

nterview ssue 11 (Fiction)

Senior Editor Tom Ball with Tina V. Cabrera

A literary artist not boxed in by the strictures of literary fiction, Tina V. Cabrera demonstrates she has at the ready an arsenal of stylistic and technical maneuvers with each piece of fiction she writes. ‘Artificial Mother’ (Issue 3), the first story of hers we published, impressed us with her ability to expand genre and transform it into a wholly new narrative innovation. As we wrote in our review of her story collection Giving Up the Ghost (and other Hauntings), Atmosphere Press 2020...The ‘voice’ is measured, articulate and textured. The prose throughout... is the kind that only comes from a tryst between talent and experience—sorcery to be sure, but... as dazzling as a solar flare. (For more info see her Bio below). Welcome, Tina V. Cabrera!

TB: Thanks for participating, Tina! My first question is: How would you describe the current state of traditional publishing, including self-publishing models?

TC: I’ve sort of been obsessed with this question since my first book was published in 2020 using a hybrid or “flipped” model of publishing wherein the writer pays an upfront fee for book design, editorial work, publishing and distribution but keeps all royalties. I went that path from frustration with little to no success in acquiring an agent or publication with presses large and small. I think there remains an unwarranted stigma around self-publishing, even at a time when there are so many tools at a writer’s disposal to self-promote, such as blogs and social media platforms. For too long, the conventional ‘gatekeepers’ have held the key to publication success and if you can get past the inherent self-consciousness in self-publishing, then that’s just another option to get your work out there. I won’t bore you with the tried and true reality of famous authors such as Proust and Virginia Woolf who funded and/or published their own work. On the other hand, the latest model of publishing to emerge is what’s sometimes called “author-friendly” or the “flipped model” I mentioned earlier, which is not quite self-publishing, but feels like it because you pay to get your book published. I’ll admit that in hindsight, I might not have gone that route for my first book because it feels in some ways exploitative, to pay for something that a well-informed author could do themselves. But I think having another name on my book as publisher rather than myself lessened the burden of proof. I mean the need for external

affirmation that my book is worthy. There is obviously no right or wrong when it comes to the avenue of publication. I'll state the obvious: That what matters is what feels right for you.

TB: *What do you think about the future of designer babies?*

TC: Ha, ha, you ask that because of the two stories you published of mine, *Artificial Mother* and *Artificial Daughter*, which had to do with artificial wombs or ectogenesis? Well, designer babies is not the same thing as growing a baby outside of a woman's womb. However, I think that the possibility for choosing the features or traits you want in your baby is still distant, I mean like way into the future. I'll be snarky and say that since I chose to be childless that it doesn't much matter to me, unless you count my fur babies. That's a topic for another time.

TB: *What do you think people of the future will hold dear?*

TC: Come on! You're messing up my efforts to stay in the moment. JK. I can only speculate, but if history says anything, it's that the nature of the world appears to be cyclical for the most part, including human behavior. The main concerns or questions we've seen emerge time and again are existential: Why do I exist? Is there a God? How do I face mortality? and so on. As long as we are sentient feeling and thinking beings, no matter the changes in social, political, or scientific spheres, I think these main concerns will remain.

TB: *Who are your literary influences?*

TC: I've always loved reading, since I was very young, but only started seriously writing around 20 or so years ago. In the beginning of my writing efforts and while in college, I was mainly influenced by what I was reading then, such as Virginia Woolf, Borges, Marquez, Beckett, Joyce. Nowadays, I read a lot of nonfiction including biographies on philosophers who intrigue me, such as Kierkegaard. I'm currently reading Clarice Lispector's "Family Ties," and became fixated with this line from the story "Love": "Ah! It was easier to be a saint than a person!" I'm not bragging when I say this, but I wrote a short story prompted by my rumination on the line, in two days! I bring it up because it's rare when I get worked up enough to spend a marathon-day of writing. When it happens, I try to savor it for as long as I can. While I'm not as enamored with Lispector's writing as my brother is, I do admire her ability to construct and capture moods and moments in such a way that feels natural to the character and that rings true. I am working on a longer project having to do with current developments in AI algorithms, but writing a short story again felt like returning to the form that feels most natural and comfortable to me.

TB: *What do you think about the state of America today?*

TC: Oh man, I don't want to really go there, but the state of America, well we left Texas and moved to the PNW recently, mostly to try and get away from the ever right-leaning environment there. Yet, we can't escape it entirely, as there are always pockets of it in any major city, red or blue. It seems to me America is more divisive than ever. That's the pessimistic side of me talking. Because I was feeling overwhelmed by the debates and what feels like being yanked around, even by left-leaning media, I recently cancelled my subscriptions to news sites and

vacillate on whether or not to remove myself completely from social media, like Fakebook. But alas, my decision thus far to not extract myself completely is self-serving, for then how would I keep people abreast of my writerly and artistic endeavors?

TB: Thanks, Tina! I enjoyed our exchange. Good luck with your future projects.

AUTHOR BIO: Tina V. Cabrera currently resides in the ATX area with her husband, dog and two cats. She teaches as Assistant Professor of English for Temple College and devotes her free time to writing and making art. Visit her website at tvcannyuncanny.com Her story ‘Artificial Mother’ was published by Fleas On The Dog in **Issue 3** and republished in this issue and her stories ‘Waking Hours Fiction’ and ‘Waking Hours Antifiction’ were published in **Issue 6**.