

Author Interview Corner

ABOUT

Posted by [lindseybethgoddard](#) on *January 8, 2013*

Mary Ann Bernal

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Mary Ann Bernal



Please tell us a little about yourself.

In addition to being an incurable romantic Anglophile history buff, I am also family-oriented, supporting my grandchildren in their interests and endeavors, ranging from sitting all day in the music hall for my granddaughter's dance competitions, to being in the stands for my grandson's sporting events – baseball, football and basketball. I am actively involved in my parish community and also with programs supporting the United States Military.

Can you tell us a about *The Briton And The Dane* trilogy?

The first book of the series, *The Briton and the Dane*, begins with a headstrong girl, named Gwyneth, whose impulsive nature gets herself into a lot of trouble, from rescuing a wounded Norseman, Erik, to being kidnapped by a Danish warrior and brought to King Guthrum's encampment, while her father, brothers, and her betrothed, Cerdic, a man twice her age, attempt a rescue. When King Alfred and Gwyneth's father arrive at King Guthrum's camp, both kings learn of Cerdic's treachery, since the Saxon had sworn fealty to both kings and had taken a Danish wife.

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Throw into the mix unrest in Wales, and an unknown prince rallying support to usurp King Guthrum's throne, and the epic adventure begins.

In the second book of the series, *The Briton and the Dane: Birthright*, King Guthrum learns that his bastard son, Rigr, is raising an army to usurp the throne. Treachery and betrayal affect both courts as the stage is set for the final battle between father and son.

In the final book of the series, *The Briton and the Dane: Legacy*, betrayal and treachery intensifies, and King Alfred faces a new Danish threat, but he decides to fight the Norsemen at sea, knowing Erik must fight his countrymen. Add excessive storm tides and fire ships hurled about by excessive winds, and suddenly both sides find themselves fighting for survival.

Tell us about your latest book in the franchise, *The Briton And The Dane: Concordia*.

Concordia is an Anglo-Saxon noblewoman, coming of age in the reign of Alfred the Great. Spoiled by her indulgent father, cunning, manipulative, stubborn and willful, she is nevertheless full of energy and an explorer by nature.

Though besotted with a mysterious Moor, a diplomatic guest of the King's Court, she honors her promise to wed a besotted Anglo-Saxon warrior on condition he accompanies her to Rome prior to consummating their marriage. In transit, their ship is boarded by bloodthirsty Saracen Corsairs, and Concordia suddenly finds herself at the mercy of a dashing young Captain who considers her precious virginity his bounty.

Using only feminine cunning, Concordia must defend her honor and plot her escape while awaiting rescue, somewhere inside steamy, unconquered, Muslim Hispania.

What made you choose Concordia above the "cast of thousands" characters that comprise *The Briton And The Dane* world?

Every character in the trilogy has a story. However, I decided to fast-forward the timeline to the year prior to King Alfred's death, so that I could tell a coming of age story. Concordia, at 19, is your normal "know it all" teenager, who does what she wants to do without considering the consequences of her actions. In addition to the challenges she faces in a male-dominated society, she also has to deal with her budding sexuality, confusing lust with love, and living with the consequences of poor choices. Her personality has been shaped by a traumatic early life, which might explain her behavior, but it does not excuse her conduct.

There are religious undertones in this series. Why did you take on such a controversial topic?

One of the terms of the peace treaty, after King Alfred defeated the Danish King Guthrum, was that the pagan Norseman was to be baptized into the Christian faith. When King Guthrum returned to his lands in East Anglia, his subjects were forced to accept Christianity, upon pain of death. I was curious as to how these people felt about being forced to deny the gods of their ancestors. Horrific stories of torture and death are very persuasive, just as they are today. The point being, would you give your life for your religious beliefs? Just how strong is your faith? Not an easy question. And, what of the guilt, if you choose to deny your God?

