

ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION – CREATIVE WORKS AND ARTWORK

No More Eggs

Kate Pullinger

Bath Spa University, GB

kate.pullinger@bathspa.ac.uk

In this short piece of creative non-fiction, Kate Pullinger writes about her empty nest and the broader changes wrought in the UK over the past decade.

I'm not quite old enough to be a Baby Boomer. My siblings are boomers, born in the post-war period, but I'm a 1960s baby, my parents' 'happy mistake', a 'wash belly baby' as a Jamaican friend once called me. I resist the Boomer identity because it is, after all, the Boomers Who Destroyed Prosperity. I'm too young for all that. My parents were old when I was born, or at least that was my version of the story; my father was born in 1917, so through him my life stretches back into the distant past. It's through my children that my life stretches forward into the future. My kids are 19 and 22 now, off at university, living their lives, and my partner and I have been left to get on with it as though this enormous thing, this tremendous disruptive force that is the business of having and raising a family, never happened, like an enormous beast from the depths of the sea burst through the surface, thrashed about for a couple of decades, then sank beneath the waves once again.

I don't really feel like my nest is empty. I know that my kids will return home once again, in the holidays, but also throughout their twenties as they figure out who they are, what they will do, and how to afford it. I know that it will be tricky and we'll jostle for space. I'll be amazed once again by how wet my son makes the entire bathroom when he has a shower and how many balled up tissues my daughter can leave in her wake as she wanders from room to room. And I also know that when they are in the house, when they are at home with us, my view of the future becomes more vivid, more immediate, more dazzling. It's hard to know what the world will be like once they are the age I am now, but I'm confident that the world is a better place because they are in it.

When MAMSIE launched all those years ago, not only were my children young, but my mother had died recently, and it felt both difficult and correct to be involved with a research network that was thinking about motherhood. A decade on, my parents now qualify for 'long dead' status and my partner's mother is dead too, with only his father hanging on. He had a fall in the spring and broke his hip and is now completely confused about everything. He rings every day from the house he has lived in for nearly forty years to ask us to go get him to take him home. We're not sure where he means, and neither is he.

The last three years in the UK have been kind of awful, what with this and that. During this period I have felt the pull of my native land, Canada, return, yanking on my hand like a small but insistent ghost, saying ‘Over here, over here, remember me?’ As my English family disperses, my siblings, already old (see above), get older and older still, and, as Pierre Trudeau’s son runs for election again, I think, okay, maybe it’s time to give *that* another go. I’ve remained a resolutely un-English Londoner all these years, Canadian passport at the ready, Canadian accent only slightly tarnished. It would be weird to leave the country my kids live in, but they might want to come long too one day. I know that there is something deep inside me that likes being foreign, and I know that if I returned to Canada I’d be foreign there now too. And maybe that’s what empty nests are about – why hang around when there are no more eggs?

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

How to cite this article: Pullinger, K. 2020. No More Eggs. *Studies in the Maternal*, 13(1): 24, pp. 1–3. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/sim.299>

Published: 08 December 2020

Copyright: © 2020 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



Studies in the Maternal is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Open Library of Humanities.

OPEN ACCESS The Open Access icon, which is a stylized 'O' with a person silhouette inside.