

REVIEW OF THREE RESTAURANTS

By E. Avery Cale

WHY WE LIKE IT: *We could say ‘Review of Three Restaurants’ is off the wall—but wait! There is no wall! Schizoid destroyer prose and Nabokovian neologisms plucked out of a personalized lexicon of Lobjan vocab—patroned, perpin, turnt, blaow, skrt—is for real gonzo. If Meatball Mulligan and Lawrence Ferlinghetti were joy-riding down Moxy Avenue and rap-slammed going 180 into a junkie locomotive piloted by Hunter S. Thompson, this is the neo-Dada train wreck you’d get. We’re breathless and we still don’t know why. There are slurs here and there that will get the Political Correction officers off their butts but it just so happens that at FLEAS we value the freedom of the artist to offend—without it, there’s no chance for art. As to the theme? Well, we think ‘Review of Three Restaurants’ bears the same relation to food as BDSM does to procreation. Buckle up, kid, you’re in for a bumpy ride. It’s just beautiful writing.*

I know you are in Hell- that is to say L.A. which we all know is Hell because both are full of Liberals- and thus you may be surprised to find this sitting on your desk right now. But I have my ways.

Food is culture. I proceed with this saying that I made up and did not steal from anyone¹ because this is a food review of three restaurants, only one of which I have lent the honour of my patronage. But that is unnecessary, as by following the above dictum I can extrapolate from obvious facts about the cultures represented. One can do the same for any restaurant, really. Take a taco truck. Why are tacos sold from a truck? Because trucks are indigenous to Mexico, as is the taco. Trucks were originally used for driving cows around Mexico and tacos were originally made from Mexican cows, and therefore the linkage is impossible to rend.

Now, one may be tempted to ask why I, who have not eaten at two of the three restaurants to be reviewed, should be qualified at all to pass judgements upon them. But One forgets that I studied Political Science. Which is nothing less than to say I studied nothing at all really but learned to judge every other subject. As a Political Scientist I am a qualified expert in speaking on matters I cannot possibly understand, in making decisions based upon scant information as distorted by my own preferences then imposing said decisions upon other people, and in then justifying my impositions by gilding them in objectivity and altruism with empty displays of eloquence. To this of course you may object, saying something like “That is not the true province of Political Science but of Real Scientists! That is what Neil Degrass Tyson does when he talks about putting more Scientists in Congress or the economics of football, or Richard Dawkins

¹ Of course there is a book by this name. But I will assume it is a book about cultured and fermented foods like yoghurt and sourdough bread.

when he tries to talk about epistemology, or Bill Nye when talks about running an amusement park.” But you can shut your fat whore mouth.

The one restaurant at which I have eaten made rather tasty food, I must say. I got a bento box. Which is not a box at all but more of a square plate divided into separate bowls. Which seems odd, as plates are a baseball thing and bowls are a football thing, but just like the beautiful mix of cuisines on my bowlplatebox- Korean spicy pork bolgogi, Tempura² vegetables and shrimp, and Japanese sushi – this sporty mashup worked. It was black on the outside and red on the inside. There was in the dead centre a cute little dimple shaped like a voluptuous triangle and filled with soy sauce. There was in the northwest corner a set of four pieces of sushi, California roll of course because that is the cheap ass roll era’body throw in for free cause who really likes that shit anyway. The New England corner held the Tempuran food- a slice of sweet potato, a slice of zucchini, a slice of eggplant, a single shreemp that had been uncurled from its comma-like natural shape, and a porkstuffed gyoza. Apparently the Tempurans are a sound-oriented people when it comes to their cuisine because it is fried a delicate gold that crisps and snaps pleurably when eaten. In the bottom right corner was plain white rice I mean really W.T.Fuck is that about. Then the star dish, the spicy pork bolgogi, was in the double negative quadrant and it came atop cut romaine lettuce which is weird because Romania is nowhere near Korea but I guess North Korea is Communist and at one time Romania was a Soviet Socialist Republic. From this we conclude that romaine is the People’s Lettuce. And we should not be overly surprised that Romanian stuff is odd as the country is a weird one, they speak a language of Latin extraction despite being surrounded by Slavs. Interesting story, that. It happened like this: we all I am sure know about the Varangians who took the many rivers of Russia down to Byzantine territory and thus converted to Orthodox Christianity and there was of course the glorified contingent of Varangian Guards who fought under the Emperors of Constantinople, justly famed as they are for their prowess in battle and their remarkable stature, this much is known and repeated only to bring one to mind of the next historical episode, that is when Antonio Banderas joined a group of Vikings on their way to the East Roman Empire and was waylaid by animalskin-wearing cannibalistic peoples in what is now Romania, whose men he duly vanquished then took upon himself to repopulate the country by siring many heirs with the local women, and that is why they are Latin. Anyway the spicy pork bolgogi was good. Samantha ate a noodle dish. The noodles were wide around and lengthy. If one considers, say, a ramen noodle to be equivalent to the size of a massasauga (*Sistrurus catenatus*) then these noodles would be the size of a gaboon viper (*Bitis gabonica*). It had some green stuff on it and some meat.

