



# The Blotter

magazine

M  
a  
r  
c  
h

2  
0  
2  
6

The South's Unique, FREE, International Literature and Arts Magazine

[www.blotterrag.com](http://www.blotterrag.com)

# The Blotter

## “AI, AI, Oh...”

G. M. Somers.....Editor-in-Chief  
Martin K. Smith.....Publisher, Treasurer  
J.H. Herring.....Webmaster  
Brace Boone III.....Marketing Advisor  
Marilyn Fontenot.....Development Advisor  
Olivia Somers.....Assoc. Editor & Art Dir.  
T. J. Garrett.....Staff Photographer

Subscriptions Contact:

Martin K. Smith  
M\_K\_Smith@yahoo.com  
919.286.7760

Advertisers Contact: Martin K. Smith  
M\_K\_Smith@yahoo.com  
919.286.7760

Submissions and Editorial Business to:  
Jenny Haniver  
mermaidblotter@gmail.com

Garrison Somers, Editor-in-Chief  
mermaidblotter@gmail.com

919.869.7110 (business hours only! —  
call for information about  
snail-mail submissions)

Marketing & Public Relations Contact:  
Marilyn Fontenot  
marilyng fontenot@gmail.com

COVER: “Dancing in the dark”  
by Beatrice Somers

Unless otherwise noted, all content  
copyright 2026 by the artist, not the  
magazine.

The Blotter is a production of  
MAGAZINE

The Blotter Magazine, Inc.,  
Durham, NC. A 501 (c)3 non-profit  
ISSN 1549-0351  
www.blotterrag.com



Mom has asked me if I think that AI will take things over. What things? I ask. Everything, she says. Like Mary Shelley. Like Mary Shelley what? She sighs at me for being obtuse. They say you can tell AI to write stories in the style of, say, Mary Shelley. Well, that’s a trick I won’t bother with, I tell her. Mary Shelley is not someone I chose to read if I’m not being graded.

Now be advised, my 97-year-old mom is not a fan of science fiction, has always considered it to be a waste of time. Mine, Dad’s and anyone else sitting around with a pulp-fiction volume in their hand. So, no she hasn’t read Philip K. Dick or Isaac Asimov, Ursula LeGuin or Harlan Ellison or any of the other giants of the genre, no matter which generation. They are, in her dismissive shorthand, not her thing.

But over the years she’s becoming less snarky about it. Sure, still a waste of time, but not irrelevant. Not stupid. Think about that – she’s complicated. Because what she does understand is that science fiction is a large part of our lives. There are many things she admits, grudgingly she might be mistaken about. She is quick to tell me that an idea might be silly, (way back in the day, she was amazed by the IBM “type ball” typewriter, yet thought word-processing would never catch on) but when something turns out to be so, like the fact that I have recently taken a call from her on my smartwatch, you know, like Dick Tracy, she acknowledges that she didn’t see that coming, because it wasn’t something she needed, or that anyone else might, either.

We have talked about technology over the years of my adulthood, and although she doesn’t appreciate the value of computers, robots or drones, she does like digital music (albeit she’s still a CD person and not ready for Spotify), microwave ovens and wireless telephone handsets, though, so there’s that. Sometimes she forgets to hang up her handset to recharge. She is still amazed by rechargeable batteries. Gotta love it.

But we don’t do Zoom calls together, which is unfortunate. (Many years ago, I bought Dad a laptop, and showed him how to use it, and he called me a few days later and told me it was broken. It turned out he’d gone online, opened a few

