

NOTE

The main thread that comes out of my thinking about climate change issues is a frustration at the reluctance to act by those who wield political and economic power – a reluctance which exists for reasons which are largely self-explanatory. I'm also questioning of the approach commonly taken by many within the environmental movement, which is geared towards individual and personal actions, and the notion that we have limitless choices about the way we live. While making changes to one's lifestyle might contribute to one's own sense of purpose and wellbeing, I believe that change on a larger scale needs to challenge the structures around which our economic and social world is built, question why and how they exist and how they are central to all of the environmental problems we now face. The phrase 'an analysis of power' came into my head, tangentially, from an article I read recently about gender violence, which seems an entirely different issue, however I see the concept of power as being a central theme to all human struggles.

In this poem I chose to use a rhyming form, partly as a way of organising my chaotic thoughts, and also as an analogy to looking back to the past, as well as forward to the future, as inspiration for alternative ways of living.

Airini Beautrais

An Analysis Of Power

Come to the lake you came to as a child.
Things are tending to extremes. Winters eerily mild.
Summers aren't real summers anymore. In our lifetimes we have seen
a folding in of what we know. Once you could have been sure
where wind would blow where frost would flower

But it's no use shooting the breeze
without an analysis of power.

What will happen to the river in our town?
Will it often burst its banks? It comes winding down
through hills lain long uncloaked. And now we pause to give thanks
for whatever stayed and stood, in the land that smoked
when they sawed the wood and burned the bower

But there's no seeing forests for trees
without an analysis of power.

As we cross the overpass a train passes under,
filled with white wrapped Porsches. Sometimes I wonder
how everything will come to a head, until it makes me nauseous.
Every field round here is wheat – for biofuel, not bread.
Scattered in the street trucks grind it into flour

But it's no use having a gas
without an analysis of power.

What can be done to rectify the situation?
Things are really on the skids. Radical re organisation
is even, potentially, too late. And how will we tell the kids
about the fate of the polar bear? And what will be the fate
of the cheap airfare? And the long hot shower?

But the world can't change, en masse
without an analysis of power.

What will be the artefacts of our age?
Of systems gambled beyond means? The abandoned page.
Vouchers that couldn't be spent. Inexplicable machines.
The city that glowed by night. All the messages sent
from satellite and cell-phone tower

But everything's just a whiteout
without an analysis of power.

The time has come to talk of many things,
which must be carefully phrased. There will be openings
for makers of maps. Certain islands will be erased,
each one serving as a marker. Redraw the world, without ice caps.
And the world gets darker when we mark Earth Hour

But it's no use turning the lights out
without an analysis of power.