What of the other restaurants? I mean literally, what are they? What are they called? Chill. Imma tell you. The northernmost of the trio is *Lanna* Thai. The middle is Sobahn, and this is where I have eaten. Thirdlimost is Hibachi Grill *Super* Buffet.

What jumps out at us here?

Obviously the fact that the two which I have not patroned are both related to Superman. This makes sense because I do not care so much for him as a character. When I want to read about God I read the Bible or Kant or Flannery O’Connor or something.

But if we may abstract from the particular performative living of my life into the organic life of the whole collective which is the only true wellspring and reference point for cultural criticism and discussion- which are truly one and the same for to engage in discourse is to critique- then what is the meaning of this? Why are both of these restaurants explicitly named after Superman?

² I do not know where Temper is, but I assume somewhere there next to Japan and Korea off the Sea of Japan.

Perhaps a Greimas square will help us. If you do not know what that is I apologize to the world for your ignorance and hope you never breed. But as I am a nice perpin I will splain it to ya. The Greimas Square was discovered by Algirdas Julien Greimas, a French-Lithuanian Literary Scientist. Literary Science is definitely real science. They use tools like the aforementioned square, which is vaguely mathematical looking. That is how you know it is a real science. To use this Square one places a term on the lefthand side and its corellary antithesis on the righthand, then fills in the spaces above, below, and between them with recombinations of the terms. As so:

Superman

Namrepus

To those who do not know what a Namrepus is, read a biology book. But I will give you ignorants a brief sketch. A Namrepus is kin to the platypus, which if you don't know what that is it is like a beaver-duck. The Namrepus is like a beaver-swan. It has a beaver tail and a bill, and a long elegant neck. They are migratory and winter in Barbados. Their summer home is Lake Baikal. Their yearly migration is the lengthiest on earth. Many die on the journey. But they have strong powerful swan wings and never give up. They are incredible to behold. So what are the characteristics of Superman, and of Namrepus?

Superman + Namrepus= Semi Aquatic Egg Laying Superhero

Superman

Namrepus

Super Manly Super Man=

Supermanly Namrepus/

Really Namrey Pus=

Action hero, demigod, ubermensch

Namrepusish Superman

Magically beautiful

And so on. I could tease this out for hours. Lithuanian semiotics is a head of hair and my typing-figures are a comb and boy when I get hot and going you know that volume will be risin, and we fixing to get turnt. But I am sure you do not have time for it. That or you are scared. You are scared what a proper understanding of psychoanalytics will mean, aren't you? That a proper grammar leads to a proper ethic and a proper political action is obvious.³ You do not want to risk your fragile class consciousness as a well-educated bourgeois. But you know, rich young niggas/you know we never really had no old money/we gotta lot of new money though, hah/(If Young Metro don trust you I'm gon' shoot ya)/Raindrop, drop top (drop top)/Smokin' on cookie in the hotbox (cookie)/Fuckin' on your bitch she a thot, thot (thot)/Cookin' up dope in the crockpot (pot)/We came from nothin' to somethin' nigga (hey)/I don't trust nobody grip the trigger (nobody)/Call up the gang, and they come and get you (gang)/Cry me a river, give you a tissue (hey)/My bitch is bad and boujee (bad)/Cookin' up dope with an Uzi (blaow)/My niggas is savage, ruthless (savage)/We got 30's and 100 rounds too (grrah)/My bitch is bad and boujee (bad)/Cookin' up dope with an Uzi (dope)/My niggas is savage, ruthless (hey)/We got 30's and 100 rounds too (glah)/Offset, whoo, whoo, whoo, whoo, whoo!/Rackings on rackings, got backends on backends/I'm ridin' around in a coupe (coupe)/I take your bitch right from you (you)/Bitch I'm a dog, roof (grrr)/Beat the ho walls loose (hey)/Hop in the frog, whoo! (skrt)/I tell that bitch to come comfort me (comfort for me)/I swear these niggas is under me (hey)/They hate and the devil keep jumpin' me (jumpin' me)/Bankrolls on me keep me company (cash)/We did the most, yeah/Pull up in Ghosts, yeah (woo)/My diamonds a choker (glah)/Holdin' the fire with no holster (blaow)/Rick The Ruler, diamonds cooler (cooler)/This a Rollie not a Muller (hey)/Dabbin' on 'em like the usual (dab)/Magic with the brick, do

