrived. They look so substantial and handsome. Thanks.

■ *April 17, 2007. James to Leslie.*

It must be good to be settled again (or semi-settled)(or trying to act again as if your settled).

We've had rainy overcast days for several days, and by some magic, carved out an exception for Easter Sunday. The weather was balmy so I spent the afternoon sitting under a winter-battered old Bradford pear tree drinking wine and talking with my neighbor, kids playing in the yard. It was a splendid day.

Let me know what you decide what you want to do with *On Double Tracks*.

I'm exciting about this U.S. introduction of your work.

■ *April 19, 2007. Leslie to James.*

Your Easter Sunday sounds perfect. I was still boxed in. But the new bookshelves have gone up and, at last, books are coming out again. It's like being able to breathe.

I have another piece that was published a few years ago called "To the Fourth Wall"—my musings about death in the midst of a case before the B.C. Court of Appeal. That court does bring on thoughts of death. I'll send it to you just for "fun."

I'm slightly less in the groove (I note that e-mail fonts don't take to italics) because my hot water tank broke. Ah, moving. Ah, planned obsolescence.

Glad we're back in touch.

■ *May 2 2006. James to Leslie.*

Rereading your note of yesterday concerning the condensed version, and thus, reconstituted story in *On Double Tracks*, I realize I did not address your concerns about your portrayal of the judge in the novel. I do not find the judge weird, or your characterization of him overheated. First, we see from the story that the judge is getting old, and that his thoughts are sometimes confused. If the judge were presented to us as a man in his 50s there would need to be an explanation for his weirdness. And for a U.S. reader, the judge will be a familiar figure. We have a long history of arrogant judges in this country. So, readers of the story, even those who may be law-trained (as I am) will find the judge perfectly understandable. He's perfectly portrayed as an aging legalist, a man who has been on the bench so long that his capacity for fresh thinking has dried up (if he ever had such a capacity). The judge is not only aging, but he's got some clearly understood biases, the biases are, I think, common rather than weird (we don't see him lusting after the clerk, Mary). Your judge reminds me a great deal, at least in terms of his legal rulings and his demeanor, of the judge in Jonathan Harr's *A Civil Action*. (The portrait of the judge in Harr's book is every bit as devastating, in terms of his bull-headed mean-spiritedness as is your judge. I've appeared before these kind of judges; I suspect that anyone who practices law in the U.S. has. (I'd like to think your judges in Canada are not nearly so arrogant, so bull-headed, so mean-spirited, as are some fair number of our U.S. judges.)

So, I don't find the judge in *On Double Tracks* weird at all. It's frightening to think of this man as a judge, but I think we can easily, quite easily, accept him as you present him and do so without thinking, as readers, that we've been cheated by not being told more about how the judge got to be this way. Indeed, we're no more cheated by the absence of a history about the judge, than we are, in having no history of Megan Striclan. As something akin to a novella—that is, *On Double Tracks* reconstituted with the backstory of the characters—we don't expect to have the kind of history of the characters you present in the novel. E.g., one of the most well-known legal fiction novellas in U.S. literature is Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener." In this narrative, we've given only a few sentences about the "history" of the lawyer/narrator character. We don't expect more. Having so little of the backstory makes the novella all the more intriguing.

I don't think you need an introduction to explain the judge in *On Double Tracks*, or for that matter to explain anything. It's an absolutely stunning story, even when only the trial scenes are presented. And it works, in my reading, quite perfectly without preface or epilogue.

■ *May 2, 2007. James to Leslie.*

Truth be told, I may be something of a living example of planned obsolescence. It's a long story; I'll will spare you.

I feel badly about plumbing problems. I remember well walking into the basement several years ago to find myself wading in water, the hot water tank spraying water like a fire hydrant. It was a nasty sight, the only consolation being the adrenaline rush that comes when your staring into a real mess, a daunting spectacle, and know that you don't have a clue about how your going to make it all stop and go away. I could, of course, be talking about Megan Striclan in *On Double Tracks*.

