

S2E12 The Body as Genre: Amanda Montei's Touched Out Touches on Motherhood, Misogyny, Consent, Control, and More

[00:00:00] **Amanda:** The way that we think about art and the way that we think about care work or housework or maintenance labor, they're interconnected in the sense that these are spheres of society that are often deemed unproductive. And obviously, first and foremost, we need to resist that, because it's the most important work that we do.

And I do think of writing as a kind of care work in that sense, right? It's like a tending. It's tending to our narratives, our cultural understandings of things. You know, I think it's very easy, especially in the motherhood parenting sphere, to get wrapped up in this, like, here are our demands, right? Here are the policies that we need, and absolutely, like, we need all of that.

Completely. But there's a reason that that's not happening, right? And I think that's because we need a bigger shift, right, of understanding. We need new language [00:01:00] for articulating the way in which women's bodies are exploited and used from a young age through and beyond parenthood. I'm your

[00:01:15] **Kaitlin:** host, Kaitlin Solimine, 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 be producing art while also being a parent in modern society. Find out more at [www.](http://www.postpartumproduction.com)

www.postpartumproduction.com, where you can also sign up for our newsletter.

I'm so grateful to share with you today a conversation with Amanda Montei. Whose book *Touched Out, Motherhood, Misogyny, Consent, and Control* [00:02:00] lands on bookshelf September 12th, 2023. Amanda and I have had the pleasure of being connected through her writing workshops and also through the Artist Residency in Motherhood community where we've staged our own collective residencies alongside other mother, writer, artists here in the Bay Area.

And speaking of, any listeners who are interested in joining us, please reach out and let us know. Amanda's impressive resume also includes the work *Two* memoirs, published by Jaded Ibis Press, and a collection of prose, *The Failure Age*, published by Bluth Books, as well as co-author of *Dinner Poems*, published by Bonaire Projects.

She has an MFA from California Institute of the Arts and a PhD from the Poetics Program at SUNY Buffalo. Her writing and criticism explores literary and cultural representations of gender, work, care, sexuality, feminism, creativity, and the body. Amanda's work has been featured at or in *The Cut*, *Romper*, *Mother Tongue*, *Slate*, *Electric Literature*, *Vox*, and many more.
[00:03:00]

She's been teaching writing and literature for over a decade at the college level and in various community programs. She's currently a lecturer at California State University East Bay. If you're eager to connect with her, she also teaches creative writing at organizations such as Catapult, Corporeal Writing, Hugo House, Writing Workshops, and Write or Die.

She lives in California where she grew up with her partner and two children.

I feel like I've been looking forward to this conversation for a while now. And I'm also feeling a little bit out of it as I'm sure you are just in this particular moment, because start of the school year, end of summer, just all of that transitional feeling. So I wanted to check in with you. At the start of this conversation Amanda and find out how you were [00:04:00] doing today.

Where are you landing?

[00:04:02] **Amanda:** Yeah, start of the school year. It's always a big Transition as I told you kids have been sick. We've had some sick kids home this week and I'm a little bit sick, but that is probably just going to be a running theme. I think this fall this school year part of me felt like I should Practice what I preach and take a day and not do this conversation when I'm not feeling well.

But I really wanted to talk with you. So I'm here and also not here. I feel you. As I think parents often are, right? Yeah, in

[00:04:46] **Kaitlin:** fact, you reminded me of your book. I don't want to, I'm like, do I dive in yet about the book? I was looking at, over your book, which I was so excited to finally receive and to read because I know we've been talking

about it for a while and I was [00:05:00] even lucky enough to see your covers and see your choices and there's so much here that I want to talk about.

To start, I'm curious to understand your trajectory as a writer. And I think you do talk about that quite a bit in this book, but also where it intersects with your postpartum experience. And like you just said, prior to our going live here with this recording that you were talking about, the type of writing that you have done prior to this book.

And returning more to an aesthetic that focuses more on language, for example, you think we're saying I'm curious about how the postpartum experience impacted the creative work that you do, and how obviously this book came out of that experience as well.

[00:05:46] **Amanda:** I think it was a confluence of factors that have shaped the writing that I'm doing in this book.

