S2 EP2 - Motherhood As Muse: Jazmina Barrera’s Linea Nigra Pushes Against Patriarchal Narrative Forms

[00:00:00] **Jazmina:** Motherhood is an experience just as love or sickness or death that is infinite, and that touches all of us because all of us come from someone else's body, as Adrian Rich used to say. So it is a topic that should pertain all of us.

[00:00:23] **Kaitlin:** I'm your host, Caitlin Salini, and this is the Postpartum Production Podcast. Here we hold conversations about the intersection of caregiving, creative practice, and capitalist production, as well as what it means to reproducing art while also being a parent in modern society. Find out more@www.postpartumproduction.com where you can also sign up for our newsletter.

Today we're speaking with Yasmina Barra, who was born in Mexico City in 1988. [00:01:00] She's published work in the Paris Review, Elma Pante, words Without Borders, El Pais, the New York Times and Electric Literature. She has a master's degree in creative writing in Spanish from New York University, which she completed with the support of a Fulbright.

She's author, four books in Spanish,

SK and the Children's Book, Los and Punto de Cruz. Clearly I'm not a very great Spanish speaker, but I hope you could understand those and they'll also be in the show notes. Her book of essays or foreign body was awarded the Latin American Voices Prize by Literal Publishing in 20. Dedos was long listed for the Von Sori Award.

The English version of Cordo dross on lighthouses from two lines press in 2020 was chosen for the Indie. Next List by IndieBound, Len [00:02:00] Niro was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circles. Greg Barrios Book and Translation Prize, the Ken's Book of the Weir Award and the Amazon Prime Novella first novel.

She is editor and co-founder of Adi Antilope. She lives in Mexico City, which is where she was during this conversation.

I'm actually embarrassed to say that. I don't remember where I came across your work, but I came across it only recently, like in the last maybe month or so, and was so excited to read it and immediately, I, I, I read sadly, mostly on my phone these days because I'm still. Nursing my baby, and I'm juggling a million things and I love books, but I feel like I lose them like in my life right now.

Like if they, they're not trailing me, I'm like, where did I put that book down? . Yes. [00:03:00] So, yeah, I, I'm so excited. I read your book on my phone, although that felt really fitting because you talk a lot about working on your phone as well, and so I would love to hear a bit about. Your journey to writing this book, but because it felt like in reading it wasn't what you expected to write, like you were not expecting to write this book, and especially given the way in which it is so deeply interwoven with your personal experiences of pregnancy and birth, I'd really love to understand from both a logistical and even a philosophical, spiritual standpoint, why you had to write this book at this time.

[00:03:44] **Jazmina:** So I started writing a journal, a pregnancy journal, which is something very typical, even what to expect when you're expecting, suggest how you do that . Uh, so I was writing that mainly because I felt [00:04:00] so amazed at what I was experiencing. I felt so many changes so fast. and I really needed that space to reflect on what it meant to be pregnant at a philosophical, biological, personal level.

It was a personal project. I didn't mean to do anything with that until a little bit later. I was invited to write something about waiting for a Chile magazine. . And so I felt like I had something to say about waiting . Mm-hmm. , and when the journal started reading it, I selected a couple of passages and started working with them.

At the same time, I started to build this archive around pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding, which is basically transformations in the body. These processes that for me were [00:05:00] so. Terrifying and amazing and very interesting. And back in those days, it, it feels like not that long ago, but five years ago, it wasn't that easy to find references to these topics in Spanish.

Mm-hmm. . And so I started building this small archive and that's when I decided I wanted to share that. I wanted to share my experiences. Those findings I was, I was doing, and also then life itself started writing things for me because there was an earthquake and my mother got sick, and so everything started to mix and to.

to connect in very interesting ways. And so I feel that there wasn't that much control for me writing this book. It [00:06:00] was sort of like the book I needed to write and the book that my body and my life was writing for me, in a way it was a necessity because I was actually, I had a, a grant to write another book, a different book.

Mm-hmm. , but I didn't. The mind to write it. It was like everything in my body was concentrated on what I was experiencing and the way that that connected to the world, and so I couldn't really think about anything else. So even though I had to write that other book, I just wrote this in the spare times, I.