hundred tabs, kept opening more as he wandered the internet, and locked up the poor device’s memory, which was substantial but not that substantial. Dad, I said. Shut some things. Nah, he said. You can keep it, and he went back to his Smith-Corona for his typing.) I wish she watched something on a streaming service, or accessed email or knew what I meant when I said I went walking with my earbuds in. But it’s not really that important. Mom thinks computers, even ones that will let you do Facetime, were not worth her trouble learning. And that was when I still worked in the industry. She fretted about me being hacked, catching viruses and not being safe with my passwords so someone might steal my identity, and no amount of saying “they’re welcome to it” could dissuade her from thinking that I would end up on the side of the road, in debt up to my ears and unable to get back in to my bank account. We’ve crossed and recrossed that bridge, believe you me. Now, however, she has relaxed enough to let me order food for her online and send it tout de suite via DoorDash. She’s fond of Belgian shortbread cookies. And malted milk balls. And, she has stopped calling it a waste of money, because she is a full-on disciple in the church of Time is All We Have, and Don’t.

And, more importantly, because we don’t play on our phones, but use them as the tools they were intended to be, we are more intentional in our conversations. I cannot show her anything by sharing my screen. I cannot forward her a poem or essay. I have to describe that which I want her to “see,” using my words. I have to read her the poem aloud. Which is a good thing.

So basically, Mom and I are living in the nineteen-seventies, most of the time. We talk about the current world, but we do it in an old-fashioned, sometimes slow way. Aren’t you afraid that someone will steal your stories and publish them under their own name? she asks. Or that AI will render you irrelevant? Oh, Mom. I doubt it. But if it does, it will be OK. There are always more stories where those came from.

Garry - [mermaidblotter@gmail.com](mailto:mermaidblotter@gmail.com)

We often use Bobco fonts, copyrighted shareware from the Church of the Subgenius. Prabob. We also use Mary Jane Antique and other freeware fonts from Apostrophic Labs and other fonts from other sources.



in the Great State of Georgia!



The Blotter Magazine, Inc. (again, a 501(c)3 non-profit) is an education concern. Our primary interest is the furthering of creative writing and fine arts, with the magazine being a means to that end. We publish in the first half of each month and enjoy a free circulation throughout the Southeast and some other places, too. Submissions are always welcome, as are ad inquiries. Subscriptions are offered as a premium for a donation of \$25 or more. Send check or money order, name and address to  
 The Blotter Magazine Subscriptions,  
 1010 Hale Street, Durham, NC 27705.  
 Back issues are also available, 5 for \$5.  
 Inquire re. same by  
 e-mail: [chief@blotterrag.com](mailto:chief@blotterrag.com).



CAUTION

I shouted out, who

## “The Usual, Please, on Cracked Wheat with Mayo”

by D. R. James

The tanned woman in the Midwest deli yesterday re-convincing me I'm superficial. Not that I needed re-convincing since regularly I'm the irregular normal person at the international annual convention of practitioners who see things differently. Whenever they feature that multi-humped camel in their closing ceremonial parade shaped like a cloud lolling overhead I can only stiffen my neck and note my intermittent blues and thus always miss my chance for imaginative prefabrication. I've tried those correspondence courses that guarantee amazing untapped sectors of one's brain will suddenly come alive and have in fact vastly improved both my cartoons depicting eye-patched pirates and my respect and appreciation for one's childhood wounds. But more often I'm forced to demand my money back then simply reinvest it in the faster foods—or, if available, the finer foods served fast—or deftly pocket it to fund fevered outings in search of Brillo, two-for-one foaming drain de-plugger and of course cheap old Beaujolais Nouveau. Just once just once I'd like to walk into my local sub shop, take my place in line, chin held high, and not let the predictable dilemma between lean pastrami and freshly compressed head cheese reduce me to my usual common denominators.

## “For Therapy, I Mix Metaphors”

by D. R. James

From a frozen wedge of machine-split pine,  
tossed on this settling fire, one frayed, martyred  
fiber curls back and away like a wire, then  
flares, a flame racing the length of a fuse.

Imagine this my innermost strand, a barely-dirt  
two-track off Frost’s road less traveled, a thin,  
trembling thread of desire, the uncharted blue vein  
of a tundral highway. Or in some dread cloister

it dreams, and a sillier spirit suddenly moves—  
like four fresh fingers over flamenco frets,  
like dumb elegance uttering Old Florentine,  
never meaning one of its crooning words.

