

CURATING A FUTURE EARTH

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Abstract

In fall 2019, I enrolled in SFU's President's Dream Colloquium course, Creative Ecologies: Reimagining the World. One of the scholars we read was anthropology professor Dr. Shannon Mattern. My creative response to Mattern's paper—"The Big Data of Ice, Rocks, Soils, and Sediments"—offered an alternative way to engage with her scholarship. In searching for poetic and concise turns of phrase, I noted how her word choice and image-making related to her essay's construction. I sought out bits of data from her paper, re-arranged them into a cohesive unit, and from this garnered a deeper meaning of her intent and expertise. I also noted what was absent or lacking, and this deficit of words, specifically toward 'should we be exploiting the planet for research?' inspired me to emphasize this in my found poem.

Keywords: poetic inquiry, creative ecologies, climate science, Shannon Mattern, climate crisis

Curating a Future Earth*

muddy icy soggy
library of the earth
matter out of place
saturated with ironies

layers of abstraction
mud and rocks on a shelf
lakes that have evaporated
icebergs that no longer exist

arks of the apocalypse
await digitization

ASCII text

 floppy disks
 phosphates
phytoplankton
 precipitation
 fertilizers
non-relational flat-file

graceful degradation
suspended life
entangled in
 terrestrial transformation

 stalactites
 stalagmites
 particulates

follow epistemological protocols
questions no one ever thought to ask

 boreholes
 ice cores
 pollen spores
 megafonds
freezer farms

what do the rocks say?
over and over again
window to the Earth's past
dirtier the deeper you go

the old ontological question

what is alive?

dredged petroleum contamination
building becomes the end in itself
the unbearable becomes inevitable

leaky boats
ride the rising waves

* All phrases and words taken from Shannon Mattern, "The Big Data of Ice, Rocks, Soils, and Sediments," *Places Journal*, November 2017. Accessed 22 Oct 2019.
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