I mean, of course I get it. It was book that was written mostly in my mind because I was thinking about this all the time, and then when I had a couple of minutes, I wrote in my phone, in my, the notes of my phone and, and whenever I had like a half an hour I got to my computer and worked on those notes, but it was, it was something I felt like [00:07:00] I was writing all the time.

Hmm.

[00:07:03] **Kaitlin:** There's so much that you talk about in terms of these little ruptures and. Intermediary moments. And I am curious, and honestly, I don't even know if this is a question or if I'm just coming to this conclusion myself, but the book itself feels so present in many ways, and I think that sadly, I hate to give credit to the phone of all things, or it didn't have to be a phone.

It could have been a notebook. Right. But that immediacy of work that you were doing, because you had to do it in that moment, it couldn't be replica. Later. And I think that there's something that I can feel that feels very bodily in the book. And so, yeah. I'm curious, how did you wrestle with that, even through the editorial process?

I hate to say this too, but through publishing mm-hmm. , how did publishers and readers respond to that when it's not something that is really a part of the canon of literature that you speak of? And I'm also curious how that relates to [00:08:00] Spanish literature, but that's maybe a side topic, but let's start with the first question.

That

[00:08:05] **Jazmina:** was definitely an effect I wanted to create once I got to working on the journal fragments, the, the effect of immediacy. Mm-hmm. , I think, because what I was saying that this feeling of. Being in constant transformation was so important for me to recreate, um, the presentness of that transformation, which is something that, that you have to document because otherwise you forget it.

Mm-hmm. I mean, and it also happens when you have a small child that they change so fast and all the time that I think that's one of the reasons why you also keep these baby journals, because otherwise you forget, I mean, I remember when I look at my friend's babies, but it's very difficult for me right now to think what Sylvester was like when he was four months or two months, or there were [00:09:00] all of these small changes, but that were so important and so surprising.

So, . I needed that. I needed that. That feeling of immediacy. And I think that the journal does that for me. The genre of the journal. Mm-hmm. . But also I liked, I liked working with these genres that are liminal in a way that can be literature, but are not necessarily literature. And that I think women from many ages, Found a space to write in those genres.

Mm-hmm. , you can find writing from women in cooking recipe books in herbers, in journals, in letters, in all of these things that are writing, but are not necessarily considered literature. I love working. In those spaces. Hmm. And I think I forgot the second part of the question. . .

[00:09:58] **Kaitlin:** It's ok. It [00:10:00] was about the Spanish language and whether or not there's something separate there.

Did you feel like it was similar in terms of the relationship to literature? Mm-hmm. and what is considered Yeah. Legitimate literature in creating that type of work. Is it similar in Spanish as well? Would you? Yes. I

[00:10:19] **Jazmina:** think, as I said, when I started writing this book, uh, five years ago, it was easier for me to find references in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Mm-hmm. around motherhood than it was to find in Spanish. And even then, I think motherhood is still a topic that when you have like four or five books about motherhood, then suddenly it's a fashion and it's like , but a fashion. as something that will pass, you know? Mm-hmm. as something that is a topic that is easily exhausted.

Mm-hmm. . And I think that's, that's wrong because I think motherhood is an experience [00:11:00] just as love or sickness or death that is infinite. Hmm. And that touches all of us because all of us come from someone else's body, as Adrian Rich used to say. Mm-hmm. . So it's a topic that. All of us and still feels many times like, oh, this is a book for mothers, or this is a book for women.

So in Spanish, I think the effect this book had was for me very mm. I didn't expect so many people to connect with this book the way they did, especially in Mexico. I got so many women writing to me saying to me that they found things in the book that they wanted to express [00:12:00] and maybe hadn't found the words or that they, they felt they.

Understood something about themselves or about their mothers or about their sisters or friends while reading it. For me, that's being just precious.

[00:12:24] **Kaitlin:** So I guess that also brings up the question in terms of publishing, despite the work at first to you feeling personal and then becoming something that. Worthy of being a part of a literary tradition. Obviously it is published and it also has been translated and I was so fortunate to be able to read it.

I wish I could also read it well in its original language, but I was able to read it in English and so clearly there's, I think, well, I have a lot of feelings and hangups around the publishing industry in general, right, because who decides what is legitimate [00:13:00] art and work. All of that. And there's a lot of gatekeeping that historically has also been done by people who are, men are white, are English speaking, right?

