



**INFINITY'S
KITCHEN**

no.1

Infinity's Kitchen is an independant publication of essays, fiction, poetry, art and whatever else that's cooking. This is a place for creative people to work out their ideas.

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I Don't Get It

Dylan Kinnett

Have you ever read a work of literature, or seen a work of art, and thought to yourself, “I don’t understand it!” Have you ever had the distinct impression that nobody else understands it either? These things can happen for different reasons. Here are some examples.

Maybe we’re all too stupid to understand. (Hey, it’s possible, depending on the crowd.) Let’s not dwell on this reason, since it isn’t very likely that the whole crowd is stupid, I hope. Maybe it’s just that we weren’t paying attention, or we weren’t interested. That’s more likely.

Maybe you would understand, if only you had a key piece of information, but you don’t. That key information is often a bit of historical or social context. Even in our own time and place, context can do a lot to aid understanding.

Other things fail to be self-explanatory, but it isn’t on purpose. Some works of art or literature have plenty of well-intentioned contexts, but that context has no bearing on the thing in question. Other things are loaded with a dif-

ferent kind of “context,” which we could call advertising, or, let’s get real and call it bullshit. At times like these, “what we’ve got here is a failure to communicate.” The key word here is “failure.”

Is the context hidden from you somehow, on purpose? Some things fail to be self-explanatory. You assume these things make perfect sense, but people don’t talk about it, on purpose. You know it’s merely an assumption. You know, secretly, you don’t really understand. Call it a case of “the emperor’s clothes.” In cases like these, we’re all waiting for that little child to laugh at the Emperor.

Similarly, the context and understanding may be available to some people, but not available to others (for the reasons above). This leads to situations where “either you get it or you don’t.”

All the stuff I have just described makes people feel uncomfortable. I think that stuff is dangerous because it can make art and literature unwanted. As the editor of this new arts and

literature publication, that’s the stuff I’m going to tackle head on, avoid, destroy, etc. As a reader of this publication, you are encouraged to do the same. While collecting the contents of this first issue of Infinity’s Kitchen, I wanted the final product to make sense. I hope it isn’t imposing too much to say that, along the way, a theme emerged, or maybe just a question. The devices we have for travel and communication, how do they relate to the distances between us?

As a post script, here’s a tip: sometimes, there’s nothing to understand. For example: the story with no moral, the image with no picture, or even the picture that’s merely a picture, just plain music. My point is that understanding isn’t everything. Art is not science.

Whether or not you like it, however it makes you feel, those things are up to you.

Disconnect

J Utah Taylor

Driving fast in a southbound lane, my speedometer tops 110 mph. My heart begins to race. Slowly, I release the gas and pray that my speed drops fast before the upcoming bend in the road. Not fast enough and so I take a wild run around a few curves before slowing down to a reasonable speed for handling these country lanes. There is a bar ahead and I decide to pull in to catch my breath. Funny things happen when you try to outrun your fears: you find a whole new set of problems that go away when you slow down... then you catch up with yourself and you're back where you started.

The bar holds a rustic and sentimental charm to it—being reminiscent of the old farmhouse my grandfather holed up in for the last years of his life—complete with variations of structural deterioration and tetanus dangers, and accompanied by an unmistakable air of hopelessness and brokenness. Walking in, I fall into the trance of a steady picking in the background. An old blues man who isn't that old, but weathered in the soul, sits and picks on a haggard guitar.

His hands carry small scars across the tops of cracked-skin knuckles. He is white, wearing an eye patch, and sings in a gurgled tone, with tears from



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years of pain welling up and clogging in his throat. The words that come out are plain, wild, untamed and lonely. His hands move steady across the fret board with deft intensity and intuition. He is raw, yet clean as razor cut flesh.

A lump forms in my throat as I find a seat in the back. Closing my eyes, I catch hint of cinnamon and vanilla. Opening my eyes it is as if I see her before me, with her soft clean hands and clear eyes aglow with acceptance and love. I shed a tear. Standing in a moment of decidedness I move across the room to the telephone. With calloused hands I pick up the phone and dial. It rings as I hear his words:

"I will go to the mountains"
ring
"I will go to the sea"
ring
"I will run fast as lightnin"
ring
"But trouble still finds me."

She picks up the phone and my breath is taken. All of my well-planned dialogue is forgotten. I stumble in words, muddled between the heart and the head. Disconnect.

