

# Poet combines offbeat style, spontaneity

*Magorian incorporates poetry, visuals, entertainment*

By Mick Dyer  
Staff Reporter

*Chasing away gnats with a flick of his hand, he peers at trading stamps pasted on the bathroom mirror, begins to hum a Cole Porter tune for reasons known only to himself.*  
—“Art Historian Pulling Hairs Out of His Nostrils with Pliers”

## Book Review

Poet James Magorian has been painting surreal visions, inspired by the America he grew up in, for more than 20 years. During that time, he has become one of the foremost chroniclers of the zany post-industrial angst that we all suffer as Americans.

He has had poems published in a variety of “legitimate” and offbeat literary magazines through the years and has published more than 50 books of poems and children’s stories.

In addition to being a prolific writer, Magorian, who attended UNL and is a part-time Lincoln resident, is a publisher at the Lincoln-based Black Oak Press.

“The Hideout of the Sigmund Freud Gang” (Black Oak Press, 1987) is a collection of some of the bizarre and satirical poems and visu-

als from earlier books. The book also includes his version of a play about Medea entitled “Medea and Fred,” his own version of the life and works of Karl Marx, and such “revisions” of American history as “The Emily Dickinson Jogging Book,” “The Red, White and Blue Bus” and “The Great Injun Carnival,” which purports to be the secret diary of Custer.

If you like the nice, bland, safe variety of poetry, you probably should skip the rest of this review. Magorian’s work probably won’t interest you. It may even disturb you.

Magorian’s poems are about mania. They are about finding truth in unusual places. They are irreverent, spontaneous, playful pieces of his mind that may try to bite at you once in a while, just to see if you’re still there.

The poems hold nothing back. Magorian unleashes one strange image from the darkness of the American collective unconsciousness after another.

Magorian’s poems are a celebration of the eccentric.

Sometimes Magorian captures some of the really weird moments of everyday life and makes deep and insightful observations about them. Such is the case with “Isosceles Triangle,” about finding a snowflake that was just an isosceles triangle; “Silent Fart,” a poem about knowledge only the reader is aware of; and “200 Pushups at the YMCA,” a poem about the appearance of a weeping-willow tree.

These are poems that approach Zen.

Most of the time, however, the poems are a result of Magorian’s vivid imagination. They are not bound by any kind of literary authority and are a joy to read. The poems will surprise you. They will startle you. Above all, they are written with a sense of humor that may help the reader see things in a new way.

*As their tales of daring become more spectacular, a crowd gathers, asking for autographs.*

—“Veteran Sperm Donors Reminiscing in Front of an Artificial Insemination Clinic”

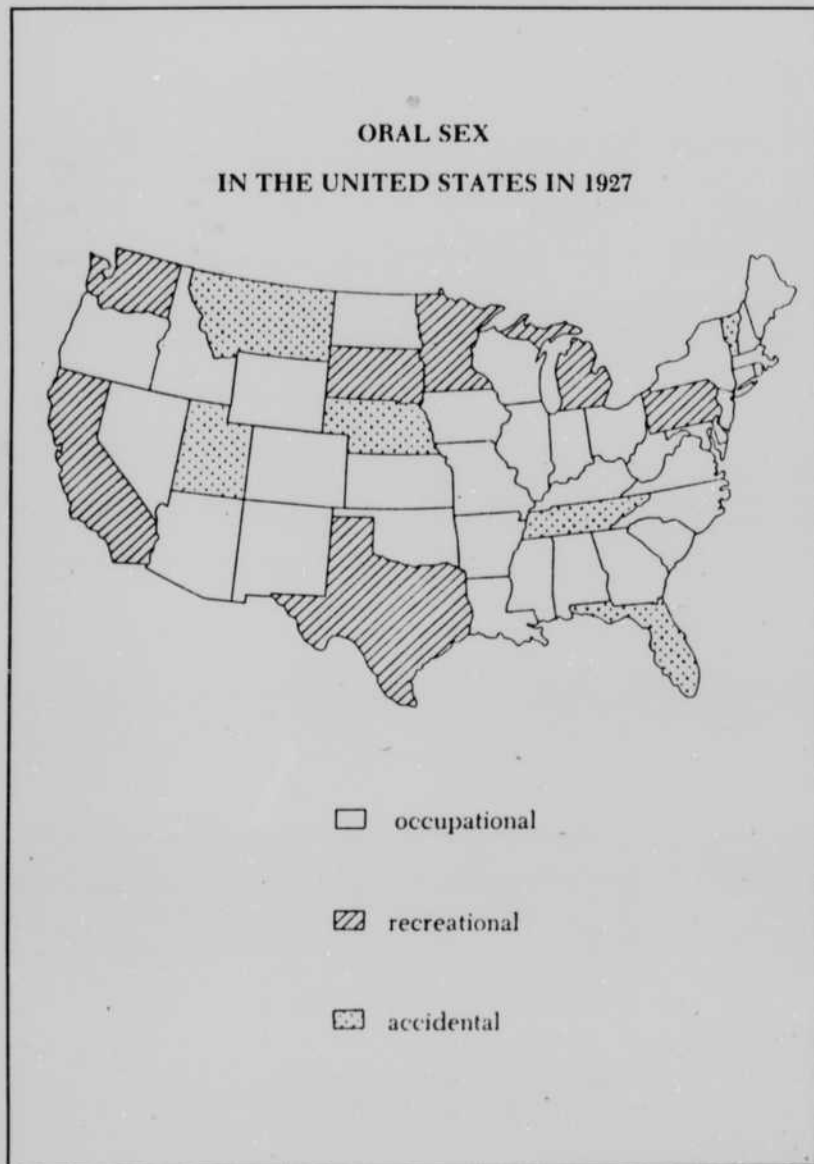
Magorian also has a knack for discovering poems in unusual places. There are poems taken from technical manual glossaries and footnotes, symposium programs, musical scores and a number of other everyday sources.

If you write poetry, this book may make you want to write more. If you don’t write poems, the contents of this book may help you learn that poetry is not a difficult art.

The book is full of fascinating and informative graphs, diagrams and other interesting visuals that are worthy of critical acclaim.

Nearly 1,000 pages long, “The Hideout of the Sigmund Freud Gang” will provide hours of thought-provoking entertainment.

During the past three years, Magorian has worked on a rather lengthy novel that he plans to publish in the future.



Courtesy of Black Oak Press

From 'The Hideout of the Sigmund Freud Gang' by James Magorian.

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