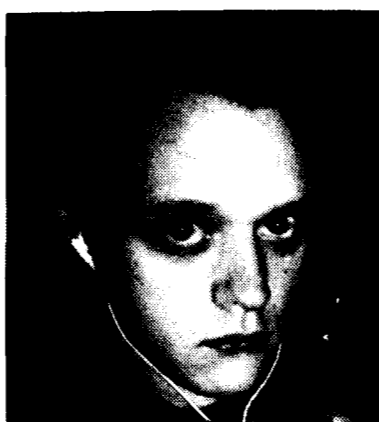


CULTURALLY INEPT

A BI-MONTHLY PONTIFICATION



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After being more than fashionably late to a deadline, my column wasn't the only surprising feature on last issue's op-ed page; however, my surprise was immediately diverted to an editorial written by one of my fellows. After a semester of my usual jabs at the Student Government Association (SGA)—which, in all actuality, is usually just aimed at El Presidente himself—I was happy, even with the lack of validity, to see some sign of life on the other side of the opinion spectrum.

While I understand the frustrations raised in Ms. _____'s Editorial, I remain perplexed as to why she took all of my columns to be so spear headed in attacking SGA. I had to ask myself, was it her or me who had really paid little attention to the premises of my complaints regarding SGA?

Later that week at my usual meeting with Dr. Richman, where

we continued our discussion on the topic of American Decorative Arts (1830-1900), I shared with him some of the findings I had retained during my analysis of his assigned reading—*The Architecture of Country Houses*. This text involved the architectural philosophy of A.J. Downing, a well renowned American Architect of the early to mid 19th century.

In his effort, he relates his designs to a greater meaning. For example, in a country home one must remember its purpose and proprietor. In the case of a country house as a primary residence versus one that is a second home to a wealthy urban family, there are many different things one should consider. Importantly, the small and humble home of a factory worker, which Downing calls a cottage, should be appropriately representative of the factory worker. Rather than decorating such a home with cheap ornaments, the house should represent a strong sense of humility and practicality.

For instance, a small home of the Greek revival style with a large porch illuminated by columns is just wrong according to Downing. Its incorrect form rises when such a home achieves a level of stature that its interiors and size cannot live up to.

On the other hand, the home of a wealthy intellectual should by no means mirror the image of their city residence. In this, which Downing describes to be a Villa, such a home should be an intriguing venue, useful for retreat with the

appropriate comfortable elements of a country home. These are just two minor elements to consider in regards to Downing's philosophy of symbolic architecture.

Another topic that was included in my stylistic analysis was the subject of the Egyptian Revival period. Most of us know little about the reasoning behind America's use of this style or are even able to recognize its presence.

A perfect example for those of you familiar with our national monuments is the obelisk dedicated to George Washington centered in the D.C. Mall.

One might ask, why this stylistic period? Well, after the American Revolution, we wanted nothing to do with England; however, as a new nation we had very little to look to in regards to style. So we looked directly to England's greatest enemy and our benefactor in the revolution—France. This led to our adoption of Empire furniture of the early 19th century, which was directly related to the Empire of Napoleon.

As we know, Napoleon's goal was to conquer the world. In his efforts he documented, for the first time, the treasures of Egypt, which led to the use of the obelisk and the trend of the Egyptian Revival.

If you're still with me, I'll give you the summation of my premise that you've most likely been awaiting. Because, we—generally—as Americans fail to notice or fathom—do to ignorance and/or apathy—the intrinsic symbolism and meaning behind some of our

greatest treasures—our homes and our patriotic representations—how can I expect an undergraduate student government representative to comprehend a deeper meaning behind my academically undernourished opining efforts?

In my closing column of the fall semester, I alluded to the fact that I, as a student, have no obligation to attend SGA meetings and that just as an active student, I deserve the right to be represented by those who sought representative powers and even voice my opinion, which I feel is a contribution in itself that is rarely made by others.

After reviewing my columns, I felt better about myself in that after some of my hot-headed lampooning of a particular subject, I am usually able to formulate my topic into an idealistic question that I hope my readers will ponder; I am not afraid nor will I refrain from humbling myself when need be.

I do not try to pose any of my opinions as the answers to the questions I entertain; instead, my intent is to assist in providing diversity in analysis. Rather than just accepting the world for its face value, I work to withdraw a deeper, more virtual meaning from the basic fabric of what is seen as an ordinary part of our daily lives.

