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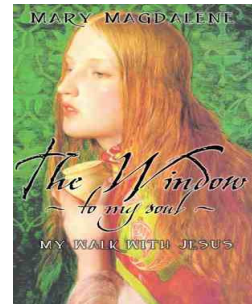
Inspiration, Poetry, Essay and Song!
By Denise Turney, Author of Long Walk Up
<http://www.chistell.com>

June/July 2007

Feature Interview - Tannia Ortiz-Lopes

About Tannia Ortiz-Lopes

Tannia Ortiz-Lopes is the author of the book *Window To My Soul: My Walk With Jesus* which was voted 2006 Best Christian Poetry. Tannia is also a poet, songwriter and essayist. She lives in Germany with her husband and their wonderful children. Tannia is online at: [Tannia Ortiz-Lopes](#)



MEET TANNIA:

BLH: You are truly an artist. You write, play guitar, sing and paint. Are your parents artists or has becoming an artists been a natural progression for you?

TL: My parents are not artists; however, I inherited my artistic genes from my mom's side of the family. Her dad was a trumpet player and a composer. For as long as I can remember, I have been singing be it alone in the shower or in front of an audience. I feel very comfortable performing on stage, either singing or acting in a play. In 1979 the Hispano-American Games were celebrated in Puerto Rico and I participated in the inauguration ceremony. The dancing groups were formed from high school students from all over the island. I danced with the group from my home town, Guayama, Puerto Rico. I consider that my biggest artistic accomplishment! In my essay "1979," I described my writing development. A copy of this essay is at my web site: www.myspace.com/tanniaortizlopes.

I started writing when I was in middle school. I wrote songs and poems. I also wrote essays and short stories. When I went to study at the University of Puerto Rico, Ponce Campus, I found my poetic voice and developed my free-style poetry under the guidance of my Spanish teacher. At the beginning I wrote secular poetry. I started writing inspirational poetry in recent years. Now, writing poetry and songs is as easy as "breathing air." It comes very naturally to me.

BLH: Tannia, how has your eclectic musical tastes influenced your writing style?

TL: Music helps me to cope with my moods. I am unable to write when I am excited, so I have to relax and calm down first. I prefer to listen to chants or instrumental music

to help me concentrate on my writing. One of my favorite CDs is the soundtrack of The Passion of the Christ. The music is very soothing. I can concentrate and produce very profound articles while listening to the music. Sometimes the sounds of nature can inspire a simple and heartfelt poem. My poem, I am a little river, was inspired by the Book of Ecclesiastes and the vision of a river and the ocean. This poem is published in my book, The Window to My Soul; My Walk with Jesus.

BLH: Have you ever put your writing to song (told a story or poem you wrote through music)? If so, please tell us about the experience. If you haven't done so, please share with us how you think the story would evolve as you joined it with music.

TL: I have written songs and musical poetry. I am a strong believer that a Top 20 hit is the result of a well written poem with the proper musical arrangement. The process of writing a song is quite different from writing a poem. When I write a song, I take my guitar and start playing a combination of chords until something pleasing to my ears comes out. Then I write the lyrics. At times I don't know the right chords to play the song inside my head, so I sing it a cappella and record it. Then I send the cassette to my youngest brother for potential musical arrangements. My youngest brother is a professional musician, a music teacher, and a band director in Puerto Rico www.myspace.com/racielmusic.

When I write a poem, the words come directly from the heart and then go to my brain, which sends a message for the hands to write down my thoughts! Sometimes the poem "sings" to me, and then I must find the chords to accompany it accordingly. And if it doesn't work with my guitar, then I sing a cappella, and the process starts all over again. On one occasion my youngest musician brother wrote a very fine piece of music. He sent me a cassette with the song recorded while he was playing a keyboard and asked me to write the lyrics. I was honored by the request and gratefully accepted the task. I listened to the music several times. I needed to know his feelings and inspiration while composing the song. When I was ready to create the text, I grabbed my hand-held tape recorder and played the song. As soon as the music started playing, I began to sing and record. The words came out of my mouth as a spring of fresh water in the middle of the desert. I listened to the recording and was satisfied with it. Then I wrote down the lyrics by playing, rewinding, and stopping the recording. It was a tedious process, but it was worth it. Then I played my brother's music again and tried to sing it with the written lyrics. I practiced the song several times before I recorded the final version. I sent a copy of the cassette I made and the lyrics to my brother. When my brother read them and heard the song he was amazed. I called him about two weeks later to confirm he had received the package and to see his reaction to my work. His answer was: "How did you know that?" That is exactly what I felt when I wrote it." My answer was quite simple: "That is what I heard in your music. I am glad you liked it."

The response letters in regards to my poetry book were extremely positive and encouraging. I know, that at God's appointed time, I will find the right artists to make music for my musical poems.

BLH: Do you consider yourself to be mainly a poet or do you also consider yourself to be a short story and book length writer?

TL: I consider myself a poet, a singer, and a songwriter. When inspired by the Holy Spirit, I can write profound essays. I enjoy doing research prior to writing essays; it is challenging and very rewarding. I have attempted to write short stories and children's stories but without much success. I still have a lot to learn in that area; however, I continue to pursue those venues since they will expose me to a different type of audience. I believe authors need to engage in different types of genres, so they continue to grow professionally and as human beings. A couple of months ago, while eating my breakfast, I looked at a painting of a rainbow painted by my youngest son. Out of that brief moment was born a poem titled, Paint me a rainbow, Lord.

BLH: Being that you have lived in Puerto Rico and now live in Germany, how much of an impact do you think an artist's environment has upon their work?

