

Growing older, uncomfortably

by Neil McCarthy

Cafés just aren't cool anymore
unless they boast walls of exposed brick, pipes,
half a chair nailed to the ceiling,
mis-matched furniture back-breakingly uncomfortable.

Music, too, needs to be offensive —
the scratched record sound, explicit lyrics of
this bitch and that bitch coming
from four wall-mounted speakers in case you can't hear.

The baristas have a uniform of tats,
trucker hats and views of side boob through
stretched vests bearing the face of Bowie,
maybe a map of a freeway they have never driven on.

And what do I mean by "a coffee"?
Do I want a long black or a flat white,
a Cortado or a double Macchiato,
and if the latter, a latté? And what kind of milk do I want?

I'm not cool anymore, maybe never was.
I slink back into a ripped-up couch realizing
that I've reached the when-I-was-your-age age
sipping quietly, lamentfully, on whatever the fuck I ordered.

