

[00:00:01] Right back at the start of my thinking about climate change, and how to approach writing about it, I was aware of the importance of time. I was intrigued by something the American choreographer Meredith Monk said in an interview for Tate Modern: "These days, I feel that there are two possibilities for artists right now to respond to our world. And one is a direct response, doing directly political art. Equally powerful is the group of artists thinking we have to actually think what an alternative reality would be, and offer an antidote, and really go back to the more timeless concerns of existence on Earth." Wondering if poetry might be able to draw these two possibilities more closely together, I wanted to explore ways of allowing present-, past- and future-focussed awarenesses to talk to each other. On the page, at least, time travel and radical change are possible. I found myself drawn to trees as living symbols of the passage of time and the exchange between human and beyond human worlds. At the end of February, I went to a powerful event called We Make Tomorrow, organised by Julie's Bicycle, a gathering for artists for many different disciplines working within the climate emergency to share ideas, practices and projects. While I was in London, I visited the Natural History Museum, carrying a Russian proverb around in my head: "The future is a long forgotten past." On the upper balcony of the Hintze Hall, above the floating skeleton of Hope the blue whale, I sat for a long time at the base of another of their prized exhibits, a slice of giant Sequoia, felled in California in 1891, and went on to write this poem about it.

[00:02:16] [POEM: Giant Sequoia]

[00:05:17] In 1891, when this Sequoia was felled, nearly 70 percent of the world was covered in trees and forest. In 2020, this has dropped to just over 30 percent with massive implications for carbon emissions. Keeping a sense of past, present and future in mind, a very open, spacious awareness helps me take in the facts of our current situation and, in my own work, to look at something very closely and from there see a wider, longer picture. Isn't this Blake's method when he says "to see a world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour"? One of the challenges of climate change is the need to balance our understanding of the Earth's history and meteorology from the scientific data with the scenario predicted for future generations, and all from this here and now, our partially sighted, persistently distracted present. But for people who've already sent rockets into space and can successfully

transplant a human heart, this is surely possible. Again, looking at an example from the beyond or more than human worlds suggested a way to write about that crucial, longer, humbler, less anthropocentric view of time.

[00:06:56] [POEM: The Octopus Mother]

[00:07:51] In the next poem, from my climate work-in-progress, I address the reader directly, asking them to think more deeply about the nature of time and how we inhabit it, encouraging them to transform their awareness into a more subtle, embodied sense of presence. Perhaps this holds the key to the sort of timelessness that Meredith Monk was speaking about and informs the world view of both oriental and indigenous wisdom traditions, where change is possible because it arises naturally from a place where you know, in your own bones, you are implicated, that impermanence and death are real. Unlocking the imagination to see what you might do with your one wild and precious life, as Mary Oliver has it, how you can adapt and change and act to make everybody's future a better place to live. However we think about time, there is no question: we are running out of it.

[00:09:01] [POEM: Immeasurable]