

An Interview with Regina Doman

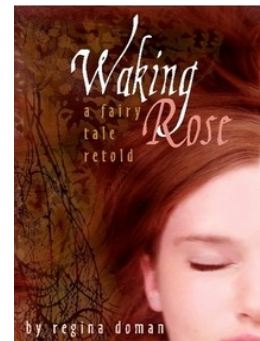
September 2008 Featured Author
at

Time with Tannia

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

By:

TANNIA E. ORTIZ-LOPES



1 .Tell us about yourself. (Keep this answer short and sweet. Please include your website.)

I'm a married thirty something Gen Xer, with six children here on earth and two in heaven (one miscarriage, and my son Joshua died in a car accident in 2006). I write for fun, to entertain myself, and because it's my passion and sometimes obsession. I usually work on four or five things at a time: check out www.reginadoman.com to see some of the balls I'm keeping in the air right now. :)

2. In 1992 you graduated with a BA in Communications, concentrating on Television Production, with a minor in Theater Arts. Then in 1999 your husband and you founded Chesterton Productions. Was the idea to create this production company a consequence of your university degree? Was it your passion for scriptwriting? Was it your desire to produce an audio theater piece for one of your books? All of the above? Tell us your story.

Producing a professional audio drama was my husband's idea. We basically formed the production company since we were in the process of making an audio drama of my first book because a friend had offered us some free studio time. We then added "Chesterton Press" when we decided to make my previously-published novels print-on-demand and bring the book production in-house.

3. In 2003 your company Chesterton Productions ((<http://www.chestertonproductions.com/>) collaborated with Northern Rain in the production of the audio drama *Enemy Brothers* (distributed by Bethlehem Books). How were you able to better utilize your talents during this production? Would you recommend such a project to other novelists?

I was the scriptwriter and director of the show. My training is in radio-TV production so I was using more of my college degree than my skills as a novelist. I don't know that I would necessarily recommend this as a project to any novelists. You do need training in how to direct, and scriptwriting is a specific skill you need to know.

More to the point, producing an audio drama is way more expensive than producing a book. From a marketing point of view, making an audio drama out of my book didn't make any business sense: we spent thousands of dollars (about \$30,000) on the production and only made maybe a couple hundred. So financially we took a huge loss, even with free studio time and people donating their talents.

However, we didn't do it for marketing. We did it because we love the medium of audio drama and wanted to make something in the medium that could be enjoyed for years. On that level, it was a satisfying artistic experience and I wish we could do it again.

The audio drama has aired on some Catholic radio stations including Ave Maria Radio, and hopefully will soon air on Relevant Radio. We hope to make it available on Lulu, Blackstone Audio and iTunes later this summer. We're also looking at doing a CD of the original music we made for the drama later this summer.

4. From 1992 until 2008 you have published a variety of articles both in print and e-zine. Which medium of communications do you prefer and why? Is prayer an essential part of your creativity? How do you choose your topics?

I love the flexibility that email and the internet have brought to the writing process. It amazes me that I can write an article one night, send it to a friend with a big website, go to bed, and wake up to see my article making the rounds of the blogs. It's only happened to me a few times: mainly with the Harry Potter articles. That's really a neat experience for a writer.

These days I have to focus on writing novels and editing, so I don't write articles unless I'm asked by a friend or the venue is good, or I just really feel I have something to say. I discovered early on that I'm not a terribly good opinion writer. There are so many excellent columnists out there that I don't feel the need to contribute very often. However, I do feel that I'm good at writing novels, maybe better than average, so I'm trying to stick to that.

I'm also trying very hard not to talk too much about writing Catholic fiction, so that I actually have time to write some Catholic fiction. Plus it's so disappointing to hear someone talk intelligently and articulately about how to write a good novel, but then, when you read their novel, you find out they can't tell a good story. I really don't want to be one of those people, so I try to keep my mouth shut, not always successfully. :)

5. Your first young adults novel, *Snow White and Rose Red: A Modern Fairy Tale* (1997, Bethlehem Books,) was republished as paperback in 2002 under the title *The Shadow of the Bear*. Was the title change a marketing decision? Or was it to reflect the printing change from hardcover to paperback?

Yes, the publisher decided to change the title in hopes that the book would appeal to boys. It seems like that was a good call on their part. I personally think the title is too long (I like titles that are short, myself) but thanks to that decision, quite a few boys and men have enjoyed the book. I think it would have been harder for them to have picked it up under the old title.

6. First came *The Shadow of the Bear* followed by *Black as Night* (2004) and the conclusion to this drama was *Waking Rose*. All these books are modern version of treasured fairy tales. When you wrote the first installment to this trilogy, was it meant to be a stand alone book? If yes, what motivated you to write the series?

I'm not sure exactly when I planned to continue the story, but I do know that by the time the first book was published, I had the next two books planned out. It was around 2003 that I rewrote what became the definitive draft of *Waking Rose* (each of the books has gone through substantial revisions before publication). At that time I had befriended a group of energetic and delightful students from Christendom College, including Ben Hatke, who became my illustrator for *Angel in the Waters*. Those friendships had a wonderful effect on my creativity: they substantially influenced *Waking Rose*, and I went on to write a further novel in the series, *The Midnight Dancers*, which I'm putting into publication next month. I do have plans for at least two other novels in the series, maybe more.

7. You are indeed a multi-talented person. You have explored many venues to express yourself such writing, audio drama productions, children's picture books, web designs, illustrations, wood carving, editorials and project management. How do you balance your private/family life vs the public figure “Regina“?