And so all of those barriers to entry in a sense of defining what a book is, but, but this book is out there. So I'm curious to hear what that journey was like and if it was a fairly seamless one, what kind of support there was and why, and how you were able to navigate.

[00:13:29] **Jazmina:** So about the translation, I think I've been very lucky because my translator, Christina Max Sweeney is not only a wonderful translator, but just an amazing writer, I think, and she was my friend before this and my previous book were translated.

She's been my only pen pal in my whole life. I think . Uh, so we had, we've had this long [00:14:00] correspondence and conversations, and I feel like this, the translation just became a part of that conversation. Mm-hmm. , we were discussing language and the body and it was. Very interesting and wonderful to work with her.

She's, she's just great. And then the book was published by Two Lines Press, which is an amazing publishing house. just love them. I mean, they do such a wonderful job publishing translated works, which is not that common in the United States as citizen. Other countries. I mean, if you look at the tables in bookstores in Mexico, you get like a 50% of translated works and 50% Spanish books.

And in the United, United States it's, I, I don't know, but it's [00:15:00] like 70, 80%. Mm-hmm. English speaking books, 20% translated maybe. So they are doing an amazing job and they, they don't publish that many books. A year. So those, they publish, they really devote their attention and their, their effort and their work to make the books get to as many hands as they can.

And, Hmm. I mean, I just, they're amazing people. ,

[00:15:32] **Kaitlin:** so it was mostly through the translation that the publication happened. Did you have a publisher in Mexico as. Yes.

[00:15:40] **Jazmina:** I mean this book has been very lucky because it has been published in many countries. I don't remember the number exactly right now, but it's been published in Chile, in Colombia, in, in Mexico, in Spain, in Italy, in, I mean, other places.

[00:16:00] So my previous book was also published with two lines press, and that's how this one got.

[00:16:08] **Kaitlin:** Okay. That's helpful. I was just curious because it's a work that I think probably without those relationships and without the translator, I don't know what it would've been like for you to, we're at your first book, for example, what that would've, what that journey would've looked like.

And it really resonated with me when you were talking about motherhood as a subject that isn't a fad. Because I do feel like there is a little bit right now where there is a lot of mother related. Books, thankfully, that are coming out, but I do have that. I, I hadn't thought about why we wouldn't see that as sitting within the realm of.

Books that deal with grief, books that deal with loss, or I guess this would be similar, but books that deal with sports. Why would sports aren't a fad? It's not like, [00:17:00] oh, we have a book that talks about athletics and therefore it's a fad. It's things that are, it's like, no, we just always, why would motherhood sit somehow separate from that?

I really like that resting of power that you're giving to motherhood and making that assertion, and I really appreciate that. And I know I've gotten a little bit off track there with the publication question. I'm sorry, I have like , don't worry. Meteor personal questions that I hope that you will of course be okay to share.

I'd love to. Well, let's start with this. So you talk a lot about. Your inheritance in the book in terms of your mother's art practice, your grandmother's birth work, and there was this line that I really loved, you said, I have the sensation that I gave birth to this child for them, my mother, my aunts, my grandmother, like an offering.

I had him for them and because of them, thanks to the unconditional love, security and sense of community they offer, I was brave enough to have a. So I wanted to understand a little bit more about the world in which you were living prior to having a child and how [00:18:00] that transition also has supported your life as an artist.

So I wanted to understand that junction, both from a practical standpoint of the day-to-day, but also from a real philosophical standpoint as well. Yes.

[00:18:14] **Jazmina:** So when my son was born, we lived in. An apartment that was right next to my mother's house. Now we live in another house that is right next to my mother's house, , we used to live in, in, in that apartment, and my aunt lives right next door also.

So I just cannot say how lucky I felt when Sylvester was born, that they were there. For him and for me. Mm-hmm. They were present all the time. They took care of him. They took him for walks while I rodee. They stayed with him as me [00:19:00] af after he was able to spend more time with them. They, they just help with him so much and they did it out of love, out of pleasure.

