

Open Open Letter

by Marc Laidlaw

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1,200 Words.*

OPEN LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE MCSWEENEYS OPEN LETTER FEATURE WHO REJECTED MY OPEN LETTER TO THE ELDERLY WOMAN WHO DANCES TO OBSCENE RAP LYRICS AT THE END OF THE LATEST TEEN COMEDY

February 8, 2006

Dear McSweeneys Open Letter Feature Editor:

Frankly, I am disappointed in your response to my submission of an Open Letter to McSweeney's Open Letter feature. I believe this Open Letter, entitled "Open Letter to the Elderly Woman Who Dances to Obscene Rap Lyrics at the End of the Latest Teen Comedy," was as funny and inventive as the majority of other "Open Letters" featured in your Open Letters feature. In a second attempt to convince you of the suitability of my my Open Letter, I am submitting it again, although contained within this second Open Letter format, believing that this will render it doubly suitable for your Open Letter feature. The original Open Letter commences herewith:

September 28, 2003

Dear Senior Citizen #3:

Frankly, my disappointment at your recent performance in "The Latest Teen Comedy" knows no bounds. The horrendously non-phat performance of Mr. Criggs, the swinish Vice Principle, I can understand. His hypocrisy was apparent from the first. It was all too obvious that although he pretended a priggish uprightness and complete inability to empathize with adolescent youth, this actually masked a desperate desire to get "down and dirty" with the kids in a way he had never managed during his own high school years; and in particular, that he dreamed of debasing himself before the buxom cheerleader, Deanna Deenie, whom he had emptily threatened with disciplinary action after the "Sperm Drive" organized in the Monroe Mullet High School cafeteria. No, Criggs's about-face came as no surprise. He had nothing to gain, no honor, no reputation, and he had already shown himself willing to stoop to any level if he thought he could advance himself thereby. When he wagged his finger in Miss Deenie's face, I knew that according to the rigorous formulae of all such films, he would eventually end up wagging that finger in time to the raucous rhymes of wannabee Anglican rapper, 13 Quid.

But you, Ma'am, what did you stand to gain by writhing and wiggling and performing strained fly-girl moves to the tuneless antipapist chants of "D'Quiddity"? Was there a single junior or senior Mullet High student, male or female, who cared to see you aping their obscene waggle dance, while referring explicitly to dildo-driven anal sex with girls 80 or 90 years your junior? Did you expect to gain the respect of your peers at The Appleyard Char-Broiled Steak and Assisted Living Manor by thrusting up your swollen-knuckled fist in a degraded mockery of the timeless "Fight the Power" gesture, while

mouthed “Yo! Ho! Slither on me po’!”

I have been trying but failing to see how this sad performance might have marked an important penultimate capstone to your generational quest. Do you not remember the long dusty road through the orange groves, how on dry September mornings you would lead the pony to the schoolhouse with your brother on its back, your little brother Lee now almost exactly 50 years in the grave? What thoughts of Lee passed through your mind as you gyrated your pelvis against the stocky buttocks of Monroe’s star quarterback Bruce Pontullis, begging him to make you his biyatch? Is this the sort of “Freedom” brother Lee had in mind when he gave his life on Pork Chop Hill? Forget what I felt when I heard the “b” word falling from your slack chaps. You don’t know me, after all, and I am old enough to be your great-grandchild. But imagine Lee’s reaction! If this was some sort of attempted tribute to his participation in the Korean War, coinciding with the 50 Year Commemoration that was wrapping up just about the time this flick hit the big screen, then I fear you fell far wide of the mark!

Could it be that am I missing something here? Am I failing to read enough into your performance, by perhaps unfairly assuming your acquiescence to this degrading act was merely an attempt to stave off the even greater and more thorough debasement threatened by Medicare and Medicaid? Is my kneejerk analysis simply that? The shallow, reactionary twitch of some jerk’s knee?

Perhaps by participating in this cultural remix, you were lashing out at the very notion of progress. You have, after all, as we are constantly reminded on Discovery Channel’s “Senility Week,” seen so much in your century of life. From the invention of steam, to the first manned landing on the moon; from the discovery of electricity to the absolutely necessary invention of the first electronic mail porn-spam filter, your generation has endured a greater whirlwind of technological advancement than any other in the last millennium. In participating in this latest cinematic degradation, were you finally fulfilling a dream that came upon you when you beheld your first “moving picture show”? Hm. So, what you’re saying is, by using technology against itself, you were reliving the excited yet doom-laden memory of the first car to make its way down that dusty lane, carrying the white-hatted developers who would cheat your father out of his groves for a fraction of their worth and pave that rutted road with asphalt, and uproot every fragrant dark glossy-leafed tree and cover the earth with (at last glance) townhomes and condominiums? Was this the only way left to you, to rage out against the expectations of a world that would like nothing better than to forget you are lying there, unprotesting, abused by orderlies, in a stained and smelly county bed, while the smell of grilling beef continually mocks your inability to chew it?

Even so. I find it unseemly. Those bronzed youths who seem to have accepted you for a time into their fold (after cruelly rejecting the prudish plate of chocolate chip oatmeal cookies you offered them just before Plot Point D), who are they after all but the tanned and sun-bleached heirs of those very same orange-grove pillagers who drove your father to a drunkard’s death, and sealed your own mother inside the concrete pillar of a freeway offramp? Why would you want to insinuate yourself into their company?

Ah...perhaps I do underestimate you. Perhaps there is something more on your mind. Perhaps that is not oranges I smelled in your dank little room, but almonds. Very well, in hopes that your advanced age has rendered you capable of slow and patient plotting, I will say no more, so as not to spoil your little game. Heh heh. I hope I’m right. Fight the power, Ma’am. For the serpent will not be bearded in its own den, should it have one!

Still, it is my fervent hope that I not see you in The Latest Teen Comedy #2: Spring Break Babylon. Be patient, but not too patient. For I would rather see you led away from Mullet University’s Sorority Row in handcuffs, than in Fort Lauderdale, in a G-string.

Yours in giddy anticipation,

Marc Laidlaw

Please reconsider your consideration of my original Open Letter.

Doubly giddily yours,

Marc Laidlaw

About the Author

[Marc Laidlaw](#) was born in 1960 and raised in Laguna Beach, California. His first novel, *Dad's Nuke*, was published in 1985, followed by such SF and horror novels as *Kalifornia* and *The 39th Mandala*. He became obsessed with the computer game *Myst* and, goaded on by Rudy Rucker, bought a new computer so that he could play more games and begin designing levels for them. After interviewing the designers of *Doom* for an article in *Wired*, Laidlaw found his way into the game biz. He is now renowned as one of the story and level designers for Valve Software's smash hit games *Half-Life* and *Half-Life 2*.