This book is just as much a work of theory as it is a memoir. And so in that way, I [00:06:00] think it draws on a lot of the work that I was doing for my PhD. So, just for some context, I finished my Ph. D. in 2019, I had my first kid in 2015. So I was writing a dissertation with a one year old, a two year old, and then I had my second in 2017.

So, which I, I talk about a little bit in the book, but the dissertation form I was really frustrated with. It was as much academic writing as... Really disembodied sort of necessarily right that genre and I even had like a footnote in the project that I had put in the book, but I eventually took it out it was like this ambling footnote talking about having a double electric breast pump strapped to my chest and how just the fact that I have to leave that out right of this genre of the dissertation did a disservice to the work that I was studying which was Feminist artists, feminist [00:07:00] writers who were writing about care work and in so doing were like reinventing genre and reinventing form.

And here I was writing this very masculine form of the dissertation. So finally I finished it, right? I don't really quite know how it happened because I had two little kids and I was working in a daycare, right? But I did it, and then I really wanted to write the book that I wanted to write. I wanted to explore the question of form, feminist art, feminist thought, and motherhood, and caregiving.

But I didn't want to do it in this really academic form. So this book really started as a memoir, and then the pandemic happened, and I feel like the urgency of, like, argument was kicked up for me. And so I think that that's why in the end

the book kind of straddles those two approaches. And I know you were saying, Kaitlin, in some of our other chats, there's that urgency, there's that need or pressure or desire, I think, right [00:08:00] now to make work that has meaning or is starting some kind of conversation or is doing something because The world is so hard right now, and I think, for better or for worse, that informed a lot of what I was doing in the book.

And I'm, I'm looking forward, in my next project to, yeah, returning more to... the writing as art, which I think remains in this book. But I think it's interesting to think about how the political context that we're writing in shapes the way that we approach genre.

[00:08:37] **Kaitlin:** On page 114, now I'm being really academic.

You said, I wanted to locate some natural element of motherhood, hoping it might help me separate my work from the patriarchal, sacrificial bullshit. Maybe then I could see my way out of institution and into something like my own experience. Thank you. But we cannot separate our bodies from the cultures in which they grow and love or from history [00:09:00] and increasingly my body was rising up all by itself.

Not just in the way it craved Hannah, but in the way it rejected her Stop there but I think there's so much that you're doing in this work that sits in the body and outside of it and I really appreciated that and obviously that's such a theme of the book, but I'm curious, as you mentioned, you started this conversation talking about feeling disembodied in the academic work.

I want to dig in there a little bit more and talk about how you were able to sit in your body to complete this work. And what that meant to you for this or like how that was a struggle, like you said, for better or for worse. So I'm curious. Clearly you're holding both in this book.

[00:09:43] **Amanda:** Yeah. Yeah. How I was able to get into my body for this work, I think was running away and trapping myself in a room and really returning to my body.

But it's such an interesting question. There's so many things I want to say. Yes. My experience of academia was very much [00:10:00] that it is a disembodied institution, that there is a requirement that one disappear their body, but also housework, care work, especially for women, right? There's this assumption that if you have children, it's going to take you off the tenure track, right?

Which is the dream. I felt that. But I think even prior to having a child in the middle of completing my PhD. I felt really resistant to the way that everyone around me was deadening themselves, which is not to say that I didn't participate in it. Right. Like I was a heavy drinker at the time, but like everyone I knew suffered from mysterious ailments and pushed through and it was always about the head, right?

It was always about the floating head and the thought and how we can make our brains work better, more efficiently, and all of [00:11:00] that is rooted in these very masculine, very capitalist values of competition and optimization and domination and individualism. I don't think I saw any of that quite that clearly then, but I think it's so interesting that you pulled out that part of the book because I think what you tap into is that a lot of the book is about that, like, okay, well, where do I find the line between intellect or between theorizing this experience?

I remember I had a doula who said, you can't theorize childbirth, right? I was like, really? Well, I'm going to try. Because that's how I had made sense of the world, right? Is to settle on some theory, which is a total impossibility. And then I'll also just say that I think I wanted to become a parent. I think I wanted to get pregnant because I wanted to understand this aspect of my body.