Really. That is something I. I think you cannot put a price on, and it is because of them and because of Alejandro who just shares completely. The idea of raising a child that I've been able to, to write, to keep on writing all of these years, when the pandemics got, uh, here, it was absolutely crucial that we could divide our time with him so that all of us.

could have time for ourselves. I truly believe that having a child is easier if you have a support net and a community that helps you raise mm-hmm. the child. Otherwise it's really [00:20:00] difficult.

[00:20:00] **Kaitlin:** Mm-hmm. . Yeah. It's interesting to hear you talk about living in, in proximity, cuz I think that a lot of people.

Don't. And so you have to create these other alternative care systems and they're costly and they're exhausting. And I could feel in your work, just this sense of other, other voices and other hands that were holding even the book itself, right? All of that helped to hold. You to hold space and I wish it wasn't a lucky thing.

I guess it shouldn't

[00:20:34] **Jazmina:** be. It shouldn't be. I mean, I think there are some examples in the world of places where there's a national care system that really becomes that net for the, the woman that don't have it in a, I don't know, like easier way. Mm-hmm. and there's, in Mexico, there's a lot of women fighting for.

right now, and I'm sure [00:21:00] in the United States as well. I mean, I, I've read a lot about the childcare system struggle to have one because otherwise it's just, as you say it, it becomes a privilege and it shouldn't be. Mm-hmm. , it shouldn't be. It should be a Right.

[00:21:17] **Kaitlin:** Right. And I think also, especially when you're working.

Creative work. It's not something that is very compensated. It's not something that's very supported on its own to begin with in capitalist societies. So you're like bound by a lot of different constraints and so to be able to have that support in your motherhood, I think clearly serves your artwork.

And I could feel that in the book, which I like wanted to thank your lineage because I feel like they gave. The world that work too. Do you know what I mean? And I could feel that honoring in your book too. And then your, the work that you were doing, which I really appreciated to that you so much point.

I'm curious [00:22:00] then in terms of the, the title and this preoccupation with Linea Nira, I don't know how to say it in Spanish, but Yes. I was curious about if whether or not you feel like that relates to that theme, but, or how you would unpack and, and. Why you landed on that title and why the book circles around that subject matter as well?

[00:22:22] **Jazmina:** Yes, I chose that title because first of all, it spoke about the language of the body. For those who don't know it, it's a black line that appears in the belly of people sometimes. I mean, I, I think not always, but most of the times, I guess. Mm-hmm. and then disappears when you stop breastfeeding, in my case.

Mm-hmm. . And it is a line that some people say, I'm not sure if they are correct about this, but some people say that it's for the baby. [00:23:00] to find a way to the milk in the breasts. There have been some experiments where you put a baby on the belly, just leave it there, and then the baby crawls. Mm-hmm. up to the breasts because they can see in high contrast mm-hmm.

and the, the nipples also become darker. Mm-hmm. . So in a way, When you get pregnant, the body becomes a text. A text for someone else, and a text that is changing all the time then that you have to decipher. So I love that idea. And I also like the idea of the, the black line to talk about writing, uh, and to talk about art because in this book I talk about, My mother, who is a painter, and I talk about visual arts, so I like the way in which that line joined these three [00:24:00] languages.

Yes,

[00:24:07] **Kaitlin:** you reference a few specific Spanish. Words that, to be honest, I didn't even really understand the lineage. So for example, you mentioned parto in terms of Yes, the childbirth experience in Spanish being used as from the verb parter to depart, and that got me thinking, wow, okay. You know, we speak in English about postpartum and this idea of like almost motherhood, like a departure, but or a journey, right?

Like a feeling, the texture of that word. and also you, you mentioned Abra of the after birth and you mentioned a bit about traditions around giving light and the, the way of the, the placenta having so much meaning, which as you know, in the US we basically treat it as medical waste. So like attaching the words to the objects to give significance.

I really enjoyed. Was that [00:25:00] something that you kind of, I don't know, I'm curious about like was that something that you. Came to as you were writing or was that something you were always preoccupied with? Why those specific words?

[00:25:10] **Jazmina:** Yes. So I love the history of words, the, the story of words, etymology. Mm-hmm.

is that the word English? Yeah. I even wrote a book for children that is called the names of the animals, about the names of some animals in Spanish and their origins. So, . It was a revelation while I was writing this book that suddenly these words that I've used my whole life made a completely different sense.