Cartersville Elegy

David Glen

Forty-three miles from the city, the interstate
Widens to four lanes. Four lanes, wandering
Down from the foothills of the Appalachians
Along the old Norfolk-Southern alignment
Into the phosphorescent jewel of the South.
Everybody ends up here eventually, kicking
Around Ponce in the small hours, idly chasing
Whatever life they were promised: it's like
Prague, but for Southern kids with slow accents
Who, in fairness, never ached to leave anyway.
For our grandparents the directions were simple:
Follow the coal road north until it turns to steel,
Then follow the steel west until it becomes
Something else. Something else was good life, such
As it was, and I'm told that from the top floors of
Midtown you can see the good life stretching out
For miles, all the way to the Chattahoochee and
Beyond. This was the slow, steady churning of their
Exile: something else. But beneath something else
Home was never Pittsburgh Cleveland Muncie Detroit,
And most returned, empty-car diasporans, having
Raised children and sent them on—our parents never
Knew home, really. Different now, perhaps. But
On this dark stretch 42 miles from the city, I'll let
Myself be drawn along these same inveterate rails,
Running out the night.

we was just passin'
by some empty lot, pockets
full of seeds culled from fertile minds
our old-timey odyssey
passin thru the valley of corporate shadows
as is my custom
to lighten load
I threwed them
broadcast in wild arcs that passed
right straight cross
that fatbelly moon
upon return migration
the very next year we spied
a post germination panoply
that lot sproutin' volunteers
blackhoods growin up tall
in the new England night
hangin heavy with the fruits of resistance
a guerilla garden ripe for harvest
plus more seeds for next planting moon
time's comin soon when
our little backyard plots are gonna bust
up the sidewalks, run over rooftops
overgrow the road to damnation
for we set roots
too deep to pull, employ
pilgrims of cross-pollination
cultivate chaos coyote mind liberation
and damn!
our dreams travel fast on the wind.

root nine, pollinated

R. "Moose" Jackson



The New Communication As Isolation

Ed Zahniser

Have you noticed how each leap forward in communications technology makes us more isolated from each other and the environment?

We updated our home pulse/tone phone to a self-contained all-digital telephone answering machine. It has I don't remember how many memory functions. I keep the old phone's handset in my van and pretend to talk on my car phone, too.

British Airways carries this digital impulse to the extreme in their first-class trans-Atlantic service. Each seat is like its own phone booth. The airline issues each first-class passenger a pair of pajamas. They still use the Hindi word pajamas to invoke Britain's glory days of empire when the sun never set on English cooking.

"Phone booth" is a nostalgic term—like "Siamese twins" since there's no longer a Siam. Today's phone booths aren't even stalls. They're more like communication versions of those feed bags once hung from the snouts of inner-city delivery-cart horses.

Superman can't change into his Lycra tights in a nose bag. It's all a computer-graphics blur.

Material consumption is killing us emotionally and spiritually.

The true image of an era lags one step behind its true metaphor.

This shows in the field of medicine and health. The 19th century's big killer, tuberculosis, was called "consumption." Then we licked tuberculosis — or thought we did — now material consumption is killing us emotionally and spiritually and murdering the less-developed world.

The 20th century's latter-day big scary killer was cancer. It was taboo to mention it as the cause of death in obituaries. We're still too sophisticated to nickname it. Cancers amount to uncontrolled development. That's killing the environment, too. We all want 17th-century English manor houses with spreading green grass lawns. To get them we gobble up willy-nilly the world's most productive farmland. Uncontrolled growth: the obituary code was "So-and-so died after a prolonged illness."

Pretty soon you'll only be able to get a 17th-century knock-off, three-acre suburban lawn on British Airways' first-class trans-Atlantic service.

Have you noticed how people will mispronounce the California valley hotbed of digital development as Silicone Valley? They don't say Silicon Valley. Their deep fear of technological change shows up as this bodily language. Call it somatized fear. Silicone Valley metaphorizes breast implants as technological cancer—the ideology of unrestrained growth.

Does somatizing fear seem far-fetched? Well, digital can mean "pertaining to the fingers and toes." And not everything digital can be reduced to the binary yes-no, on-off, in-out protocol of cyber-

space. That leaves out 18 fingers and toes. To be binary in that digital world is to be all thumbs. That implies "oppositional." To be "all toes" has been an unexplored figure of speech since we quit hanging from trees.

Breast implants and pre-Viagra penile pumps express the desire to increase our bodies' vocabulary. (Animal behavior scientists call this somatized language "mating display behavior.") Those whose cell phones permanently accessorize their persona merely express a less radical urge to increase the body's vocabulary power. The concept of "cell phone" clearly



pen, gouche, and collage on paper/21" x 16"/2005/aprilloveday.org

speaks to giving voice to the body at the most basic level of cellular organization.

