

Thesis abstract

Parturescence: a post qualitative inquiry into women's opportunities for transcendence and transformation through births

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Childbirth, including the challenging and destabilising parts, is not just for the production of a baby, but is also a site for women's transcendence and transformation. Where this goes unacknowledged, women's possibilities are reduced. In order to open up women's possibilities through birth, in this midwifery thesis, I problematise dominant constructions of childbirth with the aim of theorising birth differently. By applying processes of post qualitative inquiry to collected data, as well as maternity and feminist literature, my practice of midwifery, and my own childbearing I move beyond the dominant constructions of birth, and think differently about the constitution and subjectivity of birth and maternity care subjects. I theorise birth as an opportunity of 'becoming other'; the rematerialisation of subjectivity, which I term 'parturescence.' I situate women's transcendence and transformation at one end of the spectrum of possible experiences of parturescence and explore how they are constituted by the

intra-action between the materiality of birth and midwifery 'with woman' care. Finally, I discuss how the development of the theory of parturescence can enable all of us, childbearing women and their support people, midwives and everyone involved in the provision of maternity care, to take actions which increase women's opportunities for transcendence and transformation through birth.

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