TL: I think our environment and our surroundings impact our work tremendously. In our everyday activities and in our contact with people or nature, we can get an idea or an inspiration that could evolve into a poem, a song, a story, a book, or a simple thought. Writers are sponges-sensitive people, absorbed by our surroundings and creators of a world that might be shared with or kept secret from others.

BLH: This is a topic new and seasoned writers seem to always be interested in - finding their audience. What are some effective ways you incorporate to get your writings and music to a larger audience?

TL: This is my third year as a published writer and it has been a learning experience from day one. I made many newly published writer mistakes and I am digging myself out of the hole of illusions of richness. I have found my audience by subscribing to several e-newsletters and publishing my work with them. I also challenge and dare myself to go beyond my fears and try something new. Here in Germany I took courage and went to two local German-language newspapers and, with only my basic German communication skills, inquired about their book review requirements. I am sure God sent an angel to be with me both times, since I found grace in the eyes of the receptionist both of whom referred me to two English speaking journalists. I got two articles about my book in the newspaper in May 2006. I also got my book stocked at several local bookstores.

Other tips include - keep your eyes open for free or cost-effective ways to market your book; e.g. Amazon Connect. This is a free service provided by www.amazon.com, which allows writers to have a blog connected with their book. I also have a page at www.myspace.com/tanniaortizlopes with a blog and pictures of activities related to my book. Go to book fairs or conventions. They are good places to make contacts and get new ideas. I have attended the Frankfurt Book Fair twice and plan to attend it again this year. Previous occasions proved to be very positive for me. My stepfather plays the few songs I wrote several years ago, the ones for which my brother wrote the musical arrangements. He has a small band in Puerto Rico and the public's response to the songs has always been positive.

BLH: Did you ever struggle with rejection letters? I've heard many writers say that receiving rejection letters can be painful. How did you find the strength to keep writing and to keep submitting your work after you received rejection letters (so many writers take rejection personally which often makes the experience very painful for them)?

TL: I consider rejection letters something positive for any writer. At times we all get frustrated; however, those letters are extremely useful learning tools. I have not gotten that many, but the few I received praised my work and told me why it didn't meet the publisher's needs at that time and offered some practical advice. I was very thankful, since they gave me an opportunity to improve my writing and submit it again. If rejection letters affect a writer's quality of life, then perhaps writing is not the right career for that individual. Authors need to believe in the quality of their work and write with a lot of passion. To be a writer you have to have a thick skin, plenty of self-esteem, and most of all, you must always be yourself.

BLH: How do you insure that you continue to evolve as an artist and improve your body of work?

TL: There is no easy path in writing. You become an expert in a genre and then to continue your growth you must pursue other venues and challenge yourself to excel. If not, you become bored and tired and your readers will notice it.

BLH: Who are some of your favorite writers and what is it about their work you most admire?

TL: This one is hard to answer. I enjoy reading Catholic mystic writers such as John of the Cross, Catherine de Siena, Santa Theresita, and Brother Lawrence, just to mention a few. In the modern area, I enjoy Max Lucado's books because they are written in a very personal language and they are easy to relate to. For Christian Fiction, I delight myself reading the Left Behind series and The Chronicles of Narnia.

BLH: Do you have any work, writing or music, on the market? If so, please give us the titles and let us know where we can purchase your work to support you.

TL: From 1988 until 2000 I contributed to the following Spanish poetry anthologies, published by "El Editor Interamericano" in Buenos Aires, Argentina; Americanto (1988), Poetas Hispanoamericanos Contemporaneos (1989), Patria Plural (1990), Am rica Po tica (1992), and Expoes a 2000 (1996). These poems were published under the pen name of Th inatos Lop s. These anthologies are out of print; however, they marked the beginning of my writing career. In 2004 I published my first free-style inspirational poetry book, The Window to My Soul: My Walk with Jesus (Tate Publishing), under the pen name of Mary Magdalene. On March 2006, the book was voted Best Poetry Book by www.christianstoryteller.com The book could be purchased directly from the publisher at www.tatepublishing.com and at all major online stores worldwide. In Germany the book is available at www.amazon.de, www.buch.de, and www.libri.de. I have also published my poetry and stories in Canadian publications "Storytime Tapestry Newsletter" and Wt in Spirit Christian Magazine.

BLH: Are you working on new material?

TL: I am working on four exciting projects. First, I am working on the second part of my new book. The first part covers the Book of Job through Chapter 17. This one will include the remaining chapters of the Book of Job, some personal letters to Jesus and a

variety of poems. Second, I am getting closer to publishing the Spanish version of my book, *The Window to My Soul: My Walk with Jesus*. The book is being reviewed by a fellow poet and dear friend from Puerto Rico. I am working to create a new cover and four drawings for the book. I am hoping to have the book ready to be published by fall this year or December, at the latest. Third, with the help of my German tutor and a German poet friend of mine, I am translating my book, *The Window to My Soul: My Walk with Jesus*, into German. Fourth, I am doing a lot of experimental writing and publishing it for critique at "Storytime Tapestry Newsletter".

BLH: If you weren't an artist, what do you think you would be doing right now?

TL: I would be working as a teacher or as an assistant at an orphanage. I enjoy teaching. I would like to work at an orphanage because those children are forgotten little angels looking for a place they could call home.

BLH: What last words of encouragement or advice would you like to leave with our subscribers here at The Book Lover's Haven?

TL: Never stop trying. Never be afraid of breaking ground in arid soil. Dare yourself to achieve perfection without obsession and pursue new ways of writing and marketing. Use rejection letters and criticism as tools for improving your writing. When mentally burned out, go for a walk or take a vacation. Always ask God for guidance since He knows better the road ahead.

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-- Pablo Picasso

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