

Down at the Gold Standard

I stopped in at the Gold Standard Cafe the other evening for a fix of my favorite comfort food -- the "steak tartare parisienne avec les pommes frites a la mennonite", otherwise known as meatloaf and mashed potatoes, and Roger sauntered over and handed me a thick blue volume entitled "The Essentials of Narcissism."

"Somebody left this here, and it's been lying around for ages. Thought you might be interested in having a look."

Flipping through the essays by such eminent specialists as Sigmund Freud, Heinz Kohut, Otto Reich and Tuli Kupferberg, I saw little to interest me and handed the tome back to Roger.

"You know, theories of psychodynamics ceased to interest me when I discovered that no matter how I tried, I could never grasp the concept of 'cathexis'."

"Oh, 'cathexis' is the easy one," said Roger. "The Greek term 'cathexis' was chosen by James Strachey to render the German term 'Besetzung' in his translations of Sigmund Freud's complete works. In psychoanalysis, cathexis is the libido's charge of energy. Freud often described the functioning of psychosexual energies in mechanical terms, influenced perhaps by the dominance of the steam engine at the end of the 19th century. In this manner, he also tended to think of the libido as a producer of energies."

"Is that so?" I responded wearily. "Anyhow, great meatloaf tonight."

"You refer to the steak tartare, I presume. Yes, the recipe is straight from my mother's classic 1936 edition of the Betty Crocker cookbook."

Just then there was a loud bang and the sound of shattering glass as a brick crashed through the window and lodged itself in the mantelpiece.

"Holy crap, what was that?" I exclaimed, ducking under the table.

"Relax," said Roger, carefree and soigne. "That's just one of my little

marketing ploys."

"Marketing ploys!" I screamed, getting back to my feet and brushing the dust from my carefully pressed khakis. "Are you out of your mind?"

"Heh. Not to worry," replied Roger. "I pay the local gutter punks a trifling sum monthly to hurl a brick through the window and occasionally to spraypaint hostile graffiti on the marquee. Any minute now Channel 10 and the UC Review will be around all aghast to record the latest outrage against the yuppie community. It's incredible how much sympathy we get from these vulgar anarchist attacks on our efforts to bring haute cuisine to this dreary neighborhood."

"Hope you know what you're doing," I said dubiously. "Anyhow, that brick seems to have taken away my appetite. Garcon, remove this platter s'il vous plait. And speaking of marketing, I was looking at your reviews on yelp dot com and they seem to be improving. For awhile there those highbrow foodies didn't seem to have any good words for you. In fact some of them were downright nasty. I notice you didn't get a single five-star review. Must be a little embarrassing when you look at the raves the foodies give to RX, Vientiane, Desi Village, and other local eateries. Hell, even the Satellite cafe gets outstanding reviews on yelp."

"My friend," sighed Roger, "I see that you are a little naive about the ins and outs of the restaurant business. The way an owner wins love on the yelp list is to fork over five hundred bucks every month when they come to collect."

"You don't mean," I gasped, "you don't mean that yelp is a kind of protection racket! Good heavens! What is Philadelphia coming to! So you're paying up, and now the reviews are improving?"

"Not exactly." Roger smiled one of his sardonic smiles. "Actually -- and this is to go no further -- last time their collection dude came around we pistol whipped him with a baseball bat and tied him up in the basement. Don't think we'll be hearing from them again. And I only pay the gutter punks with kitchen scraps and dumpster privileges. Sure as hell beats five hundred bucks a month. Not to mention the fact that the collection guy was -- and I stress **was** -- about 350 pounds. Chef Joey has gotten some choice cuts --- well, perhaps that's all I should say. You know, when the world gives you lemons, just make lemonade, I always say. But I see you're turning a whiter

shade of green."

In fact I was feeling myself a trifle bilious. I got back to my feet somewhat unsteadily.

"Well, I think I should be shoving along," I said with a weak smile.

"You sure you don't want some coffee?" Roger offered. "Or some homemade lemonade?"

"I'll pass," I said, edging to the door.

"Always a pleasure!" said Roger, as he dusted off the brick.

--Ross Bender