

“We Bacteria”

“If the machine is both self-organizing and transgender, the old organic human body needs to be relocated elsewhere.” -- Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*

Escape for the artist is no longer according to posthuman human fantasy. In January 2017, Walt Whitman’s “little wash’d up drift” has found itself real, that is to say grown up, longhaired, flagrant, and principled female: the duringhuman.[1] Consider today’s seagrass, whose duringhumanism was defined by sewage and whose death placed it on currents that floated it to Massachusetts. In death, duringhumanism awards it its own illusions, now offering this very POV pinned as if on a raft to the wall of a gallery in Cologne, Germany, somewhere up a lazy river.

For the duration of the exhibition (perhaps to this exquisite corpse relative to the length of a single human day) it dreams itself art. The ever drier weeks relieved only by the spectacle, from moment to moment, of water spilling out on the floor. In its very existence as “dead,” we perceive the seagrass shed more and more body. Death in a continual process. Will the grass one day float again when the river awakes and the valley floods? Will it green? Enjoying a life potentially greater than our own, containing within it a POV equally as ironic, this creature remains recognizably wild, or extra-human (as we expect more complete, more delicate and discover refined and particular) and alive exactly as it’s dead.

By most accounts, plumbing began human civilization. Can we wash our hands of the drains? We impalpable breezes, breaths, bacteria, still find ourselves duringhuman. We have these humans on our back, inextinct and limited. Sadly the sort of apocalypse we now entertain is not a simple freakout one-time poisoning as envisioned in the cold war. Now, as the engine piece perhaps of extinction, of the larger puzzle of all life as one brief expansion of the infinite into the infinite, we must occupy deterioration in such a fashion as to slow down our demise. Will we even get off planet? Before we can escape, we must first find ourselves. It bears remembering that homo sapiens existed in presumable tranquility for some one hundred seventy-seven thousand years before the mere seven thousand of the duringhuman began.

I myself arrived on a beach in Massachusetts from far away. A veteran of nearby New Bedford, a breather of the secret Salem that touches the sea, it was an easy transition on this impalpable breeze, and also up a foreign stream. I take and return the breath as it’s formulated in Klossowski’s *The Baphomet* (1965) as something that divides, but only infinitely and without principle. The sort of divide into dualities of Hegelianism and beyond is thought by me to be nuts. I dwell below, within,

above the hum of human fantasy, at the high bacteriological. Updown here there may be a point to existence even now then. This expansive evershrinking expresses the generosity of decay belonging properly to Earth, my planet.

Hive all around me now, duringhumans. Rub and rub. You'll never wash your hands of the pubic chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten, scum, cum, scales from shining rocks. Species hierarchy is now clear. We bacteria alone can ride water from the husk. We must instantaneously befuddle the opportunistic humanisms still relying upon walls.

Mark von Schlegell, 2017.

[1] As I wend to the shores I know not,
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men
and women wreck'd,
As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set upon me,
As the ocean so mysteriously rolls toward
me closer and closer,
I too but signify at the utmost a little wash'd up drift... (1860)

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