It might dance—Tejano, Zydeco, any twenty  
Liebeslieder Waltzes, any juking jumble  
of a barrel-house blues—wherever arose  
an arousing tune, the thrum of a Kenyan’s  
drumming, the merest notion of Motown soul.

I do know: there must be this lost but lively cord,  
an original nerve, perhaps abandoned, or jammed  
as if into an airless cavity of my old house,  
where it waits, to spark, to catch, its insulated  
nest invaded by the stray tip of a driven nail.

It craves some risky remodeling, that annoying  
era of air compressor, plaster grit, dumpster,  
and the exuberant exhalation of ancient dust.

## “Writing My Way Out of This Paper Bag”

By D. R. James

is a lot like unlocking  
Pandora’s box (which was actually  
an urn, *πίθος*, I looked it up)  
if it’d been a shoe box, the hefty,  
faux-hemp-textured kind with a hinged top  
and rounded side flaps, pride-and-joy  
of a junior packaging engineer (of which there  
really are such positions, *starting* at \$67K, I’ve asked)  
but when it’s flung open, as if to allow  
all hell to break loose, it reveals only  
wads of beige tissue paper, an anti-  
moisture packet shaped like a gauzy ravioli  
without the sauce, and a glossy  
brochure on pursuing life as an adventure,  
(sporting their ‘gear,’ of course) that somebody  
had to write and nobody ever reads,  
but me. This Pandora’s box  
that’s like the bag out of which  
I’m writing my way  
just sits here like I left it  
when I laced up the water-proof boots,  
retro-fitted with my orthotics, and wore them  
over sweat-wicking socks to the office  
to grade papers and bitch about the dean.  
And any diseases or plagues or other  
acts of gods (unclear in the Greek, unlike  
in the O. T., I checked),  
whose disgorging from the horrid box  
I might have artfully bemoaned,  
simply fizzle,  
just like this petty pitter-patter,  
and I’m left with an albeit manly box  
that I probably should recycle. Or

it’s like having set out to see a certain big city  
for the first time—say, Mumbai, a.k.a. Bombay—  
with the intention of having the experience  
hit me like an aesthetic ton of bricks

(only I'd come up with a better comparison),

but due to some predictable drizzle,  
maybe a monsoon, or more likely  
lack of funds (since I drop a dozen hundred  
rupees every time I open my billfold)  
and/or a fear of big cities (this one  
in particular, it turns out),  
I sit in my mid-price fourth-floor hotel room  
in cargo shorts and a T-shirt that reads,  
“What would Prufrock do?” and watch  
a *Mannix* marathon with Marathi subtitles  
because it reminds me of the guys in high school  
and how Mrs. Wolf marked all the creative punctuation  
wrong in my ninth-grade poetry portfolio,  
something Mike Connors wouldn't have stood for  
if he'd ever written poetry. Or

like when I have a breakthrough in therapy  
after weeks of getting this latest counselor up to speed  
and by the time I pull into the driveway  
I forget the key phrase he gave me—  
something about the pre-frontal capacity  
for being of two minds. Or

like in the dream where I'm trying to two-thumb a text  
on an ancient flip-phone  
to my twenty-four year old (only  
when he was five) but multiple  
in-comings from a life-insurance salesman  
keep sending it to *Drafts*. Or

it's like accepting a challenge  
to write my way out of a paper bag  
only to discover it's too dark inside,  
and besides, it has a waxy finish,  
so my pen won't go.

## “For All The Traumas You Tasted Without Your Consent”

by Maria Oluwabukola Oni

---

*For all those times you stood by me. For all the truth that you made me see. For all the joy you brought to my life. For all the wrong that you made right. For every dream you made come true. For all the love I found in you...*

Celine Dion crooned from her JBL speaker on low volume. Ova’s heart was full to bursting for the life this job gave her. In return, she loved her job at Mega Morgan Advertising Media Group and people who worked with her. Rosine, the secretary opened the door without knocking.