³ Just sayin, they don't call them Grammar Nazis because they are apathetic.

voodoo (magic)/Court side with a bad bitch (bitch)/Then I send the bitch through Uber (go)/I'm young and rich and plus I'm boujee (hey)/I'm not stupid so I keep the Uzi (rrrah)/Rackings on rackings, got backends on backends/So my money makin' my back ache/You niggas got a low acc rate (acc)/We from the Nawf, yeah dat way (Nawf)/Fat cookie blunt in the ash tray (cookie)/Two bitches, just national smash day (smash)/Hop in the Lamb', have a drag race (skrt)/I let them birds take a bath bae (brrrrr) Raindrops, drop top (drop top)/Smokin' on cookie in the hotbox (cookie)/Fuckin' on your bitch she a thot, thot (thot)/Cookin' up dope in the crockpot (pot)/We came from nothin' to somethin' nigga (hey)/I don't trust nobody grip the trigger (nobody)/Call up the gang, and they come and get you (gang)/Cry me a river, give you a tissue (hey)/My bitch is bad and boujee (bad)/Cookin' up dope with an Uzi (blaow)/My niggas is savage, ruthless (savage)/We got 30's and 100 rounds too (grrah)/My bitch is bad and boujee (bad)/Cookin' up dope with an Uzi (dope)/My niggas is savage, ruthless (hey)/We got 30's and 100 rounds too (glah)/Pour a four, I'm droppin' muddy/Outer space, KiD CuDi (drank)/Introduce me to your bitch as wifey and we know she sluttin'/Broke a brick down, nuted butted, now that nigga duckin'/Don't move too fast I might shoot you (huh?)/Draco bad and boujee (Draco)/I'm always hangin' with shooters (brrah)/Might be posted somewhere secluded (private)/Still be playin' with pots and pans, call me Quavo Ratatouille/Run with that sack, call me Boobie (run with it)/When I'm on stage show me boobies (ay)/Ice on my neck, I'm the coolest (ice)/Hop out the suicide with the Uzi (pew-pew-pew)/I pull up, I pull up, I pull up/I hop out with all of the drugs and the good luck (skrrt)/I'm cookin', I'm cookin', I'm whippin' I'm whippin' into a rock up, let it lock up (lock up)/I gave her 10 racks/I told her go shoppin' and spend it all at the pop up (ten)/These bitches they fuck and suck dick/And they bustin' for Instagram, get your clout up/Uh, yeah, dat way, float on the track like a Segway (go)/Yeah, dat way, I used to trap by the/Subway (trappin')/Yeah, dat way, young nigga trap with the AK (rrrah)/Yeah, dat way, big dyke ho get it on, Macy Gray (hey)/Raindrops, drop tops (drop top)/Smokin' on cookie in the hotbox (cookie)/Fuckin' on your bitch she a thot, thot (thot)/Cookin' up dope in the crockpot (pot)/We came from nothin' to somethin' nigga (hey)/I don't trust nobody grip the trigger (nobody)/Call up the gang, and they come and get you (gang)/Cry me a river, give you a tissue (hey)/My bitch is bad and boujee (bad)/Cookin' up dope with an Uzi (blaow)/My niggas is savage, ruthless (savage)/We got 30's and 100 rounds too (grrah)/My bitch is bad and boujee (bad)/Cookin' up dope with an Uzi (dope)/My niggas is savage, ruthless (hey)/We got 30's and 100 rounds too (glah)/Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah/My bitch she bad to the bone, ay/Wait, these niggas watchin'/I swear to God they be my clones/Yeah, hey, huh/Switchin' my/hoes like my flows (what?)/Switchin' my flows like my clothes (like what?)/Keep on shootin' that gun, don't reload/Ooh, ooh, now she want fuck with my crew/Cause the money come all out the roof/Drive the 'Rari, that bitch got no roof (skrt)/Wait, what kind of 'Rari? 458 (damn)/All of these niggas, they hate (they hate)/Try to hide, shoot through the gate/Look, go to strip club, make it rain, yeah/So much money they use rakes/Count 100 thousand in your face (in your face)/Yeah, then put 300 right in the safe/Met her today, ooh/She talk to me like she knew me, yah/Go to sleep in a jacuzzi, yah/Wakin' up right to a two piece, yah/Countin' that paper like loose leaf, yah/Gettin' that chicken with blue cheese, yah/Boy you so fake, like my collar/You snakin', I swear to God that be that Gucci, ay/And you know we winnin' (winnin')/Yeah, we is not losin'/Try to play your song, it ain't move me (what?)/Saw your girl once now she choosin', yeah/Raindrops, drop top (drop top)/Smokin' on cookie in the hotbox (cookie)/Fuckin' on your bitch she a thot, thot (thot)/Cookin' up dope in the crockpot (pot)/We came from nothin' to somethin' nigga (hey)/I don't trust nobody grip the trigger (nobody)/Call up the gang, and they come and get you (gang)/Cry me a river, give you a tissue (hey)/My bitch is bad and boujee (bad)/Cookin' up dope with an Uzi (blaow)/My niggas is savage, ruthless (savage)/We got 30's and 100 rounds too (grrah)/My bitch is bad and boujee (bad)/Cookin' up dope with an Uzi (dope)/My niggas is savage, ruthless (hey)/We got 30's and 100 rounds too (glah)