My first vocation is to be a good Catholic, a good wife, a good mother, and lastly a good writer. In that order. So I try hard to keep parts of my life private, not so much because I like privacy but because I want my children and family to have parts of me that are not shared with other people. I think it's important for artists to not make everything public, and to occasionally make private gifts of their talent to those they love best. Tolkien did this with his Father Christmas Letters, written for his own children. I try to give my children some things that I don't give to others. My habitual practice is to show everything I write to my husband first, so we can share it before we share it with anyone else. That's an important ritual.

Also it's easy for someone like me to try to "do everything." Having a family that doesn't have my kind of frenetic energy really grounds me. If I have trouble saying no, my husband will say no for me. :)

8. *Angels in the Waters* (2004, Sophia Institute Press) is a provocative story about life inside the womb and our guardian angels. Do you believe that children who remember those intimated moments with their angels have a special purpose in this world?

No, not particularly.

I actually was asked to write a sequel to this book, showing the child growing older with his angel companion and I refused. I wanted to write this book about the universal human, the "Everybaby," so to speak. A baby who speaks with his guardian angel in the mystery of the womb can be "Everybaby," because almost none of us recall what happened to us in the womb. We can believe it might have happened to us, or to our child. A child who would continue to see and hear his guardian angel and speak to him as he grew older would not be Everybaby, but Baby Saint, a particular person with a particular special gift. I felt that a story about Baby Saint a completely different sort of book.

I am chary about assigning special roles to those who have interactions with the supernatural. To me, it smacks of gnosticism. I now tend to think those moments in which God touches our lives in an extraordinary ways as something that perhaps should be private, an internal motivation, not a public display. Those to whom those gifts come publicly (like visionaries who see the Blessed Mother) have a heavy burden laid on them that most people will find too heavy to carry. I haven't been particularly impressed by the lives of those who claim to receive such visions, so I have come to be suspicious. I think there is a real reason why the average person doesn't see or hear angels. It does not always have a beneficial effect on those to whom angels appear, even if the angels are real messengers from God and the message is valid. We are not meant for that sort of angelic company in this life.

9. In July 2006 your family grieved the loss of your son Joshua in a tragic car accident. Then you took a one year sabbatical from public life and emerged strong and published your third book, Waking Rose. After reading your book and visiting Joshua's dedicated website, www.joshua-michael.org, I noticed a big resemblance between your son and Paul. Was your intention to keep the memory of your son Joshua alive the driving force in creating this character? If yes, how did it help you and your family during the healing process? If not, how do you explain the similarity?

Actually, Waking Rose was written in 2003, and was essentially finished as a story before our son Joshua died, so I don't think it had much of an influence. By the way, Paul Fester is the hero of the new book, The Midnight Dancers. As I did the rewrite of the book in 2007, I did feel that my experience of grief was shaping the writing, but it's not something I could put my finger on. I think our main drive in finishing the book and self-publishing it was to be able to give something back to the Catholic community who had supported us during our grief.

The similarity is explained by the fact that the friends who inspired me in 2003 shared with our family a love for swords and fairy tales. I don't personally see a connection between Paul Fester and Joshua. When I think of Paul Fester, I think of him as a juggler, a flutist, and a medical student before I'd think of him as a "sword warrior" like my Joshua. Of all the "Knights of Cor" who are the protagonists in Waking Rose, Paul is the least martial of all of them, more of a healer, a bit of a happy mystic. Given Joshua's tough but gentle personality, if he had grown up, I'd guess that he might have turned out more like my character Bear Denniston, from The Shadow of the Bear.

10. Where can our readers purchase your books?

Go to www.fairytalesnovels.com and follow the links to www.Lulu.com. Or ask your local bookstore or library to order them. And I hope people will pick up my new book, The Midnight Dancers. It's sort of a new "starting point" for the series. Whereas it would have been hard to read the first three books out of order, The Midnight Dancers is pretty much a stand-alone book, like The Shadow of the Bear. It would be a great introduction to the other books.

11. Are you working on new projects?

Right now I'm in the thick of launching the John Paul 2 High series for teens (www.johnpaul2high.com). It's a kind of fun "pulp fiction" series, about the adventures of seven kids in a new Catholic high school. I'm the overall editor for the series, and I love it. The first book, Catholic, Reluctantly is out on amazon now. It's not pious tripe: it's a pretty gritty story about real teens with real issues. I think Catholic teens from any kind of background will find it speaks to them where they're at.

Going back to missing Joshua, after he died, I found myself drawn to start writing another series of novels, which is now in the planning stages. The first novel has, as its core the death of a beloved son, and I knew that I was pulled to this topic because of my grief. That's all I'll say about the books now: I hope to take five years to write the first one. They'll be for adults and I hope to take them to a secular publisher, though I know people of faith will enjoy them.

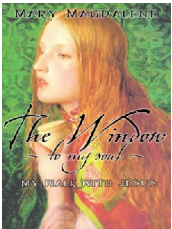
In terms of keeping Joshua's memory alive, I have thought that I would like to do a picture book about him someday. It might be the right sort of companion book to Angel in the Waters, because Joshua was an ordinary boy, and meeting death is something we all must do, someday. Joshua was not a baby saint. He sometimes behaved badly, he fought with his siblings, he spent a good deal of

time sitting on the upstairs steps of our old house in "time out," but he was a good kid, and thoroughly lovable, with his slow drawl, his shy--mischievous smile, his burly physique and love of adventure. I miss him very much still, but someday I'd like to write about him. I don't know much about the story yet, but I've thought it would be a good way to share about Joshua with his siblings who never met him, like my new baby Polly.

12. A word of advice to new writers

Be persistent, take the craft seriously, never stop learning. Love the people who criticize you: you learn more from them than from your fans sometimes.

Thanks so much for the opportunity!
Peace and good
Regina



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