■ *May 02, 2006. James to Leslie.*

I reread the excerpts from *On Double Tracks* this morning and find this story now, as I did on first reading, to be some of the most powerful, engaging, dramatic, insightful writing about legal characters that I've ever seen. More importantly, for our present purposes, the excerpts from *On Double Tracks* (leaving out the middle of the novel, the backstory

which gives history to the lives of the characters) is not, in my view, needed to make the story work.

■ *May 2, 2007. Leslie to James.*

Really great suggestions [for the new version of *On Double Tracks*]. We probably can drop all of the introduction, retain “The Trial Days One and Two” and add “Starting Day Three.”

I’m neither here nor there with the postscript. Maybe include it (with appropriate deletions).

And yes to all the other suggested alterations. Omit sex, not for prudery but for coherency (funny sentence that, if taken out of context).

Did I miss anything?

Good one. Talk soon.

■ *May 02, 2006. James to Leslie.*

You do quite well in moving things along while dealing with a blown hot water tank.

Out of context, I don’t know what we might try to say about sex: *all sex is coherent* (and all editors are prudish). I’ll go no further down this road!

I’ll get things moving here on the preparation of galley for the reconstituted version of *On Double Tracks*. I’m assuming that you don’t have computer disk/word processing files of the book. We’ll have to scan the text, and then clean up the mess created from the introduction of rogue words during the process of optical-reading the text.

Again, I’m pleased to have this new version of *On Double Tracks* for *LSF*. The writing is wonderful, the characters vividly drawn, the courtroom encounter between Megan & the judge is as good and as powerful as any I’ve ever read. For my part, the new version of *On Double Tracks* should—immediately—be made part of the lawyers & literature canon in the U.S. That may not happen; if it doesn’t our students will be the losers.

I'm hopeful that life becomes less topsy-turvy as the days sweep us along.

■ *May 3, 2006. Leslie to James.*

I am so buoyed up by your appreciation.

And you're right, I don't have a word processing file of *On Double Tracks*.

The water tank has gone to water tank heaven. The waters flow. All is better.

Be well. Talk soon.

■ *May 19, 2006. Leslie to James.*

Did I really call you Bruce?

I've just come back from the Supreme Court of Canada. They don't know it, but it feeds my fiction.

Amazing, the sense of the importance of the task at hand and its historicity—and the stupidity of much of what is said there.

Did you litigate?

Maybe we should talk on the phone sometime.

■ *May 20, 2006. James to Leslie. [Subject: Re: *Judges and the Supremes*]*

The Supremes must be good for something besides music! Now, we know, they're good for fiction!

Yes, I suppose you could say I was a litigation lawyer. I was first with the Civil Division, at the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., and then, for a short time, a Federal Prosecutor working on housing fraud cases. I made a couple of appellate appearances, and there is a good deal of Federal grand jury work while I was with the U.S. Attorney's office. I did not, to my lasting regret, get a chance to try a case before a jury. In

my next reincarnation, I'd just soon be a trial lawyer as anything else! Well . . . I might, in this next life, be a Jungian analyst, or an anthropologist. Hard to say. Maybe after being a lawyer there is no 2nd life, no further reincarnation to be had.

Never been called Bruce before. Not so bad. If I were a fiction writer, I'd write a story about this Bruce. Actually, I should tell you, my fiction writing isn't up to speed. (Something else to do in my next life?)

And yes . . . we should talk sometime.

Did you, by chance, receive the marked-up copy of the libretto? U.S. mail to Canada is slow. I can get a letter to Lebanon and an answer back before I can get a packet delivered to Vancouver. Incredible.

■ *May 08, 2006. James to Leslie.*

I sent you today, by mail, a mark-up (copy-edit) of "Bring Me One of Everything." After I put it in the mail I realized that this may no longer be your address! If you want me to send another copy to your your new house (with that new hot water tank), just let me know.

The libretto is one of the most powerful pieces of writing that I've ever had the pleasure to publish.

■ *May 23 2006. Leslie to James.*

Thank you for your note. I always thought that if I prosecuted it would be for white collar crime (exhibiting, no doubt, my deep dislike of my business-man father). It would be wonderful sometime to talk about all of this.

The libretto has not yet arrived. Lebanon indeed! Canada Post is very much a kind of do-it-yourself-not-us service. I'll let you know when it arrives.

