

Deptford Literature Festival Podcast

Episode 2: Tice Cin

Transcript

Shani Akilah

Hello and welcome to the second episode of the Deptford Literature Festival podcast. A podcast that features short interviews with artists involved in the festival that celebrates Deptford and Lewisham's diversity and creativity through words, sounds and performance. I'm your host Shani Akilah, book influencer and author of upcoming short story collection *For Such a Time as This*. And on today's episode we are joined by Tice Cin, thank you so much for coming in.

Tice Cin

Thank you for having me. I feel very grateful.

SA

So you're somewhat of a multifaceted human being you're a poet, a DJ, a producer, a film director, a digital artist, a writer you've performed and acted at venues including the Battersea Arts Centre and the Barbican's Pit Theatre. You've been commissioned by St. Paul's Cathedral and the Edinburgh International Book Festival, you honestly do so much. But with your kind of author hat on, it'd be great to delve into your debut novel, *Keeping the House* which was published in 2021. It was voted one of the Guardian's best books for that year, and was also featured in The New York Times and The Washington Post, we love to see it. Could you just tell us a bit about *Keeping the House* and kind of give us a bit of a elevator pitch for the novel?

TC

It's a experimental novel. I wrote exploring the lives in and around the North London heroin trades, I was particularly interested in what it might mean to navigate a space that is haunted by loads of lives crossing and overlapping each other at once, and how that would give you maybe like a glitched type of thought process. Maybe people like us don't think the same way. And what does it mean to try and catch that on paper.

SA

Reading *Keeping the House*, I was really struck by the specificity of place and space. And your gift for being able to write in North London, the Turkish Cypriot communities, but also wider diaspora communities. You're also North London babes grew up in Tottenham and Edmonton, I think, how would you say, growing up in those areas influenced your desire to write this story.

TC

I think growing up in North London, surrounded by people also low income, you know, we were all fostering one another, to try and find a way forwards with limited resources. I guess it gave me a type of fire in my belly with all of the work that I do. Because sometimes I have to check in with myself and be like, like me, like this stuff that is bothering some people in the industry isn't even like on the plateau of like what me and mine had been trying to deal with on a day to day basis. Just like keeping my practice grounded in my reality is really

important. And that community closeness that a bit. It used to just, in some ways invite people towards a lineage of thinking that comes a lot in like sharing your food with your neighbour and this type of thing that I think some communities just haven't got the same luxury of generosity.

SA

That definitely makes sense. And I think a lot of what you have written about resonated. You right home and belonging so well. I was also really struck by the inclusion of words and phrases translated in the margins from Turkish and I just wondered why you decided to do that.

TC

I have a background in translation, or I used to work at the Poetry Translation Centre and read a lot of really amazing poetry in Translation by people like the Kurdish poet Bejan Matur. Then after that, I was the commissioning editor and art director at Tilted Axis press translating from Asia and Africa. And I guess just like working with a lot of authors who all had a really interesting approach to how they would like to be translated. And translators who are at the front of the industry in terms of the experiments that there's applying what they're doing people like Anton Hur and Jeremy Tiang, these are translators who understand that there's a poetry in carrying something over into another language and also there's a weight to it. So with *Keeping the House* I didn't want to translate multiple languages without making it clear that this is an exchange with myself and the reader. I wanted to keep the translations as close to the line as possible. So it's like a whisper. For my publisher, her name is Emma, she said that it kind of feels that someone's whispering into your ear at a party to let you in on something. While I love about that thought of that whisper is, you know, the party gets better if someone does that for you, but they are already doing your favour at the same time,

SA

In terms of your journey to publication, Did you receive any pushback from deciding to do that translation work?

TC

I was lucky because my editor Max, you know, we were like looking at different ways to annotate that on the page, writing and drawing out these different creative ways of typesetting with each other before I was signed by And Other Stories. By the time I got to be signed by And Other Stories, and then they bought Max on as my editor, I already had like a really strong advocate in the room for that experimental typesetting. Stefan, the publisher at And Other Stories didn't want it to be like, higher kicking and me just doing it just to like flex on the page, I guess. So we had a lot of interesting conversations about how to be subtle, with your experimentation, how to do things differently, but tastefully

SA

Reading it, it was such a immersive experience. You're a poet as well. And I think that really comes through in the page. Was it your ambition from the start to kind of write in that poetic form? Or is that something that developed as you put pen to paper?

TC

From when I first started writing, people started calling me a poet from jump. Maybe my first foray into it is writing bars in the back of my exercise book, I was just trying to like woo people. I'd be like let me just write something real quick. Just like a lover girl, I guess, as it continued, to be called poetry. I was thinking, well, maybe that's just like how this type of thinking looks on paper. I just can't do things just in one straight line. My mind just doesn't want it.

