

Sunday morning, 13th December, I filled the bird table with a selection of peanuts and seeds and hung a fat ball on the side. Then, I stood inside the kitchen window and waited. Like an apparition, there he was, in all his glory. A Bullfinch. I thought, for a split second, I was going to levitate with excitement. I had not seen one in nearly two years. He had no interest in my offerings, just the bush of red berries he was perched on. Being in nature, the mountains, beachscapes or landscapes, observing her inhabitants, gifts me with something nothing else does, an expanding sense of mental and emotional freedom.

Watching Mary Robinson, ex-president of Ireland, being interviewed began with an excited interest. The subject matter, climate change. COP21. The 21st Conference of Parties. I was attentive, ready to learn. She explained her new found interest in climate change. Insightful. Then, she was asked about the mood in Paris, (where the COP21 meet had taken place), after the atrocious killing of a number of its citizens. War. No, it can't be called war. That's what they want, to be seen as warriors. They are not. They are criminals, she said with a pronounced passion. My mental filter activated immediately, as though, somehow, it was under attack. I entered into a stream of thoughts. ISIS was born in reaction to something. The UK, the western world stood with Paris, inciting action against Syria, the Middle East because Europeans had been killed. That action alone, screamed over a microphone - that the millions of refugees who have been fleeing the violence for the last four years were somehow irrelevant. At the core of each action, there is a cause, or a series of causal factors. Sanctimonious authority destroys dialogue, without dialogue, there is no understanding. Without understanding, there is little opportunity for resolution. I turned off the interview and read instead. But, my reaction lingered. I needed to identify it to proceed from it. Was it, perhaps, that there have been more women killed in domestic violence and femicide, than there have been men through acts of terrorism and two world wars COMBINED. Was it because, not once, have I heard a world leader stand up and declare that fact to be a human atrocity? Or was it because I believe that the destruction of

woman is correlated to the destruction of nature? Questions that cannot be answered with any absolute certainty, only speculated and philosophised. The incident, did however, give me clarity on one thing. Filtering. We receive knowledge from the world according to how we have filtered our experiences. So, I arose with the dawn chorus and went for a long walk, watched the swans, the baa-lambs, the birds and thought about the earth, climate change, and wondered if I was doing enough to leave a positive footprint.

The climate crisis is divisible between, the Earth's natural fluctuations/causes and human behaviour. ¹*Any factor that causes a sustained change to the amount of incoming energy or the amount of outgoing energy can lead to climate change.* Human behaviour, which is the main contributing factor to global warming, by its emission of carbon dioxide, is the principal focus of international policy.

²Carbon dioxide is a 'greenhouse' gas. Other such gases are, Methane, which is produced from decomposing waste and raising livestock. Once emitted into the atmosphere, remains there for a period of twelve years. Then, nitrous oxide, human derived sources are nitrogen fertilizer and industrial activity. It is found in aerosol propellants and the anaesthetic, laughing gas. Once emitted into the atmosphere, remains there for a period of one hundred and fourteen years. Then, Fluorinated gases (F-gases). Though small in quantity, they are extremely powerful, the most common being hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). They contribute to 4% of global greenhouse emissions. Once emitted into the atmosphere, remains for approximately two hundred and sixty years.

1 <http://climatechange.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=65CD73F4-1>

2 <http://greenpeace.org>

Perfluorocarbons (PFCs) are by-products of aluminium smelting and also used as substitutes for ozone-depleting chemicals. But, once emitted remain in the atmosphere for fifty thousand years. It is the one that should be phased out urgently. Finally, the most potent of all the greenhouse gases, Sulphur Hexafluoride. Used in Nike Air shoes, car tires, electrical insulation and semiconductor manufacturing.

We are pumping billions of tonnes of greenhouse gases into the earth's atmosphere, increasing the heat that is being trapped, resulting in global warming. The destruction of trees around the world, specifically the tropical rain forests, is having a worse effect on the earth's atmosphere than the emissions from cars and trucks worldwide. Why? Trees store carbon dioxide. Without trees, birds and animals that are dependent on them begin to disappear. With their disappearance the ecological balance is shattered. As the Antarctic melts away, the natural habitat of the seals, penguins and polar bears becomes less and less sustainable.