And a thought, to further absorb your time. I have the draft of the novel finished, the one that ends with the libretto, and it's out to a few publishers. I would be so thrilled if I could send it to you and you might give me your critical thoughts, if you could make some time.

■ *May 23, 2006. James to Leslie.*

I was serious about the U.S.-Canadian postal situation, this business about the libretto mark-up still in transit confirms what has been only a strong suspicion. Lebanon indeed! I've been corresponding of late and sending parcels to a colleague at a university in Mosul, Iraq. Again, with more timely delivery than I get to you in Canada.

With your having been so generous to provide the libretto, I'd be a step toward brain dead to say no to your offer to read the novel that I now know only by way of a stunning conclusion. This novel I've now got an investment in. I'd be delighted to read the draft of the novel. Since, I'm on my way to Kentucky in something like two weeks, with less than stellar postal service, you should send the novel to me there.

■ *May, 25. 2006. Leslie to James.*

The ms.—*Bring Me One of Everything*—is now making its way to you. The government of Canada has promised me that it will arrive on June 1. So we'll see about the fulfillment of government fiduciary obligations.

Unfortunately, no sign as yet of the galleys. We live in hope.

■ *May 31, 2006. [Basket of flowers arrive in Morgantown for a surprised editor]*

■ *June 1. James to Leslie.*

I have searched my memory for anyone named Leslie I might know (or have ever known) who would send flowers. . . . You see, the reason for this digging around for associations with the name Leslie comes from the fact that a rather wonderful basket of flowers arrived yesterday early in the afternoon. When the young man tried to deliver them, I was confident he was at the wrong house, thinking he must be seeking directions. Yet, he seemed confident he was at the right place and proceeded to entrust the flowers to me. The flowers are so vivid in color one suspects they are not real. (We're simply not accustomed to anything real being quite so perfect.) With flowers like this in the house, I feel something akin to Kazantzakis-Zobra-energy. Your flowers, have colors so true, they deserve a fine poem. This poses a wee difficulty; I'm not a

poet. There are times, this being one of them, when I wish I had the poet's skills.

I don't know what might have possessed you to do something so unexpected, and send me something so beautiful.

Thank you.

■ *June 1, 2006. Leslie to James.*

I am so happy you liked the flowers. I told the florist exactly what to send you.

And I am so glad the flower delivery man had the confidence of his purpose. They were for you.

You're en route now [to Kentucky]/ I love the idea that you have *Bring Me One of Everything* with you on your way back to the place that has always been your home. Kentucky. I love the sound of the word.

Your note picks me up. What a great literary friend you are.

Safe travels. Talk soonest.

■ *June 10, 2006. James to Leslie.*

Leslie, your Austin Hart story in *Bring Me One of Everything* [the novel from which the verse drama, "Bring Me One of Everything" that appears in *LSF* is extracted] is as compelling as any I've ever read.

It's quite wonderful to be home. I've lived in West Virginia almost 30 years, in a small university town, not at all a bad place to live. Yet, there's something about the terrain that doesn't fit my psyche. I've lived most of my teaching life in a place not home. I suppose something of a similar sort might be said of a good many of us. But would fate have been kinder if I had stayed in Western Kentucky, practiced law, and sought political office. You see, I once dabbled in politics. Even in law school, I assumed, along with two or three close friends, that I, or one of them, would one day be governor of Kentucky. I finally divorced myself from this idea, and to some extent, from politics.

■ *June 11, 2006. Leslie to James.*

As I continue to track your journey back home, as you read *Bring Me One of Everything*—I realize I've never known anyone who assumed he might one day be governor of a state. How intriguing. I was adopted, at a young age, into a family of small-time, small-scale politicians; I've always sort of thought of them as white collar criminals. (Of course, they weren't, really, criminals, except in my mind, the way an alien adopted parent comes to be seen as such.)

The geography of Saskatchewan, where I was born, never suited me. When I discovered the west coast, at age sixteen, I knew this is where I ought to have been born. So I eventually, and happily, adopted a new geography and left my parents.

Enjoy being home.

■ *June, 2006. Leslie to James.*

I'm sorry I've been out of touch. I had to fly to Saskatchewan Monday to tend to my mother who lives here and has started to decline physically.