So, in matters of the deeper meaning, are we, as Americans, incapable of accessing value beyond a label or clearly written exclamation, and in our most advanced era, is it possible that the art of true symbolism has escaped modern (wo)man?

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Too bad everything can't be as easy as knowing if you qualify for the EITC.

We're doing more than ever to help you find out if you're eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit. Discover all the ways we're here to help. Call us, talk to your tax preparer, or go to www.irs.gov/eitc and have the EITC Assistant walk you through each eligibility requirement.

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Visitor's spots are for visitors?

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With the dedication of the members of Student Activities, the CUB, and all of the other departments on campus, the Olmsted Building is often visited by rather prestigious individuals and those from the community who come to see them. It is through the effort of the individuals of the aforementioned organizations that

we have the opportunities that we do. And yet many students continually disrespect both them and their guests by deliberately taking the parking spaces set aside for their use.

Who would do such a thing? The college students who apparently find signs such as "Visitor's Parking Only" too complicated. I have walked by and seen student tags right in the Visitor's spot. Or, my absolute favorite people, the charming so-and-so's who take down their tag because they are

apparently too important to walk an extra 10 to 20 feet.

I would like to point something out to all of the students who fall into either of these categories. Has it occurred to any of you that maybe there are actual visitors who NEED those spots? They will get ticketed because they have to park in non-visitor's spots (the ones reserved for students and staff/faculty), and it is your fault. A good word for that kind of behavior is ignorant.

It doesn't matter if you are late! It doesn't matter if it is only a 50

minute class! You are a student. The majority of your peers have purchased their parking pass and park where they are supposed to. It is time you do so as well.

And for those of you that already do so, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Having your pass clearly displayed on your rearview mirror and parking in the student sections may seem like a small thing to you, but the visitors to campus, myself and the Police Services employees truly appreciate you being a responsible, decent person.

Taking A Stand For Writers...

By ANDREW KOSER
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Once, during my productive years as a freelance writer, I wrote a poem titled *Observation of The Living Room*. Observation, yes, I observed something and I wrote about it. There were a few moments in my life where I sat back on the couch in my father's living room and wrote a piece that at the time I felt was my finest work. Everything, for the most part, was all there, but then I had to write the lines:

A half-filled glass of iced tea on the coffee table contains a dead fly. Floating legs upward, wings down. Still drinkable yet psychological thinking says otherwise.

None of that was true, except for the glass of iced tea on the table. There was no fly floating whatever which way or any pertinent psychological thinking occurring. Simply I made that part up.

Now since I have admitted my observation was partially untrue I am sure Oprah Winfrey will be rescinding any future invite to her book club if I ever publish something of length.

Am I being cynical? Yes, most definitely. It is not just Oprah though; it is every news organization, unshady and shady magazine publication, go with the conservative opinion bandwagoner, ignorant student and blah blah blah.

James Frey, author of *A Million Little Pieces*, has become the most unpopular writer for doing what he apparently loves to do...write. The novel—currently reigning atop the best-sellers lists—is being analyzed for how true it really is to Frey's life. Frey contends it is a true representation of his lowly self in the previous years.

Does anyone realize how boring this world would be if every writer would chronicle things verbatim? "I have to admit I feel duped," said Rene Syler of the CBS Early Show. Well, to her I say I am glad. I am glad that she, and many of those out there in this crazy world, think that everything you read is the absolute truth.

Writing, at least in my own opinion, is the best outlet for pure imagination. Did you enjoy the *Lord of the Rings* movies? Well yes you may be too young to realize this, but those movies came from books...books written by someone with an imagination.

"But James Frey's book is a retelling of his life, not a fantasy novel," is a thought that immediately may jump into your head. So what? The best attribute a true writer may have is to make a better story out of the one that is before him or her.

Think about it this way. Let's say last Friday you had a really bad day and you never want to experience a day like that again. So, when you get home and talk to whomever, you retell your day. Now you know your day sucked, but the person you are telling really does not see it as that bad. Later on you retell your bad day to others, and each time you retell the story it might get a little bit exaggerated. You want the person hearing about your day to actually feel your bad day with you. C'mon, we have all done this right?