“Ova, meeting with the CEO is in ten minutes. Brain Room.”

“Ok. Thanks.” She stood from her seat, carried her laptop and stepped out. Right outside her door was a bigger office filled with laptops, printers, bright lights, a light-board and seven people that made up her marketing team. They looked up from their work and smiled or waved.

“Hey, Ova.”

“Guys, I’m going for the head of departments meeting. Expect debriefing when I’m back. Sandra, print for me a copy of the latest State Of Marketing report and drop it on my desk. Thank you.” She said as she walked past. The CEO welcomed everyone and introduced the agenda for the meeting. The minutes of the last meeting were approved and each manager presented their reports and updates.

“I thank everyone for every effort we put into our work and thereby expanding our client base. Through my networking and industry connections, I found a significant new client for us. This potential client

[www.blotterrag.com](http://www.blotterrag.com)

has expressed interest in our services and is eager to explore how we can help them achieve their marketing goals. Ova, please pass the brief.” Ova stood, walked to the head of the table and picked up the documents.

“This project is huge. We are handling everything from brand name to launch and hopefully, subsequent campaigns. Though Ova and her team will take it from here, let’s continue to collaborate closely to ensure that we make the most of this opportunity and demonstrate the value we can bring to our clients.”

The meeting moved on to next steps and assigning of responsibilities. Ova found herself rushed at from all sides immediately the meeting ended. They smacked her back (someone’s hand rested on the back of her bra), another shook her shoulder. Someone put his hand in her locs and shook her head vigorously like footballers do when a teammate scores a build-up goal.

“Ova! Ova!” Her colleagues could be too much sometimes. She wriggled in their grasp.

“Guys. It’s okay. Mmmph. Wait!”

The hand resting on the small of her back removed and stepped in front of her. It was Hussein. His tiny diamond nose ring twinkled at her. He chuckled.

“Why are you doing like a woman?”

“What do you mean? I’m a woman.”

Or do they forget because she was the only female manager? They continued their noise and jest as they trooped out of the meeting and went back to their respective offices, and Ova back to her marketing team.

“Everyone, listen up. We have a potential client who is new to the market and aims to become a major brand. Their product is bottled water, and they have a unique business model where the product is free for consumers. Their goal is to attract corporate and other brands to invest by offering global marketing opportunities in return. As they do not yet have a name, our agency, Mega Morgan, will be responsible for everything from developing the brand name and product designs to creating copy and managing the launch. Content writers and copywriters, please conduct market and product research to identify key aspects that this product can leverage. Send your report to my email before 12 p.m. tomorrow. We will then meet at lunch to brainstorm and map out strategies. Can we do that?”

“Yeah.”

“Sure.”

“Good. Sandra, please ensure everyone gets a copy of the brief. By the way, I think we should update the media on our website. Who else thinks so?”

“It’s been over six months.” Augustine, the graphics designer said.

“Yes, it is. Augustine, please work with Maheedah on updating photos of our latest projects on the website. We should call in Francis to take a group photo, right? Time, please.”

Two or more voices. “10 a.m.”

Toyin spoke up. She was an incredibly curvy woman with a particularly slim, fresh face suitable for her role as public relations specialist. “11 a.m.”

More voices in unison. “10 a.m.”

“Alright. 10 a.m. then. Brand colours - black and blue- is the dress code. Maheedah, please tell Rosine that Francis will come in at 10 a.m. tomorrow. I’ll send a memo to everyone immediately. Thank you, guys.” Ova walked into her office to find Rayce from

Finance by her desk.

“What are you doing in here?”

“Nothing.” He said with his mouth full and walked out. But she knew what he had been doing. Same thing everyone does in her office. He had dropped some receipts on her desk. She opened the first drawer. The jar of sweet potato chips she brought in that morning had depleted. She opened the second drawer to find a big space created by a thieving paw. The width indicated that, at least, two packs of snacks had disappeared. Her eyes went to her mini fridge. She resisted the urge to open and inspect it. Her phone rang. Rosine.

