

Paula McCloskey

Writer's Statement

My maternal journey, like others', is complicated. I come from an immediate matrilineage that bears witness to disrupted maternities. Mothers leaving their children, children sent away in the wider context of poverty, loss, abuse and trauma. I was one of six children, the second child born to teenage Irish parents – a Catholic father and Protestant mother in the mid-1970s. My maternal journey started with my own mother, a relationship that, although primary, has been at best consistently fraught, at worst destructive or non-existent.

I became pregnant for the first time at twenty-five. This was a difficult time in my life; a time when, for a culmination of reasons, I was lonely and I felt isolated and confused. The birth of my son, like so many births, was an event I experienced as traumatic as well as joyful. I loved being a new mother but was struggling with other issues in my life. At this time I had what I have come to think of as a transformative 'art-encounter' with the art practice of Louise Bourgeois.

In the months that followed the birth of my son I left his father and much of my life changed; not least in becoming a mother. Part of the many life changes was the arrangement of 'shared-care' of my son being ratified by court. My son lives one week with his father, one week with me. This arrangement, which I have always always found difficult, continues to this day.

Over the ten years following the birth of my son (and my art-encounter with Louise Bourgeois' work), my life has changed beyond recognition for the better. I now have three children, the eldest is now eleven and I have another boy who is three and a daughter who is nearly two. So I am parenting a 'pre-teen' as well as being back in the throes of early parenting. My days as a mother are an ever changing constellation of intense, mundane, funny, insignificant/significant, creative, repetitive, wondrous, chaotic, dramatic, and boring infinitesimal and infinite happenings, events and encounters. My mothering is connected to all parts of my life. I now research and write about art-encounters, subjectivity, art and maternity. I draw, and I work on collaborative creative and critical activities and projects.

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Studies in the Maternal, 5(1), 2013, www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk

My maternal experience is dynamic. I had two miscarriages last year: one a 'missed- miscarriage' where I found out that my surprise pregnancy had become a surprise miscarriage. This was quickly followed by a very early miscarriage and another pregnancy. I am now 22 weeks pregnant.

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