The doctors swan in and swan out, saying little, gathering much—and when they leave my sister says to me “what did they say?” Then, we try to cobble it all together and report to our other siblings who ask questions we can't answer. So, in short, we don't really know what's up except something is eating her spine. An operation today? Tomorrow? She's cheery but scared. We're all cheery and scared (I have 5 siblings, so the burden is broadly shared).

The first thing I noticed when I saw her were her hands. They didn't look like they belonged to her. It wasn't just the strange false nails she had at the end of her fingers. Her hands looked like her mother's competent, strong, large hands, cooking meals, dealing with her two young children, before she became crippled.

One thing that is strange is that—you may remember *Bring Me One of Everything* where Sophia takes a bath and Alix is shocked at her mother's aged body—well, I am experiencing that now. And everything inside me kept saying no, how is it that my mother is this way? And all

the memories of her skid back in time to an indomitable beginning that I now understand was false.

But still she flirts with the doctors, laughs at my jokes.

So this is where I am until next week. I hope you are well. Thanks for your notes. All best wishes from the flatlands.

■ *June 19, 2006. James to Leslie.*

I hope things go well with your mother. And yes, I can see that you have now stepped into a drama you've anticipated in the pages of the new novel. Being here in Kentucky with my mother, now 81, and, fortunately, in quite good health (she takes no medication and has never spent a day in the hospital in her life), reminds me that I'll not have so many more years before I must face what you now confront. My mother is fiercely independent, and it will be heart-rendering to see her lose that independence (assuming that such a loss is inevitable; one would like to think it's not, knowing only that we don't know how it turn out).

I'm still awaiting the final pages of *Bring Me One of Everything*. My secretary tells me they are on the way. Why I left Morgantown without a complete copy is a mystery to me.

■ *June 22, 2006. Leslie to James.*

My mother announced to the nurses that she had never been in hospital except for seven times: for each of her six children and for a face lift. But the 8th time is going to be a bit long, unfortunately, although the operation was a success and her 6 children are spelling one another off, taking care of her. So I'm home again . . .

I finished your "Pathologizing Professional Life." What an inspired thing to do, to draw from the classics of literature, modern novels, essays, to try to get at the lawyers' experience (as you've also tried to do using film). It seems, and I hadn't thought of this before, that perhaps more than most professions, going into law draws those who want to be made whole through the process—to be cured, as you note.

I was intrigued by Charles Reich's lawyer spy metaphor, trapped in the world on which he is spying, cut off from home, a spy without a portfolio

(Alix, in *Bring Me One of Everything*, gets into some of this, looking for clues to Austin Hart's death: a detective who is off the case . . .).

The section [in "Pathologizing Professional Life"] near the end, on confession, is really wonderful and interesting, especially in the context of how the law treats confessions. I'm going to think more about this. And, on the over-riding question of how to make an authentic life as a lawyer.

■ *July 4, 2006. Leslie to James.*

I'm heading out to my island property tomorrow, taking my 16 foot zodiac to put in the water and then create a summer of writing.

I'll be in touch before I disappear.

Thank you thank you for inspiring me afresh.

■ *July, 2006. James to Leslie.*

I've been all this week at my family's place on Kentucky Lake. I've got one of the world's largest man-made lakes in the front yard but, albeit, no zodiac, no boat of any kind. In years past we've had fishing boats and ski boats, but now, there are no boats. If I were living here in western Kentucky, I'd certainly have a boat.

A summer of writing you say, and not a hint as to what you're working on. Are you suspicious and guarded about that kind of talk (of work-in-progress)? I'm always afraid that if I guard my secrets too well I'll have nothing to say! I guess I'm just short of confessional on this front.

Take care on the zodiac, on the island, and enjoy this summer of writing.

■ *July 7, 2006. James to Leslie.*

It was a good day, new Pinder work, essay and fiction. I've decided, knowing it now for some time, that you are a master in every genre you take up: essay, fiction (long & short), poetry. No reason to think you're not hell've a lawyer as well!