And that is about all I have to say about Lithuanian semiotics.

Let us proceed to the historical discussion.

To fully understand these restaurants we must explore the histories of their respective countries of origin. History is of course a sensitive subject, especially when written by an Outsider. That is why Pony Boys' book "40 Acres and a Mule my Ass" did not stay golden. I am not of the cultures in question. And as a white American male I must be mindful of the legacy of oppression which follows me and the potential to misinterpret and unjustly distort the history and cultures of these peoples. And one must be extra careful when speaking about Oriental cultures, as Asians are prone to misreading things, what with those squinty little eyes and all.

While reading this I ask that you be mindful of the fact that my reference material is of highest quality and impeccable accuracy, and that therefore if a claim seems suspect to you you are wrong and full of shit. My source, of course, is Age of Empires II, as of the Rise of the Rajas expansion. If I may, let me briefly lay out the history of my source, a procedure we academics call "historiography."

Age of Empires, the original game, came out sometime when I was a toddler and therefore is a Poopy Old Game. But Age of Empires II came out 1999, and I guess I had a computer at that time because I played it quite a lot. And a dedicated group of heroes have worked in the underground and continued to mod⁴ and update the game, and over time this community has grown and developed until like something stuck way down in the throat of Old Faithful it has exploded with Steam into the world. And so a while back they put out Age of Empires II: The Forgotten in which were remembered the Italians, the Indians, the Incas, the Slavs, and the Magyars. I doubt these teams were forgotten by the original development team, it seems more likely to me that they were all on the "I" page of the binder in which the civs⁵ were kept and it must have fallen out. One could of course ask why the Magyars and the Slavs were on the I page. The Slavs are obvious, it stands for "Ivan the Terrible's people, the Slavs." The Mayars are more difficult. Magyars are basically Hungarians. If you drop the H, Hungary sounds like Uyghur, which also looks like Magyar, and the Uyghurs are Central Asian so the mistake is plausible. Then if we assume the person transcribing the notes for the binder heard "Eager" instead of Uyghur, as in "Eager Diaspora" instead of Uyghur Diaspora, then the next person heard Igor instead of Eager, well I guess it makes sense.