“Hey, Ova. Maheedah told me you want Francis at 10 a.m. tomorrow.”

“Yes, that’s correct.”

“Alright. I’ll let him know.”

“Rosine?”

“Yes, Ova?”

“Tell him I want a copy of the group picture he would take in a big frame, for my office. I’ll pay the cost.”

Rosine’s voice held a smile. “That’s cool. Ok.” Ova looked around her office for the most conspicuous place to hang the frame when it arrived. Her eyes fell on her wardrobe in the corner, housing some dresses and designer suit jackets and a shoe rack at the bottom. She had wardrobes in different places. At her apartment. At her sister’s home office- a well sought fashion designer in this Lagos, thanks to marketing; moving with big names. And at her mother’s. She who used to have only few clothes that she had to wash them at night so they could be fairly dry in the morning and she would have something to wear. Sometimes, the wetness made her underwear itchy which caused some fellow wicked interns to maliciously label her ‘Scratch and Win Promo.’

Ova composed and sent the memo stating the 10 a.m. photoshoot and a reminder

## The Blotter

to come in dressed in expected colours - blue and black. She made a few calls, made some notes in her journal and ordered an Uber to Omole Phase 2 to meet a friend. She would go home from there. Tears streamed down her face as they passed Ojodu-Berger. She remembered her life when she lived in this neighbourhood years ago as an entry level marketer. She patted her face dry, sniffing and brought out her make-up purse. The Uber driver threw quizzical glances at her from the rearview mirror. The last time a beautiful, successful-looking lady had cried in an Uber, she suddenly told the driver to park on the Third Mainland Bridge and jumped into the lagoon below in a flash. He activated the lock. Their eyes met. She decoded his silent warning and scoffed. Like she would even think of that. As soon as they left Berger and got to the big foot intersection, Ova reached into her carrier bag and brought out a celebratory bottle of red wine and a glass cup.

She popped the lid with a victorious 'woohoo' and poured herself a toast. To all the times she didn't have money for transport, and had to beg for fare at the bus stop because she got a call for an interview, and one praying for a miracle doesn't exactly know where their breakthrough is and must find their way there, available fare or not. To all the times she was left with only money for a single meal and had to eat at midday to retain strength to trek the long, unending road and get home disheveled and bone tired.

She downed the glass and refilled it. This time, she swirled and savoured the rich blended flavour of blackberry, cherry and spices. with a bag of small chops containing samosas, spring rolls, puff-puff and chicken. She reached forward and dropped the half-drunk wine, with its lid placed back and a small bag of edibles on the passenger seat.

"For you."

She felt the driver's eyes on her and looked out to watch the passing scenery. *What manner of girl is this?* He must have thought. After a few seconds, she heard a quiet 'thank you'. But she didn't look. She only smiled in her charming way.

Ova stepped into the office building the next day looking sharp in perfectly tailored navy blue pantsuit, and kitty heels. Staff going about their duty were also ensconced in blue and black corporate-casual style. At 12:10 p.m, the meeting began in the kitchen.

"I received and read through everyone's report. I got some really creative ideas. Well-done, guys. Let's eat first before the business." People on the high stools scraped their seats to get closer to the island. Others leaned by the cabinets. They went about unpacking their lunch and eating.

"Where's your food, Ova?" Kessie, the young woman with glittering braces asked. They looked in Ova's direction.

"My lunch is automated. It will be delivered in the next ten minutes." They awwed.

"Can we appreciate Ova for always having snacks we can steal before lunch?" Maheedah said.

"Yes, this morning, I took some chips."

"I took her smoothie and sausage roll yesterday."

Sandra lifted a pack of IceTea. "I got this from her never empty fridge." Everyone laughed.

"It's not entirely our fault. Who has such beautiful kitchen with no food in it?" Sandra wailed.