And of course, going through that [00:12:00] process was a lot more complicated than I had ever imagined. Hmm. Because we can't separate out the body from the cultural and the political and the theoretical and all these stories that we take into an experience like pregnancy or motherhood. Hmm.

[00:12:18] **Kaitlin:** I appreciated that so much about the work and that it definitely resonated with me and my own experiences, as I'm sure it will with many who are drawn to these.

topics into these, well, topic makes it sound quaint, clearly for these incredibly important revolutionary— really, again, it's like this idea, right? If you tell you an idea, an idea feels like it can't have the power that the body can have in a revolution or in an act of resistance or in a moment of destabilization of what is the existing norm.

But I think that you do so much work in this book of, examining both that critical lens and [00:13:00] also because of the use of the memoir in it, it also draws that body experience too, which I think in some ways for me even sat even more strongly with me or made me feel more connected to the work. And there's a moment in the book where fairly doulas.

Note that you can't theorize. Although I'd argue that western medicine tries to do that a lot. Absolutely, but you said oh here it is You say I had given my body over all my life and though I feared pain complications surgery and depression What I really feared was losing control of my narrative. I didn't know it then but this snag Between the necessity of yielding to love and the urgency of maintaining my own autonomy was the real beginning of my story of motherhood The conversations that we have here and that I'm really drawn to are about that rub between [00:14:00] who we are as mothers and who we are as individuals and where they intersect and where they don't and like just the wholeness of our identities.

And I think that what I'm curious about in your work and moving forward like as you mentioned and you feeling drawn to work that looks at language, for example. I'm curious how you plan to be able to do that work and have it feel like it has the impact that this work will in a different way. Like sometimes I think we're primed, as you said, to feel like academic work or more theoretical work has a wider application or impact because I know that you also have a long history as a poet.

So I'd love to dig in there and see like, where does your poet self sit in this work and moving

[00:14:50] **Amanda:** forward. Yeah, well, my background is really in narrative. My first book was like, just pure memoir. But I did do [00:15:00] my PhD at SUNY Buffalo, where Robert Creeley was, at Susan House, so it's a really, really big poetic history.

And I think I stopped writing narrative when I was there, and I stopped leaning into memoir for some of the reasons that we've kind of already discussed. Poetry was kind of understood as more intellectual, but also as having this possibility to kind of get beyond, like, the failures of language, in a way.

That I think some would argue that narrative can't. I don't know that I would necessarily endorse that. So yeah, I wouldn't identify, I don't identify as a poet anymore. I don't, I'm not writing poetry. And all the poetry that I did write was always really firmly grounded in narrative. So I think I'm, I'm interested in future projects in...

Digging into that further. This particular book, like I said, [00:16:00] I don't think it's an adaptation at all of my dissertation, but I think it evolved out of the research that I was doing, both academically and as a new parent, right? But something that I was exploring in my earlier research was this question of the

representation of home and our bodies, kind of women's bodies in particular, connection to the home.

And so that's something that I'm much more interested in digging into a little bit further now. I think this book would have become that, like what I'm envisioning this next project being, had there not been this real political urgency when I was working on it. It took it in a different direction, but I think, yeah, I'm, I'm interested in digging into the aesthetic history there in this timeless connection between women's bodies in the home.

As well as [00:17:00] working on like other fictional projects. But yeah, I would say that as a writer I've always been really fascinated by narrative and what it can do. Like writing in and of itself, I think is productive, is an action. Making art can be a social justice practice. Mm-hmm. , it can be an action, but I'm also really interested in how narrative can just disrupt these other narratives that we're always carrying around.

Hmm.

[00:17:28] **Kaitlin:** Are there any examples you can think of as works that you look to that do that? Well, I

[00:17:35] **Amanda:** think, yeah, I always struggle with questions like this because I'm like, where do I begin? Right. What genre do I begin in? Right. I think that a lot of my work has been inspired by some of the sort of feminist performance artists, you know, in the 60s, 70s, who were documenting creative labor.

And you took a class with me. We looked at Mary Kelly and Meryl U Kelly's. [00:18:00] And so I'm always thinking about that, like documentary art and the connection that that has to memoir is always a fascination of mine. But also what I'm really interested in with those artists is how did they take the work that they do in the home and create a form or a sense of temporality that was reflective of the work that they do.