SA

I do feel like *Keeping the House* subverts a lot of literary conventions. I think one of the things that stood out to me is that there wasn't like a key protagonist, that everyone kind of has their own stories. What did you want to convey to the reader in taking that approach or having multiple perspectives?

TC

I think I wanted to have that expanse of love. I wanted the book to feel like this real big love letter to ends. And for me, that's in like, really sitting inside the humanity of each person that you're bringing into the story. Even Babo, one of the mob bosses. So a lot of people will say, Oh, you know, he made him quite sympathetic. And I was like, you know, that is how these things work. It's not a villain from mediaeval times coming into that, do you know what I mean like... it's people that they've done really bad things, but they're also the person that may be bailed someone out, you know, it's complex.

SA

Going back to the theme of space and place, you're involved in curating soft, soft, which is going to be opening the Deptford Literature Festival. Could you tell us a bit about your production company and what the audience can expect on the night?

TC

Neoprene Genie, I've been running it for about a year now. I like to create spaces where people can come and just feel a particular thing together. My second name Cin means Genie. And my first poem that I put out, it had a line in it that said neoprene to the dream, the idea of using our collective resilience and creativity and power to actualize our dreams from ends. So I really wanted to, like have this idea of like, coming up and making wishes come true, you know, putting people on and making imaginative seeds happen in as many different places as possible. That way we can actually make some change together, you know. I'm trying to connect all these international webs together, it's fast so that maybe we'll think about what can we do as communities are all facing the same issue of gentrification, turbocapitalism, the erasure of the community heart. I just wanted to do something for the community. We're all going through a really really heavy grief right now. With the passing of my best friend, of so many of ours best friends Gboyega Odubanjo. I just wanted something to kind of let everyone in with gentleness to come together for a couple of hours. I want to build this world for people to walk into where it's just all soft. And this all focused on communal healing, gentleness, putting on the community with the community at the heart of it, you know. We've got Yomi Odubanjo, Gboyega's big brother, my friends Annie Hayter, just an amazing interdisciplinary artist, Kareem Parkins Brown who will be performing and also doing the VJing for the events all the visuals that are projected around the room are by Kareem. Misbah, you he's one of the biggest 3D artists in London, really wonderfully talented person. We have Maymana of Fungi Futures. She'll be doing like a amazing radical eco

feminist presentation that's musical and poetic. Olivia Douglas. She recently won the Fourth Estate short story prize and I rate Olivia so much their practices so like expansive Mandisa Apena, who's going to be literally flying back in from Brazil for this event which I'm really excited about. Asmaa Jama, really amazing sound artist and poet, Ashanti Ahmed, another person who's has just recently started making music and a poet. We also have Maeve Slattery and Lex Amor. She's one of Gboyega's favourite artists and we've got lots of memories of going to see Lex together. So I feel really honoured that she's taking part. I'll be performing. And then sound design will also be from KG. She's one of the first women in UK funky, really amazing rhythm expert, and also dream beach. So he's a producer that's worked with people like Danny Brown, and just a really amazing producer from Detroit, and just trying to connect the different scenes together for this.

SA

Sounds amazing. I can't wait. It's gonna be a great night and such a great way to open the festival. A slightly unrelated question, but I had to ask. I read somewhere that you're, you have a book two in the works, which is about a female grime producer who is experiencing heartbreak? How's it all going? And when is it dropping? Or is it still in the works?

TC

I think I might send it to agents in a week. With the last few months that I've had, I've been thinking about different layers of heartbreak, communal heartbreak, and platonic and romantic heartbreak and all those overlaps. So for me, this book's been really soothing to write I feel sad to give it over to anyone to look at as it has been my peace place for a really long time. I've really fallen in love with this world. And there's this feeling I had when I finished *Keeping the House* where I finally felt like this surge of love for it that I was waiting to happen with this book. And it happened yesterday or so, just such a relief.

SA

Can't wait to read it and all the best with going out and submission. What is the best way for people to keep up to date with the different projects that you're working on?

TC

So I have a website which is ticecin.com. But I think maybe the quickest way is probably Instagram and Twitter. And that's also Tice Cin. So it's Tice.Cin on Instagram, and then on Twitter @TiceCin with no dot.

SA

And just a reminder to our listeners that you can catch Tice on Friday the 15th of March for the opening of the festival for neoprene genie and Deptford Literature Festival presents soft soft. It'll be taking place from 7.30 to 9.30 at the Albany theatre tickets are £10, and there are bursary tickets available to Lewisham residents on low income. The event will also be live streamed and subtitled. And on our next episode we'll be joined by poet and producer Helen Howell who'll be facilitating Writing the In-Between, a queer poetry workshop. Thanks so much for tuning in.