"We need edibles, snacks, in this kitchen." They looked expectantly at Ova.

"I've also thought about it. Let me speak with accounts first so we have a monthly budget before I run it by Rashid." They

trilled and yayed like school children. Rosine came in with Ova's delivery. Ova unravelled the paper wrapping to reveal a well garnished, yummy looking dish of jollof rice, fried rice (the lemon green one) and chicken wings.

"This is just your lunch?" Kessie asked. "What then do you have for dinner and breakfast?"

Ova smiled. "I have a cook that makes only dinner and breakfast for me. Top-notch tastes and flavours, if you may know."

"You eat like a king. You're living the soft life." Sandra said. If only they knew how she persistently communed with hunger few years ago. Years of tactical starvation and hunger strikes because she had to buy online courses, join a paid community or constantly buy data as an unpaid intern. One of her future dreams then was to always have good, healthy meals to eat even when she wasn't hungry. Back in her office, Ova browsed through travel sites, trying to pick a getaway destination for herself, her sister and mother when she got on leave after the bottled water product launch. Morocco. No way. Flick. Venice. Flick. Zanzibar...

Rosine popped in carrying a cake box.

"You have a cake! And it's not your birthday. You are so lucky." Lucky una. Lucky indeed, Ova thought inwardly. Rosine placed the white and gold box on Ova's desk and loosened the ribbon securing the cover in place like it was hers. There was a rich brown, moist and sweet smelling, big-sized chocolate sponge cake with no dressing sitting inside the large box.

Ova smiled as she looked at the cake. She had never received or bought herself a birthday cake until recently, on her last birthday. But now...

"I buy a cake of different flavour every week and eat it all through the week. Maybe there's no one to collect it at home, so they

delivered it here."

Rosine touched Ova's neckpiece. "You smile all the time." Ova smiled widened. Rosine paused.

"Can I kiss you?" She asked tentatively. A storm of emotions brewed up in Ova's eyes. She covered it with her signature smile.

"Ok. But please, no tongue."

Rosine held her neck in place and sucked her lips in, slowly. Just like the way actors kissed in movies, with caution and respect. Rosine tasted purple hibiscus juice and something else on Ova's lips. She tried to stick her tongue in. Ova broke it off.

Rosine smiled.

"There's something about your eyes and smile. They pull people in. They make me want to curl into you and share your experiences." ❖

## The Blotter

### “Worry The Weeds”

By Simon Collinson

When you're down, get outside and pull up weeds,  
if you're bitter then better take it out on the weeds,  
if someone annoys you, just pull out more weeds,  
don't get mad, get weeding,  
worry the weeds and forget your troubles for a while.

Worry, worry the weeds and you'll feel better,  
if you're fed up with waiting on the phone,  
then be sure to make them weeds moan,  
whatever life throws at you, make the weeds pay.

If an old addiction won't shake off, worry the weeds  
till it shakes less  
if you're riddled with doubt, frighten those fears away,  
take up your trowel and fight the weeds with all your might,  
and worry those weeds every day.

Everyday take it out on the weeds,  
each day worry the weeds,  
and worry yourself less,  
keep on working away at those worthless weeds,  
every day worry, worry those weeds.

If your obsession won't leave you,  
make worrying the weeds your new obsession,  
if in doubt, get out and worry the weeds some more,  
if things are going from bad to worse,  
don't delay make those weeds pay

Then worry the weeds,  
keep on going, that's all you can do,  
till your bones and back ache,  
and you can't worry the weeds anymore.

Till then, harry the weeds,  
give hell to the weeds,  
send those weeds to oblivion,  
dig, fork, jab, stab, hoe, rake away those weeds,  
if need be, pull the weeds out with your teeth.

Your garden will thank you for it,  
there'll always be weeds with us,  
the wicked weeds quickly grow back,  
so hurry and worry the weeds that you left yesterday.