Now I do not know James Frey and most likely I never will, but I am guessing that perhaps this thought process just mentioned occurred when he wrote *A Million Little Pieces*. And since I know most of you out there do not know how the book publishing world works, it is also quite possible he was told from editors, "maybe you should emphasize this part a little bit or make it seem worse."

Frey admits he did shop the novel around as a fiction piece before selling it as nonfiction. Honestly there is no such thing as either pure fiction or pure nonfiction.

Fiction is always derived from something and nonfiction is up to one's interpretation, therefore making it subjective to the truth.

Yet maybe the best thing to come out of this whole Frey thing is that people are actually putting down those iPods and are picking up books. And for those of you that feel Frey duped you, remember the fact that YOUR President screwed you for far more than the 15 bucks you spent on the book.

What the \$%*#...?



By MATT MILLER
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Congratulations! By deciphering the text of which you are currently viewing you can officially read. This means you are, at the least a literate individual. If you attend Penn State Harrisburg, I would venture to say that you are also a rather smart and competent soul as well and, by saying this, I am admitting that you are not a moron. Unfortunately, for the rest of all human existence not everyone falls into this broad category of "not a moron." I stumbled upon this staggering fact some time back, but only recently deemed it necessary to publish an article noting the true existence of "morons." These

people can be seen almost anywhere, but often times shield their moronic traits by blending in with the rest of common society. They rather reveal themselves in a fit of glory I like to call, "WTF moments."

As previously stated, you are not a moron. But, for the benefit of all the slow witted persons, a "WTF moment" is a moment in which you become so frustrated with something you spout the three glorious words, "WHAT THE F***!" Maybe this happens rarely for you but, for me, this short line of poetry is an all too common staple of my everyday diction.

Are you shocked? Are you appalled? Have you shielded your child's ears even though they cannot hear the text? If you have, then worry not; for it is not my vulgar mouth that makes me say these words, but rather than action and operations of full-fledged morons. I would now like to take the time to discuss a few "WTF moments."

As I calmly walked into the electronic metropolis more commonly known as Best Buy, a touch of excitement filled my body. The type of joy a small boy gets when he kills an ant with a magnifying glass or strikes his younger sibling in the eye with a small shard of an Oreo.

It was a good day to be alive, or so I thought.

When my stroll through Best Buy ended, (and yes I say stroll because I never really buy anything there, but rather play video games, and type obtuse messages on the computer screens) I was about to step out when I pondered the horrid cold that would ensue on my walk back to my mode of transportation.

I quickly Macgyvered a plan that involved the purchase of a chap stick for my lips were quite parched and in need of quenching. I chose the cherry flavored variety for it is the best flavor of all the chap sticks and walked confidently towards the checkout counter, proud of my first official Best Buy purchase.

The cashier looked at me as if I had elbow dropped an older blind woman. I didn't see what could bring a gawk of this nature. Then realized she was a moron, and showed her the chap stick I wished to purchase.

She charged me the desired fee and waited for the transaction to finish. I waited for what seemed like weeks, as her cash register malfunctioned and sputtered excessive amounts of receipt paper onto the floor. To my surprise she proceeded to tear the receipt of doom, and handed it to me and said, "Here's your receipt, have a nice day."

My mind ran rampant, how could I possibly have a nice day after the lady at the register handed me a bible's worth of paper she so arrogantly called a receipt. I could have sworn the register was broken, but as I watched in utter horror, countless numbers of other innocent souls received these long doctored scrolls of death. I couldn't even fathom what text could be on this "receipt" as they called it. Did they expect me to read this non-sense? I had only bought one chap stick. One cherry chap stick. But to my delight, I ran my eyes down about 7 feet worth of paper to find that I had received a 3 dollar rebate for a 1000" big screen TV, a coupon to McDonalds, one free guitar lesson, and a voucher for a free game at the penny arcade; all at the bottom of this wonderful receipt for my cherry chap stick.

As I re-rolled my scroll into my pocket I wondered, why are my pockets so small? And also wondered who found it necessary to include all these ridiculous things on my massive Best Buy receipt.

That was when it hit me... morons. This was the clear and present work of morons. So the next time you go to Best Buy, you can ponder the idea of why morons are on the brainstorming team at Best Buy... pffff, Best Buy my ass.