I mean, part of not only means, as you say, a departure, so, so a separation, but also a cut, a split. So childbirth in that sense suddenly became to me, [00:26:00] A time for splitting in two. Mm-hmm. , which was something that I hadn't thought about, but I mean, all of the philosophical conundrums, that I, I came across while I was thinking about pregnancy, it was just amazing to think that you could be two people at the same time and what that meant and how that changed also, because at the beginning, , I felt it.

It wasn't that it was, it was me. So for example, I could definitely say that I was pro-choice because I felt that a couple of cells in that very early stages of pregnancy were, were mine. They, they were, they weren't someone else. Whereas a couple of months afterwards, I did feel that there was, at first something and then someone.

Mm. And then that, that idea that, that someone was and wasn't me mm, was just mind blowing [00:27:00] and how that, that doesn't end when you give birth because that person that lives your body is still in a way you, it, it doesn't stop being you entirely, and at the beginning when you breastfeed it. does feel like a part of you is outside yourself, and that is very eerie.

and, and, mm-hmm. , wonderful. .

[00:27:26] **Kaitlin:** Mm-hmm. . Yeah. I mean, you even talk about the fetal cells, right. That we carry with us in ourselves. And I know there's been a lot that's now I think spoken about, about the eggs that you carry from your grandmother and, and sort of all these embedded bodies that we have within ourselves when we are living within a female.

and when I hear you speak about this and reading the work, I mean, it was really emotional to me just to be able to sit in the experience of these things that are so transformational and to really [00:28:00] give them power, which I think has. , you know, as I think we've were saying earlier, it's sort of been like pulled away from, from mothers and it really situated so much power in, in your personal experience, but which is a very universal experience.

And to that end, I was curious also, I really enjoyed all of the textual examples that you drew from, were those works that you were reading prior to becoming pregnant or was this like you just got obsessed with reading about motherhood in different ways? Yeah,

[00:28:31] **Jazmina:** so. I became obsessed . I mean, as I said, like at that stage I was like, I want to write, I want to read something.

Some literary works about motherhood and I had to look for them. They weren't as evident and as present as I think they are starting to become or are already easier to find in that time. For me, it wasn't that easy and I went looking around asking, uh, [00:29:00] friends and I did come back to some books that I previously read.

With different eyes. I just, I, I didn't have the eyes for, for those passages. And then suddenly motherhood was everywhere. You , it was in, in Frankenstein and Inna in and in many places I just had look before. Uh, but I also found many new books and amazing new writers that I haven't read and. Yes. It, it became this collection, this very exciting collection also with, with painting and with visual arts in general.

It, it was very important to me to look for the ways in which women had represented these experiences because sometimes, The, the most [00:30:00] obvious images or references we have about motherhood came from men starting from the Virgin Mary , which is like, or in Mexico, which is a Catholic country. It's like the, the, mm-hmm.

epitome of motherhood. But for me it was very important to look at the way in which women understood themselves and that wasn't as easy to. .

[00:30:25] **Kaitlin:** Hmm. Yeah, no, I mean, you really pulled some of my favorites, but also I had the same experience where I didn't come to these books and I thought, why wasn't I taught?

Like why was this not on a syllabus in college or in high school even? I mean, why was this not reading that I was exposed to at that age? And I think because perhaps, , there's this sense in the patriarchy of, well, this doesn't apply to everyone. Motherhood is a subject matter, or even if it's just a large part of a work.

Right. I like the the way in which also your book is able [00:31:00] to, and the work that you're doing is able to legitimize the examination of motherhood. Right. That's just. Something that has academic value in and of itself, and not this sentimental feeling of whether it's the Virgin Mary or Mother's Day of this sort of idealized mother, but rather something that can be personal, unique to itself and also universal at the same time.

To that end, I had a question that I wanna make sure we get to, which is about time. You talk a lot about time in the book and there's. Part you say, I write here, there's no time. And I think those words are true in two senses. When you have a baby, there's very little time. And when you have a baby time as a nud, and then you also quote Sheila Hedi later as saying the eternity of motherhood being a frightening concept and the fear of motherhood.