Every day and like in Mary Kelly's case where literally the art object is just, they're just documentations of her taking care of her child. How can we make a work that acknowledges that that is the work, that that is the art, that that is the creative intellectual labor already?[00:19:00]

[00:19:03] **Kaitlin:** There's a moment that I also really enjoyed where you say that, well, you're quoting Koa Beck in White Feminism about parenting choice,

and you're referencing that the parenting choice essay makes it seem as though parenting is simply a singular personal decision rather than a form of labor. If motherhood is a choice, Beck writes, then you don't necessarily frame it as work.

In a way, actually, as I'm reading that, it just dawned on me that when we see in some ways art as a choice, right, if art is just something that's superfluous to the structure of society, then it is not also deemed valuable work. So I don't know if you, if there's anything more you want to say on that, but I'm curious if you've dug in on that intersection in the work that you're doing on a daily basis.

[00:19:51] **Amanda:** Yeah, well, first I'll say that absolutely the way that we think about art and the way that we think about care work or housework or maintenance labor, they're [00:20:00] interconnected in the sense that these are spheres of society that are often deemed unproductive, which I think is what you're getting at. And obviously, first and foremost, we need to resist that because.

It's the most important work that we do. And I do think of writing as a kind of care work in that sense, right? It's like a tending. It's tending to our narratives, our cultural understandings of things. I think it's very easy, especially in the motherhood parenting sphere, to get wrapped up in this like, here are our demands, right?

Here are the policies that we need. And absolutely, like, we fucking need all of that. Like, Completely, but there's a reason that that's not happening, right? And I think that's because we need a bigger shift, right, of understanding. We need new language for articulating the [00:21:00] way in which women's bodies are exploited and used from a young age through and beyond parenthood, right?

And so I think that is where. The aesthetic can help us more than this is like a little bit of a tangent But this is my soapbox lately like memoir is not it's not a policy brief. It's not a self help text, right? It's an experience. It's a reading experience. It's an aesthetic object and That has a purpose too.

Hmm into the question of how do you practice that daily? As a caregiver, that's so much harder to answer. I can't like, I can't offer my theory, right? I come back to this idea that parenting is a conversation. It's a dialectic. It is this ongoing practice. And I write about that a little bit in the book in terms of, like Bell Hook's wonderful work on love.

It is an [00:22:00] art. And so yes, we can read the “say this, not that” advice texts, and we can try to really theorize our way through parenting. But when it comes down to it, it's the day to day, like you're saying, conversations, this ongoing work of talking through some of the hardest, most complicated questions that we'll ever have to answer when our kids are asking us “why is there injustice? Why is there unfairness? Why are people afraid of police?” Like these just really big conversations that we have over 18, hopefully more than years. It's an art. It's intellectual labor. We're constantly theorizing with our kids about the world, but it's also creative because we're also imagining something else, hopefully with them.

[00:22:56] **Kaitlin:** Yeah, and in your work, too, I definitely sensed and I appreciated the [00:23:00] work that you are doing. And I think that a lot of parents are doing right now and caregivers are doing right now in reframing your own understanding of what it means to be a caregiver and the responsibilities of a caregiver, the relationships between adults and children, which I think it's also a huge part, obviously, of the work that you're doing in this book around consent, around bodies.

And so I know you talk a lot about that in this work. And there was this moment, though, that it's definitely in concert with that. And it's such a, you even struggle in a way to, like, name it. You're trying to do this intellectualizing. But I want to read it because it just made me think a lot about how much I personally struggle in the moments when I do just love the caregiving work that I'm doing so much.

And yet it feels like as this person who comes from this tradition of a very strong academic background or this, like, how do you intellectualize this [00:24:00] and how do you value this? Right? So anyways, let me just, let me just read if you don't mind.

[00:24:03] **Amanda:** Yes. No, yeah, yeah, it's good. Maybe I should have you read it

[00:24:06] **Kaitlin:** because I don't want to be reading it in your voice.

In fact, let's do that. How about 1

[00:24:11] **Amanda:** 45? Okay. John was so good at the art of loving them, carrying them on his shoulders, making fun of himself to get them to laugh. In the sun I could see he had a kind of loyalty, a devotion, that I wasn't sure I had.

