

# 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.