I don't know if those are totally intertwined, but I was thinking a lot. [00:32:00] What time means in the way in which we live now, and how motherhood just completely disrupts that. And so there's a power in that that I think we're not as a species, as a, as mothers right now. Like I'm trying to figure out myself like how to, how to pull the power and the story from that.

And I think that you're starting to do that in this book, but I'm curious like how do you conceptualize time now?

[00:32:28] **Jazmina:** I mean, of course. time has completely changed for me, first of all, because, well, you know, it's so demanding to have a child. It demands a lot of your, not only your time, but your attention.

Mm-hmm. taking care, especially of a small child, is something that is very difficult to, to do while doing something else. . I mean, you have to be there. You have to be present. I mean, that can be, of course, Tiring because it, it's [00:33:00] exhausting, but it's also, I, I, I mean, I think it's also wonderful in the sense that it brings you to the present.

It, it makes you forget about speculating and going around stupid things in your brain. You have to be there doing what they're doing. And for me, that has been learning, just, just being. , and that is something, as you said, that capitalism struggles with. I mean, it's, mm-hmm. , this idea also that your time doesn't completely belong to you.

That if your child is sick, you will not go to work. It doesn't matter how , how much you need to or want to, or the system demands that you do. , why motherhood is still so incompatible with the capitalist work system that we have mm-hmm. in [00:34:00] these countries and why we need so much effort from public policies to, to be able to, what is the word?

Compassionate. Like make compatible motherhood. Mm-hmm. with. Work. There is so much work to be done in those fields still. As I was saying, I've been very lucky because I have this support net that allows me to, to work in what I like. And I also have a very flexible work, which is a writing something you can do on your phone, you can do on your own time.

But there are many, many women that don't have that privilege, that have different kinds of jobs. That struggle a lot to find the time. So yes, I think this is a political, a philosophical and and a practical question,

[00:34:58] **Kaitlin:** what I enjoyed most about [00:35:00] Linne a nigra is the way in which it resisted traditional forms and genres of writing in order to say, this is one form of literature that fits the motherhood experience. And it really embodied that experience quite literal. As I discussed with Yasmina here,

I think that what your book is doing, I think at the core, what just moves me the most is that it's saying, I'm not going to live. I'm not going to . They say live. It's funny to talk about a book and saying, the book is saying, I'm not gonna live . I'm not gonna, I guess I'm not gonna live and exist in a format that is the way that.

The world is seen by these people or in this experience, right? Like, I'm going to live in a way that fits this universe of experience, and I really appreciated that. So that it's not trying to be told in a way that. [00:36:00] The canon or the history or the, the powers that be would tell this story, but it's saying, I'm gonna tell it in this way.

[00:36:07] **Jazmina:** Yes. And, and I actually, I, I mean, it's a fragmentary book and that has to do with what we've been talking about, about interruptions and about the rhythms of motherhood. But it, it was also to me, a way of paying homage. a lot of books about motherhood that have been written in that format. Mm-hmm. , which is starting to become a genre in itself.

I would say that little laborers, Ika culture. Mm-hmm. . Mm-hmm that the pillow book that, I mean, there are many motherhood books that have been written in that format, and for me it was a way. honoring that tradition, which we've created out of our own [00:37:00] experience, as you say.

[00:37:01] **Kaitlin:** Mm-hmm. , there are moments I think that to me at least, felt very raw and unedited and personal in terms of like that journalistic quality, which I think grounded the book in a, in a sort of inverse way.

Right. Of like, even though they were very personal and potentially they sat. I'm kind of like doing this, like , you should see my hands. I'm very visual. So it's like I'm thinking in this like rounded way of like , right? They're sitting here against the, the traditions and the voices of all the other textual works that you're holding, right?

And how they are in balance with each other. And I really appreciated that balance because I think had the book been only those fragments, like I think it may have. In some ways it would've felt more extracted or in some, even though I don't know if that's the right way, but it would've felt I needed that balance, and I really appreciated that in the book.

But I would love to [00:38:00] hear too, I know you mentioned that your son is in school, you have to pick

[00:38:03] **Jazmina:** him up. Yes. He's in school. Yes. . And

[00:38:06] **Kaitlin:** where you're at now in terms of how are you. thinking about this work, about motherhood, about the type of work that you are doing now creatively? Yes.