He was bumbling at times, but a very good father, wiping up the kids messy faces, swinging them around in the grass.

He looked at me while trying to hug me that afternoon. And I could only compare that look to the way I looked at my children, to how I pulled them close, huffed their hair, studied them, craving in those moments, only them forever. Popular marital advice may discourage mothers from letting the love for their children replace their love for their partner, but what a ridiculous ask.

My children were my great love story. They always will be. And I had to pull away from my [00:25:00] husband to love my kids the way I wanted to. And the way I was told to. More? Or? More, well

[00:25:09] **Kaitlin:** tell me more.

[00:25:10] **Amanda:** Yeah. Oh, where, where, where should I start? So this is from this chapter, Refusal, which is very much about marriage and negotiating how to refuse the institution of marriage while being within it, but also how to kind of refuse all of this stuff, like all these expectations that a.

Wife hyphenate mother feels bearing down on her. And so this particular moment, I think what I wanted readers to feel is that, that tug and, and also that confusion with these expectations or narratives or stories, right? That we kind of live with and then [00:26:00] realize what a ridiculous ask. I think there's a fear, culturally, of women loving their children too much. We can see this in all kinds of horror stories, right? I was just watching this new show that's about mothers and their children who like murder together. And it's all of it is structured by that, like fear of, Oh, they had a very close relationship, like very disturbing.

But all of that is really rooted in the fear of women, not serving men of women, not loving men enough. So I think that's part of what's happening here. But I don't know. I'm curious what you also saw there. Yeah, no, I

[00:26:46] **Kaitlin:** definitely saw that and I think I saw this tension around the love for a child being enough.

Yeah. I connected it to the care and the love for a [00:27:00] child being as valuable as being president of the United States. Like legitimately and intellectually. And Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. creatively or just changing the reference point for that not being something quaint and also not even required, but just that that alone is incredibly valuable.

Like just the value of that to the health of the society for you to be able to lean in and privilege that over your relationship with your partner, over your creative or intellectual work. Just that, that Love alone, and I think you speak to that in terms of the work when you're referencing bell hooks as well And I know you reference a lot of others in this that do more critical theory around that as well But for me that that was the poignancy I think of that moment I mean even in this work for you to be able to sit with that and hold that space or that kind of love

[00:27:57] **Amanda:** I think it was really important for me in this [00:28:00] book to explore this notion of love, too, because as I write about in the book, it is this mythology.

It's this capitalist mythology that serves the heteronormative marital institution, right? It's a way in which women get sucked into this institution that is not always very good for them, right? But that doesn't mean that love itself does not exist. It's just this mythology. that has been oppressive for a really long time.

And I didn't want this book to only be like, Oh, motherhood is so hard and it's so bad. Like it is, but that is a cultural political problem. And absolutely, as I write about a lot in the book, affects the way that we are able to love our children, our partners, right? Because all that stuff. comes between us.

It's the point, right, to turn us all [00:29:00] against each other. But there's still a lot of love and tenderness, I think, in this book. And that was really important to me because It's sort of this reactionary position, right, to be like, oh, kids are terrible, I'm a hot mess, everything is a disaster, right? Which just plays into this narrative that women's essential condition is suffering.

It's tricky, we get caught in this web, because on the other hand, the idea that the love for a child is enough. and is creative and intellectual enough to stimulate a woman all day has also been a big problem. There are many people who don't want to have children, gestationally or otherwise. So I think that was, for me, the work of this book is to not be like, Hey, it's this way, right?

Or feel this way, or [00:30:00] This is all nostalgia or this is all terror because that's not really how we experience it, right? But rather create for the reader this experience of ping ponging through these contradictory cultural expectations. And yes, there's some struggle. There's a lot of struggle, but there's also these moments of just pure tenderness that don't necessarily solve everything, but they are enough to carry us through.

Not enough, period, but they're enough for, like, that moment.

[00:30:34] **Kaitlin:** Mm hmm. I personally, too, when I feel the most supported, when I feel the most autonomy, that actually feeds my caregiving self more. Totally. And so, I often think about that, and you obviously look at other societies and structures and political mechanisms that provide for that.