After the Forgotten came "The African Kingdoms," which included the Malians, the Berbers, the Ethiopians, and the Portuguese. The Portuguese look pretty sweet. Their special unit is the Organ Gun, which looks like a guy pushing a shawarma cart and can be built in the Castle Age without having researched Chemistry even though it is a gunpowder unit, so that is neat. The other civs are not even real.

Lastly we have Rise of the Rajas, which includes the Burmese, the Vietnamese, the Khmer, and the Malaysians. More on these later.

Now, the three restaurants we are reviewing here each represent the cuisine of a different Asian civ⁶: the Chinese, the Koreans, and the Thaietnamese.

We shall start our Very Historical Analysis© with a discussion of the Chinese, as they first appeared in the Age of Empires II base game and so can be considered as chronologically prior to the other two. The

⁴ Short for "modify" in Lobjan.

⁵ Lobjan for "Civilization"

⁶ "Civ" being equivalent to "culture," as in, "Hey Science Professor Brah look at this sweet *Staphylococcus* civ I grew on my Petri dish.

Chinese are a strong economics team, and have a unique tech⁷ that upgrade the damage of their Heavy Scorpions, and so one could say it packs quite a *sting*, ha ha get it that is some hilarious shit right there. But really though Heavy Scorpions are the bee's knees, if bees had knees that mowed down infantry like a lawnmower mows a lawn. Little infantry bits chopped up all tiny like and left there to slowly decompose and fertilize the ground and mmmm can you smell it mmmmm or maybe you could chop them all up and fling them into a bag and then dump the bag into a pile that gets bigger and bigger every time you mow oh yea look at that pile of chopped up infantrymen oh hell yea that is hot when it decomposes I'm gonna throw that in my tomato garden and grow some bomb ass Cherokee Purples. Which brings us to our next point- the Chinese have a killer farm bonus, each farm starts with +45 food. And let us talk about that unique unit, the Chu Ko Nu, that guy is pretty nifty, shooting as he does not one, not two, but three, yes indeed sir three arrows, or rather crossbow bolts, at almost exactly the same instant, bop bop bop like a gansta tommy gun bop bop bop three bolts all in ya eye bop bop bop and for you too sucka. Mass a whole mess a them boys together and what do you got? An army that is probably still inferior to the equivalent resources spent on an army of Heavy Scorpions, if we are speaking honestly.

Next we have the Koreans. I used to love these guys. Mayhap I still do. They have two unique units, the Turtle Ship and the War Wagon. The Turtle Ship looks metal AF. They got a dragon head. Not a turtle head. Unless it is a dragon turtle. On man that would be so badass. But with a normal turtle head. So it would look all boring like and you'd be like "What a cute turtle" and go to sit on it and it would be all like "Dracarys" but in its own head because it can do that, if a dragon says something in its own head it still hears it so it would say dracarys in its head and BAWCWAW FIRE ALL OVER EVERYWHERE and you'd be like "Damn that is one badass turtle I bet he countin that paper like loose leaf, ya, and getting that chicken with blue cheese too donchaknow, in fact I would venture to say that his niggas is savage, ruthless (savage!) and that they got 30's and 100 rounds too (grrah!)." So yes Turtle Ships. They shoot out cannon balls. Two at a time! And they go bkoo bkoo and crash blam into the bad guy ships or buildings or whatever and they look awesome but are they effective? I mean I know Donald Trump, may his name be Blessed Forevermore and Sing Between the Stars Until Rangnarok takes the White People to Heaven, I know we can dump a big bomb- a huge bomb, a real big league bomb- onto the Enemies of Blue Jeans and Apple Pie and it just kills most of them and makes the rest love us but can Turtle Ships do that? They damn well better, they cost 180w/180g⁸. I think they are pretty good. And the Korean unique land unit is the War Wagon. It, too, looks quite metal. It is like a normal wagon, similar to that one on Beauty and the Beast that the sneaky guy with the angular face, the one who helps Javert capture Jean Valjean and tries to sell him to Amelie because he thinks Blue is the Warmest Colour before the Three Musketeers and Ratoulli rescue him. Or something like that. I don't watch French films, those Commie Pinko Basterds are just trying to corrupt our minds, man. The wagon shoots two big ole arrow out the front over the top of the horses. Not sure where the driver sits. Maybe the horses drive themselves?