Yes, I know of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and its mechanisms and finally the Marrakesh Accords—but what has any of it got to do with me? It appears that it is being managed at a level beyond the average citizen, with an incredible absence of engagement or reporting. In the mundanities of daily life, where is the connection? Where is the personal power to contribute in affecting change for the better? But, more to point, where is the motivation to engage with impacting the reduction of carbon emissions? At corporate and governmental levels, there is carbon trading, also known as emissions trading. It is well defined by the Guardian; *Emissions trading is a market-based approach to controlling pollution. By creating tradable pollution permits it attempts to add the profit motive as an incentive for good performance, unlike traditional environmental regulation based solely on the threat of penalties.*

The profit motive. The absence of any connection to nature. Nature. Nature that woman is cyclically connected to. Nature, which offers medicinal and psychological remedies and cures to all its inhabitants. Women were herbalists, mid-wives, faith healers, spiritualists. Connected to being. The Catholic and Protestant churches, threatened by their perceived power, named them witches. Then proceeded to persecute and kill them. It was then legally and religiously declared, that only men were permitted to practise medicine. *The high point of witchcraft prosecutions in Germany coincided with the Jesuit priests keen to root out witches. Prominent witch trials were seen in Bavaria, Bamberg, Wurzburg, Saxony and Treves [Swain, 1995;16]. The suppression of women as healers and the rise to dominance of male professionals was not a natural process, it was an active takeover by male professionals. [Ehrenreich, 1972;4].* When plagues occurred or men became impotent or floods wiped out crops, women were blamed and sacrificed. To be under the impression that this practise belongs somewhere in the dark deep past is dangerously misguided. Witchcraft remains legally punishable by death in Saudi Arabia. In June of this year, ISIS beheaded two 'witches' for using 'magic' as medicine. In India, it is common to label a woman a witch. Reasons can be from attempting to grab land to punishing her for turning down sexual advances. In 2010, in India, it is estimated that 200 women were killed because it was determined they were 'witches'. A woman engaged with nature and that which is considered 'other worldly' can be deemed to be witchcraft. But in Holy texts, male prophets who receive messages in dreams and visions are to be revered. Simplistic, perhaps, but my belief that there is a correlation between the gradual destruction of earth and the oppression of woman no longer seems extreme.

All scientists, ecologists and naturists, unanimously agree, that not enough is being done to slow down global warming, to repair the enormous damage that has already been done. Mainly by structural patriarchies. (But the language used to address the crisis is 'human activity'). For the first time, in Paris, COP21, 186 countries agreed to make the lowering of

CO2 emission figures legally binding. ³The agreement will be open for signatures on 22nd

April 2016. 55 countries must sign it before it is ratified. It is an event to be celebrated, but not to become complacent about.

In the early 90s, a doctor, being interviewed on RTE radio was asked about the effectiveness of St. John's Wort (a natural remedy for mild anxiety and depression).

"Women's mumbo jumbo, all in their minds". A few years later, the results of a study showed what herbalists had been claiming, that it was effective. The same doctor commented after the study was published. *"It is important that people attend their doctor to get checked out and have St. John's Wort prescribed, because such medicines cannot be left to the layman to take any which way they decide".* It was banned from being sold over the counter on 1st January 2000.

By the 17th century male doctors drove an assault against women midwives and quickly transformed a neighbourly service provided by women midwives into a lucrative business. The forceps were legally classified as a surgical instrument and women were legally barred from surgical practice. The women midwives of England organised and charged the male doctors with dangerous misuse of the forceps but it was an impossible task to go against the authority or the medical profession, parliament and the church. Paracelsus considered the 'father of modern medicine' burned his text on pharmaceuticals confessing that he learned from the witch all he knew [Ehrenreich, 1973;17]

3 Framework Convention on Climate Change – Adoption of Paris Agreement –Draft Decision -/CP.21

In Ireland, the 'leave no trace' standard is being promoted to all involved in rock climbing, hiking, kayaking and trail running. A respect for the land, the environment is audible and visible. A respect that induces a self-pride and a bonding of 'community' through the need to attain a common goal. It is a gender leveller. That is a paradigm that needs to be grown into the wider society.

It is difficult when your filter is clogged with violence, persecution or poverty to find the energy to engage in the reduction of global warming and ecological deterioration. Yet, the simplest of joys, like seeing a Bullfinch or Redpoll, can emulate the effect of a spatula scraping your filter. Investing time in buying one packet of wild flower seeds and sprinkling them to increase the bee population, who are natural pollinators (their decline, because of pesticides, is hugely impacting agriculture) and in turn the bird population. Instead of using creams for superficial burns, use ginger. Instead of aerosol sprays for insect bites, dab on a little Lavender Oil. Spray your roses and vegetables in the garden with Geranium and Tea Tree Oil, natural insecticides. Or, follow in the footsteps of ⁴Dr Lisa O'Donoghue from the UL spin-out VOTECHNK who are pioneering the world's first fully automated machine to recycle LCD Flat screens and remove the potentially hazardous materials they contain. When we begin such conscious practices, we expand ourselves. In that expansion, there is a reaching out to women on Island States dealing with the rise of sea levels, because of global warming or the women in Uganda, now attempting to manage the extreme fluctuations in precipitation and volume, which is destroying regular crop growth.

4 – As seen on RTEs Science Squad

In coming back to nature, we return to ourselves. In returning to ourselves, we return to each other. When we return to each other, we become strong. When we become strong, we become a voice to be reckoned with. We become closer to the restoration of balance. To assisting in the repair of earth. Mother Earth.

There is no one single act of betterment that is in anyway insignificant.