But I think that's why that moment because it wasn't about Oh, [00:31:00] look, you become a mother and this is such a natural thing or we become parents because we want that and that alone, right? But that alone is like you said, is the sustaining factor, right? But I think that it becomes that much more critically meaningful when it's coming from a place of wholeness and support and a communal aspect around the caregiving and a communal response to why your children should matter as much to me as my own children. Obviously, there's a biological factor there where that's not always going to be in. But there's a sense that we all can contribute and care collectively. And I think that's why I was drawn to that particular moment in the book. And also the bodily experience.

You really, even in the writing itself, I could sense that. connection to body and to connection to your children's bodies and the meaningfulness of their embodied experience as well. Yeah. Which

[00:31:57] **Amanda:** I really appreciated [00:32:00] towards the end of the

[00:32:10] **Kaitlin:** book, you write about creativity. And I thought, given this podcast and the interest of listeners. Let me have you read it quickly if that's okay. Yeah. Page 194. Okay. Where it starts getting sober for me. Yeah. Could you read that

[00:32:28] **Amanda:** section? Getting sober for me that year felt like choosing life over death, creation over pain, as Daraa describes her decision to quit drinking.

But returning to writing felt like gasping for air and like returning to myself. It brought me the kind of pleasure I've always sought. A way to make sense, if fleetingly, of the pain. At night, I rubbed my kids' bellies, heat passing between us as they fell asleep, conjuring possibility. I think of [00:33:00] creativity not like productivity, but like a practice of magic, of connection.

But art alone, or one woman's access to a room where she can write, cannot remake the world. At its best, one of the most creative activities is being involved in a struggle with other people. This is Federici. Breaking out of our isolation, seeing our relations with others change, discovering new dimensions in our lives.

End quote. Thank you. I'm

[00:33:32] **Kaitlin:** glad I had you read it. I think what I was drawn to here was creativity as a practice of magic, but also of connection. Yeah, yeah. And I think that's not something that culturally is a narrative that we think about a lot. if you will, if you're able to speak a little bit about that and more about how you're able to do that [00:34:00] and to really practice that on a daily basis and a practical level, like what that looks like to you.

I'm curious how that sustains you and what that means.

[00:34:10] **Amanda:** Yeah. Well, I love that idea that creativity is a kind of connection. And I think that's true. It's funny, I haven't looked at some of these passages in a while, so it's making me think about a lot. I think elsewhere in this chapter, I'm also writing about how a piece of art can never be a total representation of what it's documenting or recording and the way that our children are also kind of this thing that we make That is never a replication of the other part of the dyad, the, the thing that made them.

There's always all this loss. There's always all this mourning. And I [00:35:00] think that unearths something about connection that we're always kind of reaching out for the other, but something's always lost there. That's very much the experience that I've had in writing, whether it's a short thing or in both of my books, you want it to have a kind of life and it always becomes some other kind of life.

We talked about that earlier, the way that context just shaped. Where this book was but also something that I'm writing about at the end here is that it's really like this desire to Kind of solve all the things for the reader that I wanted to resist but I also wanted to lean into and explore because that's kind of a lot of what this book is about is how do you Do something other than solve all the things?

But still go on and find joy and [00:36:00] pleasure there. As far as how that translates into my daily or regular creative practice, it's tricky, right? Because like so much of creative practice is often production. But I would say that the

moments where I'm like in a text, like writing a text, or with my kids, and we are connecting, communing, like when I can see that reader on the other side, Having an experience.

That's the most powerful part. Not the book promotion, or the produced object. It's that moment when you're making the thing, and you're kind of imagining the feeling on the other side. I think it's, yeah, it's similar in parenting. Like, those are the moments of connection, right? When you're talking about a thing.

You can feel the feeling on the other end. So, I don't know if that [00:37:00] really answers your question, but. It does.

[00:37:02] **Kaitlin:** No, it definitely does. I think there's so much more I could talk about too, but I think you've, you've touched on the heavier hitting pieces and I know that in many ways we haven't talked about, there's so much I think on the memoir standpoint that we didn't dig in on, but I was thinking of a way to approach the book maybe a little bit differently than just the particularities of your individual experience in this, but wrapping a bunch of the themes that you're working with.