There is not a Thailand team. Which makes me think it is not a real place. But it seems some people think the Khmer Empire was roughly where Thailand is now. Seems shandy but I will go with it. Mostly because I know a whole lot about the Khmer, as I just last Friday started a game piloting them against Samuel and Tanner. We are playing the map Black Forest, and I am rocking it. So that should tell you right off the bat that the Thais are good at dessert. As to concrete, real life, historical details, it is a fact that their Battle Elephants are the bomb dot commander in chief of the battlefield, brah. They have a

⁷ Lobjan for "technology"

⁸ This means "One hundred and eighty wood and one hundred and eight gold" in Lobjan.

unique tech⁹ called Tusk Swords¹⁰ that boosts their attack by +3. +3!! Como se WHAAAAAT? You read that right. Plus. Three. Attack. Them tusk swords slash through enemies like Slash slashes through enemies, that is, real fast. Mass them songuns and boy you get your elephant stampede on. A whole mess of spearmen can stop that after a while but it is right satisfying as hell to watch them get trampled all over. And then, their unique unit- mon dios!- an elephant that has a double giant crossbow mounted upon his back like he just don't care, boy that is like some kind of Grand Theft Auto cheat mode shit right there. BAMBAMABAMABAMBAMABAMA ELEPHANT ARROWS YEA BITCH. Combine what I said about how elephants can nail the solo from November Rain and what I said about how ain't nobody grow a salsa garden like a Chinamen and you basically have these bad boys. And when you have to fight these bad boys, bad boys whatcha gonna do? Whatcha gonna do when they come for you? Huh? Cause I tell you what they are here and ready to crush your Constitutional right just like they was written on a moldy piece of parchment that couldn't stop a bullet even if it wanted to, but guess what? It doesn't want to, because the Supreme Court told it "Stand down, Boi, let that bullet through."

Alright alright alright, he said McConaugheyly, I will tell you how I will defeat them. As I am sure you know, Black Forest is almost entirely wooded. And on this random map there is an entire quadrant- the quadrant where the California Roll would be, if it was Bento Box- that is wooded over, a primal virgin forest. And like Saruman the Great I will fell those trees in droves and sicken the very earth with the destruction I shall wrought. And that will bring me up behind Tanner's base. Not to be crude here, but once I am positioned behind Tanner, right up snug behind him, I'll extend myself into his rear and much like RuPaul I'm gonna make P nah P nah P Nah Peanut Butter Peanut Butter Peanut Butter Peanut Butter out of his base. I'm only gonna say this once: That boy should watch his Wood.

OK, we are near the end, so it is time to get down to Brassed Axe.¹¹ Have I eaten at all these restaurants? No. Why should I? Asians all look the same, so their food is probably all the same. How is sushi different

⁹ This still means technology.

¹⁰ Tusk Swords? Are you freakin jokin? How nifty, eh?

¹¹ The Brassed Axe is of course the universal symbol of cultures or "civs" as brass axes are what finally allowed humans to overcome the Ents and invent fire. That is why to this day people say "Get down to Brassed Ax" because it means "Get down to the most important details, that is, mankind overcoming nature."

from cashew chicken? Trick question- cashew chicken is from Springfield Missouri. But how is 腰果雞丁 different from 腰果雞丁? Hell if I know.

P.S. You asked for this, sucker.

P.P.S. 4513 words, who went above and beyond?

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *I was inspired to write this when I still lived down south and a friend who had moved to LA told me he wanted a full report of one of the restaurants in town by Monday. So I did it. My influence at the time was beer, playing a ton of Age of Empires 2: HD and padding my word count with lyrics from Bad and Boogie. My intention was something like 'Try to sound academic while using irrelevant sources to make points that do not follow'. And in that way I think it was much like any academic writing.*

BIO: I grew up in the South, under clouds of humidity and mosquitoes. So I moved to Alaska and live under clouds of ice-fogs and gnats instead. I've not seen any grizzlies but I've seen tons of moose. They're like raccoons but bigger and tastier. I do not think my biography is important but if you want to know something personal about me well I guess I can say I have no running water in my house and that's bohemian as hell, ya'll boogieass high pocket writers with your cold water flats don't even know.