You also chose a very violent time period – Viking raids, Saracen pirates. What prompted you to write about such atrocities?

My interest in the brutality of the times focuses on the actual warrior and the family left behind. Whether one is attacking or defending the land, there is a warrior mindset that seems inbred, being passed down over the centuries – the warrior spirit, comprised of honor, courage, giving one's life for a belief.

There has always been a need for warriors, but warriors have families. When a warrior leaves for battle, waiting is difficult for the families left behind. In modern society, communication is almost

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instantaneous, whereas in the Ninth Century, it could take years to learn the fate of a loved one. My characters reveal the anxiety associated when a loved one must fight for their king and country.

Your stories have an underlying theme of deception and betrayal. Again, why the fascination?

Since I am an avid history buff, I like to put life into the names of characters that lived in bygone centuries. How much more interesting would history be if the instructor delved into the mind of the tyrant, versus just listing the atrocities?

My characters lie and cheat, acquiring wealth, seeking the ultimate aphrodisiac, power. How much has changed since the Ninth Century? There are still unscrupulous people in this world – dictatorships, military states and fundamentalist groups.

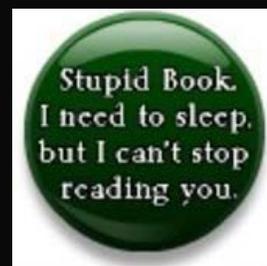
However, redemption is an underlying theme in my stories, and redemption brings hope for the human race. The human psyche is complex – and my stories show that emotional conflict has not changed over the centuries.

You now have four novels in the series under your belt. Are you ready to leave the 9th Century and move on to other projects?

Good question, which should be answered in the affirmative. However, the key word here is should, but should does not compute. My next story, which will be launched in 2014, is "The Briton and the Dane: Timeline." The story begins in the 30th century, where Dr. Gwyneth Franger supervises an archaeological dig in England, the ruins of an Anglo-Saxon fortress that housed the last descendant of Gwyneth of Wareham and Erik of Esbjerg. Gwyneth is obsessed with finding the remains of Lord Erik, and is transported back in time, a few years before Erik dies fighting for his king, leaving no issue. Will she find Erik and change the course of history or will she find herself lost in the Tenth Century?

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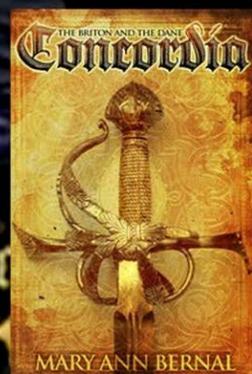
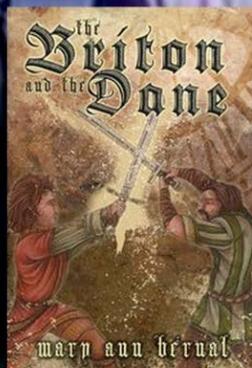
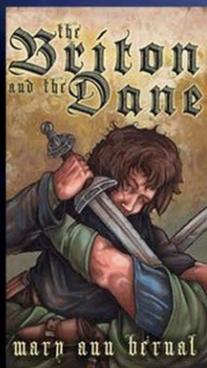
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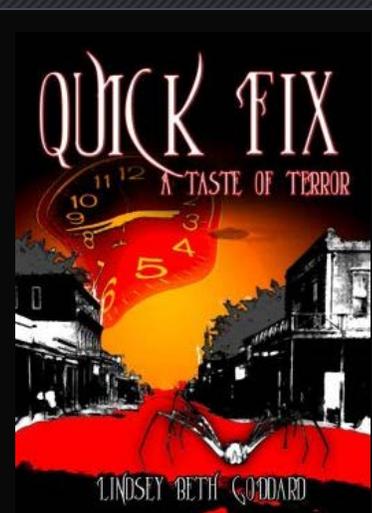
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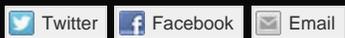
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