[00:37:27] **Amanda:** Yeah. That makes sense. Totally. Yeah. No, I love it. Productivity, production. Like these are things I think about all the time, so I just love that you're digging into all these questions and it comes up in the book too, this question of like, what is productive work and why, why does that supposedly have more value or how do we measure what is productive

[00:37:52] **Kaitlin:** work?

Yeah. Yeah. If a published book is the productive moment, [00:38:00] I feel that that is, it's slippery and it's tricky because it exists within the institutions of the publishing world of academia, right? Like wherever you're sitting with that work. And so that's personally my own little struggle of the materiality of.

of a work, whether you consider that a work of art or a work of critique or whatever genre it's fitting within and how you navigate the power structures that be that will dictate. Like you said, I'm still sitting with the fact that you started early in this conversation saying that you took out a footnote out of your dissertation.

And that it's something that you didn't end up including in this book.

[00:38:40] **Amanda:** Well, I left it in the dissertation, but I cut it out of this book. Yes. Oh, okay. I cut it out of here because, yeah, well, it was just, it was too much to just go into the question of productivity and genre and academic genres and, but that's very much what it was about is like all the [00:39:00] productivity, right?

All the, really what we mean by that is like labor and care that is going on, that has been. cut out of the work, right? And that's where that feeling of the kind of loss or the mourning comes in. And yeah, I think with a book launch, I feel some of that too. This is supposed to be the moment of production, but it's also this very long drawn out process.

This book was done a while ago. And so it's, it's wonderful. It's great. It's I guess like a point of pride or whatever it's supposed to be, right? But the real work already happened. So, yeah, I don't know. I think I'm in the midst of one month out from the book trying to figure out how to reframe that. Like, this feels so good to have these kinds of conversations.

They don't need to be productive. They are so valuable, whatever they are. However we want to measure them in terms of work, if we [00:40:00] need to. But an object in and of itself is... Not inherently productive, but this is why I love Mary Kelly's work because the whole point is that the art object is the child, right?

And it's not the fetishized art object. Hmm. Hard to get outside of that when you're making a book, it's such an object. Mm-hmm. . Mm-hmm. .

[00:40:24] **Kaitlin:** And it's a commodified object, right? It has, yeah. It has a price on it. . Totally. I can see it right there. It's on sale. September, 2023, .

[00:40:32] **Amanda:** Yeah. And then an author themselves, herself, right.

Is, becomes a commodity as well. Mm-hmm. , the ideas become a commodity, right? Mm-hmm. , how do they move out into the world? What's gonna make people click on like this interview or this link? Link or whatever. And that's not the stuff of writing, unfortunately it is, right, but it's not where I feel the most connection.

It's just a weird process. [00:41:00] Mm hmm.

[00:41:00] **Kaitlin:** Well, I'm excited that the book is actually in the world that we can buy it with money that we earn from, not from caregiving, but from whatever other endeavor we have to

[00:41:10] **Amanda:** me, just so we're clear.

[00:41:13] **Kaitlin:** I have to explain that to friends so often, I'm like, how much do I make on this book when you buy one copy?

Yeah, right. Well, again, because the structure that is in place decides how much value they provide. Yes. That is interesting. I like that your value is minute compared to the productive structure that actually packages this.

[00:41:34] **Amanda:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:41:36] **Kaitlin:** Well, we will buy it and we will support you in many other ways as

[00:41:40] **Amanda:** well.

Thanks. You can come subscribe to my newsletter. That goes to me. Good. Awesome. Except for what goes to Stripe. Right.

Okay.

[00:41:52] **Kaitlin:** Bye. Bye. Well, thank you so much for sitting with us and doing so when you're also navigating your own bodily [00:42:00] restrictions and challenges right now, but I hope that you feel well and we're excited for your launch and for this book to reach more readers.

[00:42:09] **Amanda:** Thank you, Kaitlin

I'm

[00:42:15] **Kaitlin:** your host, Kaitlin Solimine, and this is the Postpartum Production Podcast. If you like what you've heard today, please subscribe wherever you get your podcasts and give us a rating, which will help us reach more listeners like you. For regular updates, visit our website. Site, www.postpartumproduction.com.

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