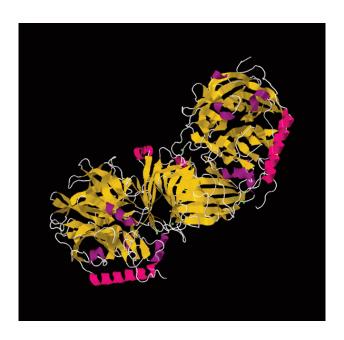
THE BETATEXT



Produced in a limited edition of 27 copies to celebrate the publication of *The Xenotext* (*Book* 1) by Christian Bök

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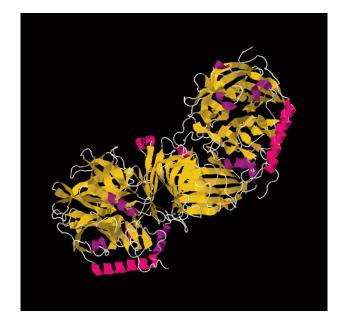
ADAM DICKINSON

Saliva is disorganized and easily fooled by success. It's not even true that I eat honey. Within the province of drive-thrus and sleeper cells, something else does it for me, stuffing aspartame briefcases with municipal snow. At the business end of this shit, complex sugars are abducted by aliens as necktied as a carpool, still rocking classic haircuts and metabolic pathways from the oxygen-starved oceans of Archean Earth. I don't have to move a muscle. Bifidobacteria break down the best defense and special teams, build welfare states and a culture of dependence founded on hamster dental plaque, Mongolian fermented horse cream, pig intestines, and honeybee digestive tracts. The limits of my enzymes mean the limits of my world. Milk and honey curd a landscape as pointless as a fingerprint. In the prehistory of the gut, getting off this planet means getting someone else to take the wheel.

THE BETATEXT

My gut is a rainforest of microbes. Their combined cellular material, which covers my entire body, outnumbers my own by a factor of ten. These microbiota serve as a kind of xenos (the 'foreigner') living within me as a giant nonhuman organ, controlling the expression of genes and the imagined sense of self maintained by my immune system's sensitivity to inside and outside. It is unclear, in fact, whether the immune system controls the microbes or the microbes control the immune system. My body is a spaceship designed to optimize the proliferation and growth of its microbial cosmonauts. These organisms enact a form of biochemical writing through their integral involvement in the metabolic processes that fuel my life. In some cases, the proliferation of certain species can improve the health of the host. The oligosaccharides in honey, for example, which are indigestible to humans, can stimulate the growth of bifidobacteria in my gut, potentially reducing the risk of food allergies and colonization by pathogens. The enzyme beta-fructofuranosidase from Bifidobacterium longum is one such catalyst for handling the oligosaccharides from honey in the anaerobic environment of my large intestine. I know this because I have had my microbiome sequenced to better read its wet and otherworldly writing.

- 1 MTDFTPETPV LTPIRDHAAE LAKAEAGVAE MAAKRNNRWY
- 51 PKYHIASNGG WINDPNGLCF YKGLWHVFYQ LHPYGTQWGP
- 91 MHWGHVSSTD MLSWKREPIM FAPSLEQEKD GVFSGSAVID
- 131 DNGDLRFYYT GHRWANGHDN TGGDWQVQMT ALPDNDELTS
- 171 ATKQGMIIDC PTDKVDHHYR DPKVWKTGDT WYMTFGVSSA
- 201 DKRGQMWLFS SKDMVRWEYE RVLFQHPDPD VFMLECPDFF
- 241 PIKDKDGNEK WVIGFSAMGS KPSGFMNRNV SNAGYMIGTW
- 281 EPGGEFKPET EFRLWDCGHN YYAPQSFNVD GRQIVYGWMS
- Zor Erdderkier Erkewbedin Tiki Qorn vb dkQrvid wii
- 321 PFVQPIPMED DGWCGQLTLP REITLGDDGD VVTAPVAEME 361 GLREDTLDHG SITLDMDGEQ IIADDAEAVE IEMTIDLAAS
- 401 TAERAGLKIH ATEDGAYTYV AYDDQIGRVV VDRQAMANGD
- 401 INEKNOEKIII NIEDONIIII NIEDONIKI VDKOMMINGI
- 441 RGYRAAPLTD AELASGKLDL RVFVDRGSVE VYVNGGHQVL
- 541 SSYSYASEGP RAIKLVAESG SLKVDSLKLH HMKSIGLE



BETA-FRUCTOFURANOSIDASE

(AMINO ACIDS)

BETA-FRUCTOFURANOSIDASE

(PROTEIN FOLD)