Thanks for sending the *Vancouver Forum* and *Women & Words: The Anthology*. I suspected you had been holding out on me. Then, today these new “old” works arrive. Both the story and the essay are quite good; I’m particularly fond of essays these days and ‘To the Fourth Wall’ is excellent. Can I have it for *LSF*? (I’d be willing to beg, but the sight of a grown man doing this sort of thing can be a bit much.)

■ *July 11, 2006. Leslie to James.*

I’ve just popped into Powell River—well “popped” isn’t really the operative word when you have to descend from the cliff to the dock, start the 40 hp motor (making sure that you’ve cleverly lowered the engine so the propellor is in the water—one day I tried a sort of hydroplane flying start—but apparently no real guy boater ever admits such a thing), drive around the island and across Jervis Inlet without running out of gas, dock the boat in amongst the really big real guy boats, find the car, die of the heat and drive half an hour to town.)

Really lovely to get your note. So glad that the postal service provided. This internet cafe is closing, as will I.

■ *July 12, 2006. James to Leslie.*

You have undoubtedly completed your business in town, taken leave of the internet cafe and found your way back to the island. I have no notion about when you might actually read this.

It was down right good of you to take the time, and effort, to send a note while your trying to get away for persistent editors. I simply assumed that you were lost to wilderness thoughts and water meanderings, no possibility of fit conversation until you returned to Vancouver.

I don’t know about you, but I find dealing with email by way of keyboards and monitors other than my own a bit trying. As much as I enjoy getting off a note to you from Kentucky, I’m rendered terse and irritable when I must use a stranger computer.

Your comments on getting into town by way of a 40 hp motor, reminds me of my younger days, and my first boat. I had a 14-foot ski-boat with a 40 HP Evidrude engine. It was just enough of an engine to pull up a single slalom skier. The engine, with a pre-season turn-up, was perfectly

dependable. I used that little ski boat for a good many years and never once did I end up stranded on the lake.

I'll start work on the *Vancouver Forum* essay ["To the Fourth Wall"] in the next few days. I'm really quite pleased to have it for *LSF*; I'm delighted that you are willing to see it back in print. With these latest arrivals, I'm still reasonably confident that you've got still other writings secreted away. Maybe one day, still more of your work will appear on my doorstep.

■ *August 6, 2006. Leslie to James.*

Another ride across Jervis Inlet on a beautiful day. It's been very hot, and wonderful, except the province is burning up with forest fires as it does every summer.

My cottage on Hardy Island still isn't completed. So frustrating. But I'm managing to get on with a new book. I'll be back connected to e-mail every 4 days or so. I hope to hear that you are well.

■ *September 12, 2006: Leslie to James.*

Well, I seem to be the Runaround Crazy Queen. I'm back from Hardy Island, fly to Toronto tomorrow (hopefully to get good news on the novel), then to see healing mother in Saskatchewan, then back on the 19th of September.

Yes, the mock-ups [of the galley] arrived. I'll take them on board with me and be back to you about all next week. Is that okay?

■ *October 25, 2006. James to Leslie.*

I have a distinct sense that your head is so positioned after a good many years of trials and tribulations as a lawyer that you are quite immune to the inflation that comes from praise. Encouragement seems a rather faint response to talent and skill.

I'm rather proud to have become a reader of your work; I should hold off on letting the cloak of my pride extend to the publishing until we see

what gets printed (and that we've managed to do it without embarrassing either of us).

We'll need to start thinking about a title for the collection, all the more important as I've decided to publish your work as a stand alone volume. I've attached a mock-up of a reprint cover which gives you an idea of the kind of 'space' we're working with on a cover.

I'd also like to have your advice on the order of presentation of the work. I've attached a rough draft of a 'table of contents' page, but there's nothing sacred about what I've laid out.

I change the color of the cover stock with each issue. Any colors you're particularly fond of? Any that you simply can't stand? I can send you some swatches to show you what we've got to work with. That is, if you're interested. You may want to avoid getting involved in these kind of decisions, and if you do, that will be fine.

This note has been mostly business, but then, we'll never get your issue out if we don't get some of these nuisance matters behind us.