Your life may still be a mess,  
but at least your garden will look its best,  
for the weeds they grow everyday,  
they keep on growing while you're away,  
remember one year's weeds is worth seven years' seeds,  
so what are you waiting for?  
go out now and worry those weeds!

Make it your mission to subdue the weeds,  
weaken and wreck the weeds,  
wrestle and wallop the weeds,  
wage war upon the weeds,  
shock and awe the weeds.

So are you still feeling blue today?  
Then get out!  
Don't delay!  
A little or a lot,  
it's up to you,  
but everyday you know what to do,  
worry, worry, worry those weeds.

**“Babs Drives a Buick”**  
by Bart Edelman

Baby blue, in fact,  
To match her eyes.  
She cruises the avenue,  
Searching the evening ride,  
A honk or two away  
From the next lover—  
Her mind shifting,  
One gear at a time.  
Slowly, she eases down,  
When the moment strikes—  
Another chance encounter.  
And then, he’s hers,  
She’s his, until daybreak,  
Asleep in the Buick’s backseat.

## The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird  
Please send excerpts from your own dream journals.  
If nothing else, we'd love to read them.  
We won't publish your whole name.

I'm tired. Tired of being asleep and having a dream that goes south and suddenly I'm running from someone, or being grabbed from behind or by the ankle by something and crying for help that does not come and gasping for breath I cannot catch. Happens too often for me. Too often for anyone, I think. Simple nightmares, but effective in their capacity for waking me and leaving me awake in the gloom. Something like this gets old very quickly. I have no control in my dreams. I wish I had even a little bit. I have heard that some people do, can manipulate what happens, like a director in a movie. I guess I believe them, but I'm skeptical. For me, things often get away. I think about one thing, or at least think I'm thinking about it, and then, as if intentionally trying to throw me for a loop, the dream takes a different path, follows a strange tangent.

And here are my questions: why do we seem to adore this sort of entertainment? Going to horror movies, or appreciating a "good jump-scare." Don't these people have nightmares? Don't they wake sweating in the middle of the night, wondering if it was something they ate, or a certain dark-and-dangerous phase of the moon? Or is it me? Am I really having a fright, or is that thing behind me not worthy of a gasp, cringe and attempt to flee? I do feel the fear fade away as I sit in the dark. I can go back to sleep, eventually. Maybe there is something about sleep, about dreaming, that taps into childhood fear, blowing off the dust to see if it will still work.

Linda W. - cyberspace

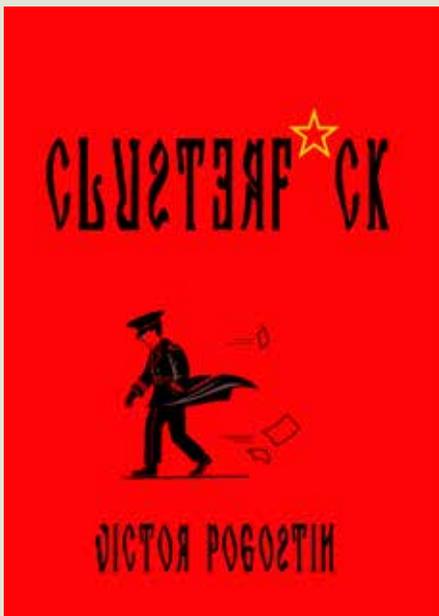
## CONTRIBUTORS

**D. R. James**, retired from nearly 40 years of teaching college writing, literature, and peace studies, lives with his psychotherapist wife in the woods near Saugatuck, Michigan. His latest of ten collections is *Mobius Trip* (Dos Madres Press, 2021).  
<https://www.amazon.com/author/drjamesauthorpage>

**Maria Oluwabukola Oni** is a copywriter and storyteller from Nigeria. Her stories have appeared in 16 mags, most recently in *April Centaur*, *Nalubaale Review*, *Arkana Mag*, *Behemoth Biennial*, *Hooghly Review*, *Spillwords*, *Hearth & Coffin*, and forthcoming in others. Her debut short stories anthology *I Did Not Come For Peace; Problems, Always!* is forthcoming in Sulis International Press. She tweets @OhMariaCopy

**Simon Collinson** is a writer from England. He is a member of the All Seasons writing group. he seeks stillness and solitude.