In the more-than-human world of mating behavior, outrageous bodily expression generally has been embedded in the male of the species. Witness the bizarre plumage and the contorted dance steps of many sexually aroused male birds. Cell phones render this gender-neutral for the human.

Anything somatized risks assuming the human body's ambiguities, as hinted at above. The phrase "all thumbs" hooks into great metaphorizing power, but the phrase "all toes" does nothing. Yet both phrases could remain undifferentiated as "all digits" or even "all digital."

So-called primitive cultures invest the task of reflecting on such issues of multi-layered expressiveness in the shaman. We often relegate them to the etymological end of the bar that bills itself — perhaps too highly — as jurisprudence. The ambiguities of a concept

like "cell phone," which can express, etymologically, both communication and isolation, may even be an oxymoron (c.f. juris + prudence).

Carry-out meals have boomed synchronously with the proliferation of mobile phones. All these people ricocheting about encapsulated in air-conditioned private automobiles need someone to talk to on their portable phones.

"Who can I call? Let me see. I could just order out Chinese tonight and nuke it in the microwave."

This becomes one economically potent interior monologue when newly linked to a permanently accessorized but ambiguously loaded device of isolating communication.

Whereas emerging global citizens in the 1980s might have declared "The world is my home," it's not that simple now. "Everywhere" may be "nowhere." Better yet might be the slogan "My home is my world." Among the 4th-cen-

tury Desert Fathers, Abbot Moses instructed a brother: "Go, sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything." Marcus Aurelius said most of our problems stem from our inability to stay in our room. Oft-transplanted trees can't bear fruit. If you must move about, adopt the turtle as your role model—like those 30-foot RVs with satellite TV hookups in national forest campgrounds.

When I "dial" an overseas number "direct" now, there are so many digits that maybe by adding four more we can dial up the dead.

Do not go gently into that good night with-
out your cell phone.

Battery life will become a huge issue. This will be one step back toward so-called primitives' custom of burying one with all one's possessions. So-called primitives sent off their dead equipped and accessorized for

the afterlife. This will be like metaphysical payback for a lifetime of layaway purchases. Renewing this burial practice would wreak havoc with the fortunes of estate and probate lawyers and set IRS customer-service tactics back several decades.

Most obvious of the cell phone's etymologies of isolation is the prison cell. It even suggests that ultimate, solitary confinement but as confinement to the solitary. Couch-potato-dom imposed from without.

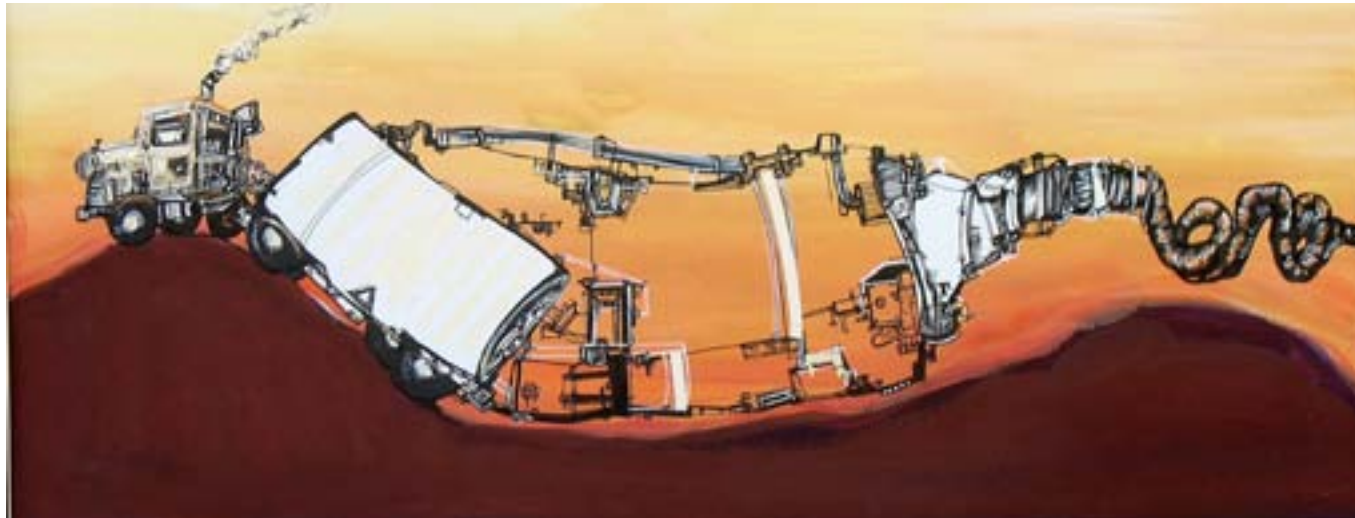
Or does communication track developments in transportation? Could the increasing isolation from proliferating communications devices result from the evolution of transportation?