■ *October, 27, 2006. James to Leslie.*

With "On Double Tracks" and "Bring Me One of Everything" I feel like a man who has stumbled onto a deposit of jade, the likes of which he's never seen before and may never see again. I didn't want these works stuffed into an issue with the kind of thing I've seen before and can expect to see again.

■ *October 31, 2006. James to Leslie.*

Red. I've never quite had the nerve to do a red cover [for an *LSF* issue] which is not to say I wouldn't give it a go. There is a rather vivid red available in the cover stock; I'll put it in the mail to you tomorrow. Still more options. Red you say! (I should have known!)

■ *November 13, 2006. Leslie to James [Re: Jacket Cover for Pinder issue of *LSF*]*

Oh oh oh the colors you sent. They were pools. I've been swimming.

I love Carnival Premium Linen Red 80. And somehow, set with/against/
in/around Fox River Sundance Country Cream. What a feast.

Talk soonest. Thanks for the food and the swim.

■ *November 4, 2006. Leslie to James.*

A nervy red, yes, let's.

Do you think the *LSF* issue needs to be called after something that's in
it?

■ *January 27, 2007. Leslie to James.*

I can't tell from my ins and outs whether the shuttlecock has been
batted back to me or not.

There are a few aching buds starting on the trees. The winds have
calmed somewhat. I'm having a conference call next week with my
literary agent. And, sometime soon maybe, Leslie Hall Pinder in *LSF*.
I'm so looking forward to it.

P.S. Do we need to think about some explanatory something-or-other
about the writings in *LSF*?

■ *January 28, 2007. James to Leslie.*

Our correspondence tends to be of the sporadic nature, fading in and out
like a music sound-track for a film (sometimes I'm aware of a film score
and sometimes I'm so immersed in the film I lose track of it). (We
watched "Anatomy of a Murder" last week in my lawyers and film class.
The original Duke Ellington film score was most notable, at times,
impossible to ignore!)

We would have had spring before winter here had it not turned cold a
few weeks ago. It had been until our recent cold weather, a mild winter,
and I suppose in some sense, it still is. We've had little snow and
nothing, really, like cold weather of the kind I know to be possible. It's
hard for me to believe that it's the end of January. February will slip

away—if we don't get some major winter storms coming our way—and then we'll limp into spring as we always do here in northern West Virginia. I know it does absolutely no good to complain about the weather, so I usually don't bother (it is, is it not, idle chatter, our weather complaints). But, I must say, I disapprove of the poor attempt at spring here. What we get, in truth, is an imitation of spring, an unskilled actor playing a part she is ill-suited to play. It was in Kentucky, where I grew up, that we had robust, vigorous, well-played springs. I suppose it's fair to say, I miss it (no complaint in saying that).

■ *January 28, 2007. Leslie to James.*

Thank you for your lovely message. It's so wonderful to hear from you, who can actually pen a coherent and delightfully sizeable letter. Not just incoherent bits of words that fly by. I love your description of spring in W. Virginia, the reluctant and unskilled actor playing a part. I remember growing up in Saskatchewan and spring arriving, like an impossible gift, long sought after, and the sense of everything, including one's heart, having to thaw out. But it was, for me, at too much of a cost, all those extremes of freezing and thawing, and burning and aching, and freezing and thawing again. Too much *Lear* and *Waiting for Godot* and not enough of, oh, *Ayckbourn* . . .

It will be interesting to see where you end up, following Robert Bringhurst [a fellow Canadian]. And, I agree with you that following tangents is such an important thing. After all, you found me at the end of a string.

I'm working away on the plan of the next book, *Love and Law*—written about five chapters as I try to figure out how I want to spin the narrative. But not enough concentrated, uninterrupted writing. The building of the cottage on Hardy Island is pretty absorbing. The walls are up, the roof is on, more money spent than I have, and it's going to be great. Why don't you plan to come up this summer?

So, this particularly aria comes to an end.

Sing soon.

■ *January 28, 2007. James to Leslie.*

I like this talk of spring: “spring arriving, like an impossible gift” and yes, it does feel each winter, that spring arrives “long sought after,” with the “sense of everything” at stake. For me, it once meant another summer of baseball, and that wonderful sense of freedom of going without shoes. You, I suspect, have seen far more of the extremes than I; some of us are spared.