**Bart Edelman's** poetry collections include *Crossing the Hackensack*, *Under Damaris' Dress*, *The Alphabet of Love*, *The Gentle Man*, *The Last Mojito*, *The Geographer's Wife*, *Whistling to Trick the Wind*, and *This Body Is Never at Rest: New and Selected Poems 1993 – 2023*. He has taught at Glendale College, where he edited *Eclipse*, a literary journal, and, most recently, in the MFA program at Antioch University, Los Angeles. His work has been anthologized in textbooks published by City Lights Books, Etruscan Press, Harcourt Brace, Longman, McGraw-Hill, Prentice Hall, the University of Iowa Press, Wadsworth, and others. He lives in Pasadena, California.

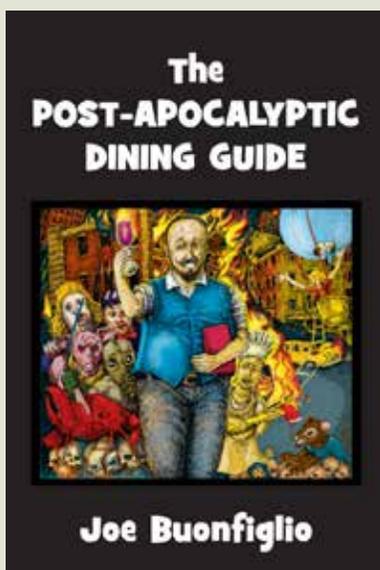
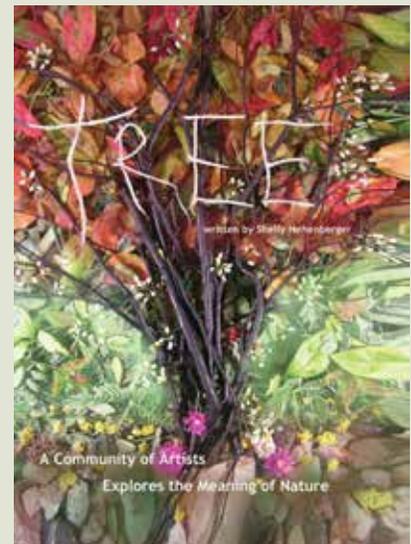
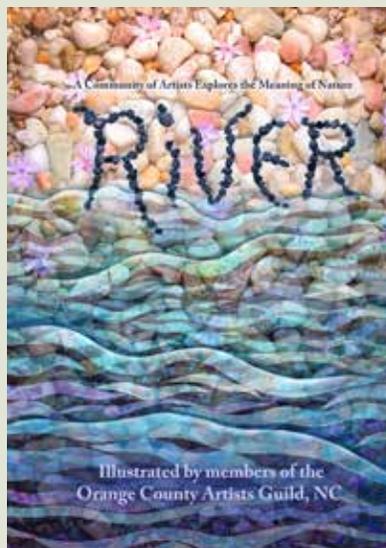


Victor Pogostin, PhD,  
is a teller of tales.  
Stories that are often  
funny, sometimes  
moving, but always  
entertaining.  
And they're true.

find them on Amazon



All-ages 64 page picture  
books illustrated by 30  
artists local to the Orange  
County, NC area. Inspired  
by the many facets of what  
nature means to us, both  
practical and poetic, they  
make an excellent gift!  
To purchase, drop an  
email to Marty at  
m\_k\_smith@yahoo.com



The Post-Apocalyptic Dining Guide  
drops you into a realm of pure  
madness. The humor comes from a  
dark place...a really dark place. The  
tale is completely absurd, and the  
events downright shocking. Who  
knew the end of civilization could  
be so much fun!!

find it on Amazon



Blotter Books