[00:38:17] **Jazmina:** So I, I feel like motherhood is that kind of experience or something like feminism.

Mm-hmm. , I would say that once you get to it, it's sort of impossible to, to get rid of it. So in a way, everything I write. Right now, even if I'm not writing directly about motherhood, is filtered by my experience as a mother. So I am finishing a book right now about a Mexican writer called and she wrote a lot about motherhood.

She was a, a [00:39:00] mother who lived with her daughter. Her entire life until she died. And a lot of her books have to do with the duplicities and the secular experiences of motherhood. Hmm. So, writing about her, it's also writing about motherhood. You know, there's barely a topic right now that I can write about without thinking how it affects

[00:39:28] **Kaitlin:** motherhood.

Mm. Oh, thank you. I can't wait to read that. So is it non-fiction or is it essay? What form is it

[00:39:35] **Jazmina:** taking? It's, um, sort of a biography, but it's a strange biography. Like, like everything I do is like , the form I I filed for it. It's, it's also fragmentary and it's being, reading as a notebook, a book of notes, I would say something like that, yes.

About her life and

[00:39:56] **Kaitlin:** her. I can't wait to read that. That [00:40:00] sounds really exciting, and thank you. I also love the idea of telling more of these stories. There's actually, I'm gonna be, I think next week, I don't know if you've seen this book by Julie Phillips. Maybe I should hold it this way. . All right. I dunno if it's upside out.

The baby on the Fire. It's called The Baby on the Fire Escape. Yeah, I highly recommend it. Yes. The subtitle is, let's see, baby on the Fire. Creativity, motherhood and the mind baby problem. Oh, I love

[00:40:25] **Jazmina:** that. That

[00:40:26] **Kaitlin:** sounds amazing. Yeah, . So it reminded me it's similar, not the same format, although there is some fragmentary, there's some really lovely moments where the biographer herself starts to insert her own.

Experiences into the biography and the biographical work that she's doing, and I really appreciated that. Oh. But yeah, definitely recommend looking at it reminded me of the work that you're doing. Gosh, I, I mean, I, I wanna be mindful of the time cause I could ask you like so many more questions. , yes. Uh, well, maybe I will leave with this quote.

I just wanna, I wanna like read quotes from your [00:41:00] book too. , I just constantly one other, anyone who's listening to hear it, but there was this moment where you talk about your grandmother passing away in the same bed and home in which she was born. And you said she came into the world and died on the same soil and Oh my gosh, it's gonna make me cry.

Just reading it and like the fig tree succumbeded to old age. And you talk a lot about. Birth and death and, and this interweaving of, of these transitions, I think. But that to me, I think just felt so meaningful because of the way in which you, through that language and that story are actually linking materiality with lived experience and in a way that I just don't think we do in the world, much in this world anymore.

And this system of experiences. , I guess we as writers in a capitalist world are doing. And so I just wanna honor that and thank you for that. But I didn't know if you had anything else that you wanted to say imparting along those lines, or just [00:42:00] in terms of the bodily experience of birthing this book.

[00:42:04] **Jazmina:** Well, yes. I think this book was written. Through the body or in the body, I dunno. But it was very, very important for me to speak about, as you said, like the materiality of the experience. Not just the concepts and the ideas, but how it felt. And there's a part where I speak about painting, where I say that my mother is always saying to me that you cannot photograph a painting because a painting is matter.

Um, Matter who was something like that. I mean, you can, I could try to write this book, but there is also always something that escapes you because it's just outside of language. Yes. Mm-hmm. . But thank you so much Katelin. It was a pleasure talking to you and I can't wait to, to listen to the other episodes of the

[00:42:58] **Kaitlin:** podcast,

[00:43:00] Yeah, definitely. I really appreciate you taking the time to sit with me, cuz I know time is very valuable right now. Thank you.

[00:43:06] **Jazmina:** Thank you for doing this. It was a pleasure really.

[00:43:13] **Kaitlin:** I am your host, Caitlin Salini, and this is the Postpartum Production Podcast. If you like what you've heard today, please subscribe wherever you get your podcast and give us a rating which will help us reach more listeners like you. For regular updates, visit our website, www dot postpartum production dot.

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