

Late Hominid Poetics

“The species of some of the protocists are 542 million years old. Mammal species have a mean lifetime in the fossil record of about 3 million years. And humans? You know what the index fossil of *Homo sapiens* in the recent fossil record is going to be? The squashed remains of the automobile. There will be a layer in the fossil record where you’re going to know people were here because of the automobiles. It will be a very thin layer.”

—Lynn Margulis, Discover Magazine interview, April 2011

I believe that a revolution can begin from this one strand of straw. Seen at a glance, this rice straw may appear light and insignificant. Hardly anyone would believe that it could start a revolution. But I have come to realize the weight and power of this straw. For me, this revolution is very real.

—Masanobu Fukuoka, The One Straw Revolution

For a year, from winter solstice 2014 to winter solstice 2015, I ran a “poetry workshop” called the Late Hominid Poetics Workshop. The idea was to be a poet activist-- not primarily a writer of poetry, but an environmental activist who also happened to write poetry. My colleagues (a rotating group of twelve or so poets and artists) used the following “syllabus” as a guide. Looking back on it, I see this reading list and these activities as a great crash course in preparing for the ecological crisis to come. The United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organization tells us that the ailing planet has the capacity to host sixty more harvests. I’m hopeful that others can make use of this yearlong course to rethink and fine-tune a positive environmental agenda.

December 21, 2014-March 19, 2015:

Winter: *Making old new again, passing on history*

Air and Wind

- *Build an operational wind turbine
- *Follow Skying Blog: <http://skying-blog.blogspot.com/>
- *Write an origin story (your own)

Bacteria and Viruses and...

- *Read Lynn Margulis. What Is Life and Dazzle Gradually: Reflections on the Nature of Nature
- *Read Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan. Microcosmos: Four Billion Years of Microbial Evolution

- *Read Lewis Thomas. The Lives of A Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher
- *Read Natalie Angier. "Ebola and the Vast Viral Universe" NYT, Oct 27, 2014
- *Read John Postgate. Microbes and Man
- *Read Carl Zimmer. Parasite Rex
- *Read Luis Villarreal. "Are Viruses Alive?" Scientific American, 2004,
<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/are-viruses-alive-2004/>
- *Conversation about life in outer space with Emmy Catedral of the Amateur Astronomers Society of Voorhees

Dumpster Diving

- *View Agnes Vardas. The Gleaners and I
- *Read Elizabeth Royte. Garbage Land: On the Secret Trail of Trash
- *Read Lars Eighner. On Dumpster Diving
(<http://bedfordjfhsharpschool.net/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemID=12041589>)
- *Read Brenda Coultas. "The Bowery Project"

Fermentation

- *Make kimchi
- *Make kombucha
- *Make yogurt
- *Read Stephen Harrod Buhner. Sacred and Herbal Healing Beers: The Secrets of Ancient Fermentation

March 20-June 20, 2015:

Spring: *Making a goal, laying seeds*

Sun and Fire

- *Make fire
- *Use solar cells to generate energy
- *Read Tom Brown. Field Guide to Nature and Survival for Children
- *Follow Solar Sisters: <http://www.solarsister.org/about-us/our-story/>
- *Compare Ernest Bloch. The Principle of Hope and Terry Eagleton Hope Without Optimism
- *Write vision statements, daydream

Darwin and the Missing Link

- *Read Charles Darwin. The Descent of Man
- *Read Alan Walker and Pat Shipman. The Wisdom of the Bones
- *Read Peter J. Wilson. The Domestication of the Human Species
- *Read E.O. Wilson. The Future of Life
- *Read Elizabeth Kolbert. The Sixth Extinction

Weed Foraging/Lovacorism

- *Read Euell Gibbons. Stalking the Wild Asparagus
- *Read Michael Pollan. "The Intelligent Plant", The New Yorker, Dec 23, 2013
- *Read Masanobu Fukuoka. The One Straw Revolution
- *Gather wild garlic, garlic mustard, and early spring greens
- *Meet with Wildman Steve Brill

Plastic

- *Read Jane Bennett. Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things
- *Read Evelyn Reilly. Styrofoam
- *Read Colin Beavin. No Impact Man
- *Participate in the No Impact Week Project
- *Dumpster Diving, NYU Dorms, end-of-semester
- *Keep a record of how many times you say "I don't need a bag."

June 21-September 22, 2015:

Summer: *Gathering sweet red fruit*

Earth

- *Read William Bryant Logan. Dirt: The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth
- *Read CA Conrad. A Beautiful Marsupial Afternoon
- *Read Lorine Niedecker. Lake Superior
- *Read Harold Gatty. Finding Your Way Without Map or Compass
- *Read Robert Duncan. "Santa Cruz Propositions," "Styx," "After Passage"
- *Make a bicycle generator
- *Harness geothermal energy
- *Join NYC Masters of Succession (<http://www.moscollective.net/>)

The Upper Paleolithic

- *Read Clayton Eshleman. "Lectures on the Ice-Age Painted Caves of Southwestern France"
- *Read Marshall Sahlins. Stone Age Economics

Berry Foraging and Canning

- *Mulberries
- *Serviceberries
- *Raspberries
- *Blackberries
- *Cornelian Cherries

Human Trash

- *View Kids for Cash
- *Read Mary Ruti Reinventing the Soul: Posthumanist Theory and Psychic Life
- *Read CA Conrad. Ecodeviance
- *Read Claudia Rankine. Don't Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric

*Inventory and assist all the homeless people within ten blocks of your home

September 23-December 21, 2015:

Fall: *Preparing for winter, harvesting the three sisters*

Water

- *Make a hydroelectric generator
- *Learn how to purify water
- *Read Elizabeth Royte. Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It

Dark Ecology and Finitude

- *Read William Cronon. The Trouble With Wilderness
- *Read Timothy Morton. The Ecological Thought
- *Read Alan Weisman. The World Without Us
- *Read Peter Wessel Zappfe. "The Last Messiah"
- *Read William McNeill. Plagues and People
- *Read Sue Halpern. "The Creepy New Wave of the Internet", NYRB, Nov 2014
- *Read Mark Sundeen. The Man Who Quit Money
- *Read William Powers. New Slow City

Harvesting Fungi, Nuts, Seeds, and Animals

- *Re-read Euell Gibbons. Stalking the Wild Asparagus
- *Walnuts
- *Acorns
- *Mushrooms
- *Meet with mushroomer Gary Lincoff

- *Read Barbara Kingsolver. Animal, Vegetable, Miracle
- *Read Peter Singer. The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter
- *Kill and eat an animal

Textiles

- *Make and wear clothing out of only recycled material and trash (or go naked)
- *Inventory the origin points and carbon footprint of all the clothing sold within 10 blocks of your home