Transportation once meant traveling about, across, or over the world. But modern transportation (other than space travel out of this world) takes one through the world. Transportation models encapsulation. One moves through the world without encountering the world. One moves without reference to local conditions. The first-class Brit Air "phone booth" is a capsule within a capsule. One thinks of the mammalian body's catchy ploy of coating fats to ship them through the water-based blood of its circulatory system.

First-class air passage becomes a movable experience—but not of the world. It's powerful cold up there at 36,000 feet. No, it's more like you're inside your TV. You experience not the world but a generalized passivity of viewing. Flying first class is like watching "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" reruns from inside your TV set. Enforced isolation compounded.

"Go, sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything."

Marcus Aurelius





Panspermia

Leonard Richardson

The jet airline traveler is as isolated from the world as the young married professional man standing in the dairy aisle of the supermarket talking on his cell phone. This man is oblivious to the real human actions and interactions that surround and enmesh him. Everywhere around him human beings are making choices and considering tastes, opinions, household economies, and aesthetic judgments—desires, even. All around him human beings are approving and admiring or criticizing choices by a stunning range of subtle criteria. Here the man's spouse, and their young child in the grocery cart, are also resenting his choice of isolation and the "fathers are our most distant relatives" syndrome.

Existentialist philosophers posited this isolation-cum-alienation in the 1960s as the human condition itself, a view resoundingly pooh-poohed later. Are we seeing it re-emerge as a technological lifestyle choice?

The child in the grocery cart may as well be experiencing his father as though the child were watching televised NASA officials in Houston commenting on video images of the father floating about the space capsule.

In such a real-world context as the grocery store, however, only the man's spouse's anxiety can be described as free-floating. The gravity of the situation lies with the contrast between the man choosing this isolating self-encapsulation and, as a result, his spouse experiencing free-floating anxiety.

On the other hand, should the man be ordering Chinese carry-out for the family's dinner, the above is as speculative as a fortune cookie.

YOU WILL FIND LOVE WITH YOUR CELL PHONE.

Ah, you're just in time to see me test my panspermia cannon. Stand back! Only seasoned professionals dare approach this potent geothermal-powered device! As a professional screenwriter and lifelong extropian I am uniquely qualified to build and operate and take the credit for this machine. Back, I say!

First, the apple test. Bang! As you can see, I have fulfilled mankind's eons-long dream of accelerating apples to escape velocity. With luck, that apple will land on a foreign planet and take root there. This device makes me the Johnny Appleseed of the cosmos!

Now, the plum. The cannon is now aimed directly at Mars. The Martian terraforming process begins now, with this plum! Bang!

What is it now? It seems my overzealous assistant, Behemoth Radix, has loaded the panspermia cannon with marshmallows. You fool! Marshmallows are not the seed of interplanetary life! Except perhaps in the ammonia clouds of certain gas giants... yes, yes.

Behemoth, your progress astounds me. Let the cosmos be filled with gaseous marshmallow balloon-creatures! Bang!

What? Who dares disturb my demonstration export of picturesque Earth life to the universe? Ah, General, your question please. Yes, I suppose it could be used as a weapon, if the enemy lived on other planets, and if more than anything they hated having fresh fruit delivered through space to their door. I find your obsession with militarizing each of my inventions disturbing, to be honest. First it was my "fun bomb", which you thought could be modified to deploy munitions other than fun. Then, your ludicrous plan for my top-secret stealth glider. Frankly, your naiveté astounds me. But keep those checks coming!



This Kitchen Needs More Cooks

We are accepting submissions for **Infinity's Kitchen no. 2**. We're looking for all kinds of writing; the more experimental, the better. Here are some invitations. Is your life or your wit interesting enough to warrant a semi-regular column? If you're a bibliophile or an audiophile or a screenhead, perhaps you should write reviews. Maybe you would like to have your own work reviewed? Recipes are fun, but even more fun are recipes for things that aren't food. The quizzes in some magazine are a guilty pleasure. Got a hard-hitting "cover story" message? Let's hear it. Find someone interesting and grill them with banter, repartee, etc. We like visual stuff too, like photography, paintings, collage or even cartoons.

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