

An Interview with Andrew McNabb

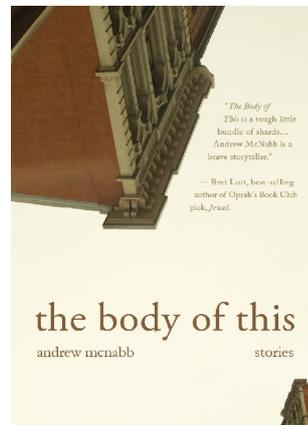
October 2009 Featured Author
at

Time with Tannia

(<http://timewithtannia.tripod.com>)

By:

Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopés



1. Tell us about yourself

I am a forty-one year old fiction writer living in the West End of Portland, Maine with my wife and four young kids. I have been writing full-time for a decade, and have published my stories widely, in journals, magazines and anthologies, both religious and secular. *The Body of This* (Warren Machine, 2009) is my debut story-collection. More about me and the collection can be found at www.andrew-mcnabb.com.

2. Prior to going to NYU and earned your master Degree in Business Administration (MBA), you knew you wanted to be a writer. Was your desire to become a full-time writer your motivation to obtain a MBA to secure yourself a steady and wealthy income to fulfill your writing goal?

No. I grew up without a lot of money (but with lots of love,) and I wanted to feel what it was like to have money. I found out. It was nice in many ways, but I had no problem leaving it behind. Making the money did, though, enable me to pay off loans and move to Ireland when I left the business world. It was nice not having to live hand to mouth during that crucial period of time when one is just learning the basics of the craft.

3. After you saved enough money to write full-time for a whole year, you went to Ireland and lived there for seven months. Were any of your stories inspired by the locals or events while living in Ireland? Do you consider this move essential to the transition from the hectic business world to the oasis of ideas in your mind?

As for stories being inspired by people or places or events in Ireland, I have never written a stitch about Ireland. I don't know why. Though my body was there, my mind, writing-wise, was elsewhere. As for the transition, moving to Ireland was an important part of my development. I had a very demanding job in Manhattan, and there was never any real down time. Being in Ireland, the solitude, was amazing. It really enabled me to start to think of myself as a writer.

4. You are a stay-at-home dad married to a full-time working wife caring for four small children, two of them with special needs. How do you cope with both your family's needs and the needs of the voices inside your head? Do you have an "Andrew's Corner" at home?

Great question. I get my "time." I am up early, five am, and I write until my wife, Sharon, goes off to work at eight-thirty or so. Even before the kids were born I could only ever write for a few hours. I have to be strict during the time that I am sitting at my desk, but it works out well for all of us. And yes, I do have my own "corner." We live in a big old Victorian and on the third floor I have an office. Little hands do still, though, find their way to the doorknob.

5. You are an accomplished writer. You have published in both secular and non-secular literary journals. What is the biggest challenge and advantages of publishing in non-secular journals? Which one of these journals do you prefer best and why?

There are many, many more "secular" literary journals than "religious" ones, so you have more to choose from. At the same time, the work you submit has to match the aesthetic of the journal. I write literary fiction, and so it was never a huge stretch for me, content-wise. Some of my stories are more "overt" than others in terms of religious content. Those more overt stories I sent to Christian or Catholic journals. Most of my publishing has been in secular literary journals, with The Missouri Review, where one for every one thousand stories submitted is accepted, being the journal that pushed me to the "next level."

6. You participated in the award-winning anthology, "Not Safe, But Good," (Best Christian Short Stories, 2007)(Thomas Nelson.) How does this award change your perspective of yourself and the quality of your work?

It was wonderful being included in that anthology alongside some of the premier "Christian" writers today. Like The Missouri Review did in terms of establishing me as a serious writer for the secular literary market, having this credit solidified my appeal to an audience seeking "Catholic" fiction.

7. One of your stories appeared in The Missouri Review. Would you recommend this literary journal to new writers? Or is it better for new writers to know their craft well before they consider submitting? For the benefits of new writers, share with us the process from querying to publication.

My first publishing credit came by way of acceptance in an e-zine. I worked my way up. It is very unusual for a writer to have their first story published in one of the top-tier journals. The important thing is to know the journals you are submitting to, and to keep submitting. With short story submissions, there is no querying, you just send and wait. And in terms of waiting, submit simultaneously, no matter what the guidelines are. It is unrealistic for a journal to have you wait three or even six months for their verdict, particularly when the number of submissions is astronomical.

8. How do you handle rejection letters? What lessons have you drawn from them?

I don't submit to literary journals any more, but when I was submitting to the journals I just kept plugging away. It can be hard at times, but you have to believe in yourself. The types of rejections I get now are from magazines or newspapers that don't want to review my book, for whatever reason. Usually, the reason is unrelated to the book itself, so it's not hard to move on.

9. Tell us about your debut story collection, "The Body of This." How does it set itself apart from other books of similar content? Where can our readers purchase it?

The Body of This sets itself apart from other story collections because it appeals, really, to two separate and distinct audiences; one, purely literary and the other, Catholics seeking literary fiction. This has been both a blessing and a curse for me. First off, it presented a problem for agents/publishers because they had a hard time figuring out how to market the book. But ultimately it has been a blessing, because it has expanded my audience significantly.

As for purchasing the book, it can be purchased at Amazon.com or, as the publisher likes to say, "Wherever good books are sold." Part of the challenge has been keeping the book stocked in brick and mortar stores. It is completely hit or miss, whether a store will have the book or not. Because you have to get buyers when they are motivated to buy your book, I suggest buying on-line at Amazon.com, or, for those who want to buy from a Catholic bookseller, Aquinasandmore.com. The latter has matched Amazon's price for the book, which is something they have never done before.

10. You are the great-grand nephew of Fr. Vincent McNabb, O.P., (<http://vincentmcnabb.org/>), one of the greatest men and priests of the twentieth century. Do you consider your storytelling and writing skills to be the product of genetic inheritance?

Nope. There may be some inspiration from heaven from time to time, but otherwise it's just plain hard work.

11. Imagine you are at a book signing at your local bookstore and a buyer asks you, "What is the meaning of your book title?" How would you respond to this inquiry in 30 seconds or less managing to give this buyer a satisfactory answer without adding waiting time to other customers wanting their book signed too?

The title can be interpreted in many different ways, and ultimately it is subjective in nature. For me, architecture, both of buildings and of the body are the prominent theme throughout, and are often intertwined. I wish I could say more, but I can't without over-interpreting and influencing what is meant to be a thought-provoking aspect of the collection.

12. A word of advice for new writers.

Write every day! Don't give up! Be tough!



Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopés, author of *The Window To My Soul; My Walk With Jesus* (2004 Tate Publishing); *El Espejo de mi Alma* (2009 Pleasant Word) .

Author's websites: timewithtannia.tripod.com, www.shoutlife.com/tanniaortizlopes, and www.myspace.com/tanniaortizlopes The author also has a blog at www.amazon.com

INTERVIEW COMMENTS:

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Comments: I've read Andrew's book and it is terrific stuff. Sometimes it is sexually edgy but that's part of its honesty and insight.

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