

A S T R A Y D R O P *of* **B L O O D**

COMPANION GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

If you've already read *A Stray Drop of Blood*, then you know I draw on a lot of history, a lot of literature, and a lot of stuff that might leave you going, "Huh? What in the world is that?" or else "Ha ha, she actually put that in there!" (depending on how much obscure literature you've read).

In an attempt to bring it all to life, direct you toward some interesting stuff, and give you lots of fodder for discussion among book clubs or small groups, I've put together this companion guide with pieces on some of the interesting things from which I drew the story.

Most of these little pieces are written by me, but a few are by expert friends of mine.

This same information is available on my website at www.RoseannaMWhite.com if you click on the Books tab. There is a comment section set up at the bottom of the Companion Guide page, and I welcome all reader comments and discussion.

Enjoy!

Roseanna

HISTORY

ANCIENT ROME

by Sandi Rog

When I think of ancient Rome, I think: yawn, stretch, borrrring. I'd much rather write about something romantic, like knights in shining armor, castles, and maidens in distress. But no. I chose to write about ancient Rome. Why? Well, because it's really very similar to where we're at today.

Writing about this time period puts my work in the "Biblical Fiction" slot. It's called Biblical Fiction because it takes place during Bible/Roman times. What interests me most about this era is the fact that most people don't feel the Bible applies to them today because "times have changed."

I wonder where these folks think roads and bridges came from? Don't they realize Romans also invented mile-markers? How do they think we learned about gutters and sidewalks? Sewers and water fountains?

How dependent are we on plumbing? I guess they don't realize that the Romans invented indoor plumbing as well. And what about when these people went to their last football game? Didn't they realize that the amphitheater was invented by the Romans?

Nearly every major city in ancient Rome had a coliseum. The most well-known is the Colosseum in Rome itself. Now, where do folks usually like to spend their free time today? Football stadiums, baseball games, hockey, soccer and I don't know what else. Keeping up with the "games" is a big deal to folks. Well, it was a big deal to ancient Romans as well.

The Romans also invented "dry-cleaners." They were called "fullers." It was there that the citizens would bring in their tunics, expecting them to be pressed and cleaned. And I won't tell you what they used to whiten these tunics. Just think: vinegar. I won't disgust you with how they got it.

Oh, and let's not forget our government and their buildings. I guess folks who think the Bible is outdated don't realize the first Senate was invented by the Romans. Not to mention the beautiful buildings with their columns and magnificent archways. And consider the toilets you sit on. Bet you can't guess where those came from. Toilets and politics in the same paragraph? No pun intended.

How many of us like to eat out? I love going to restaurants, I love sinking my teeth into a big juicy hamburger. Well, the Romans usually had restaurants which were very similar to European cafes and American fast-food restaurants. These eateries were usually found below the apartments—yes, the Romans also invented apartments—where they served big juicy hamburgers (what they referred to as meat between bread). Hmm, I used to think the Americans were the inventors of the hamburger. Guess I was wrong.

We've covered only a fraction of the physical aspects of the similarities between us today and the Romans. Don't you think they also dealt with the same struggles? Adultery and divorce was quite common back then, not to mention, abortion. Yep. ABORTION. Fornication (that's when you have sex outside of marriage) was also a practiced pleasure, one of the reasons they had abortions. Folks tend to think homosexuality is something "new." Nope. It was also quite common in Bible/Roman times. Do any of these issues sound familiar?

Next time someone tells you that the Bible doesn't apply to us today because "times have changed," simply remind them of these historical facts.

CENTURIONS

The most basic definition of a centurion is an office in charge of a hundred soldiers. Generally, centurions earned their rank through years of dedication. For the purposes of my story, I had a handful that were moved ahead by politics.

Most of us have a pretty vivid image of a centurion. Those breastplates that display a perfectly sculpted male chest (and cover what most likely wasn't, underneath, LOL), the brilliant scarlet cape attached at the shoulders, the short skirt made up of lappets, the ornate armor from the knee to the ankle. And of course, the plumed helmet. (Though I confess I had an image of the plume running from the back to the front, and in truth the centurion's plume ran from side to side.)

For some intensive information on centurions, visit <http://www.roman-colosseum.info/roman-army/roman-centurion.htm>.

In my story, I take a few liberties with the role of the centurions, especially with their schedule. I found a very detailed report on how night shifts were selected, which confused me to no end, LOL. It seemed mostly to be by chance, but that was also describing a battlefield situation. I decided that it's reasonable (who knows if it's factual) to assume that in a garrison, schedules would be more firm. So I set it up that they would take a night shift every fourth day, which at least follows the impression I got from research, if not the exact letter.

COSMIC EVENTS

If you read an ancient history (as in, something written by who we would consider an ancient about stuff even more ancient), you'll find that almost every really important historical figure has some cosmic event recorded as surrounding his birth or death. It would have been odd if there weren't.

Because of that, it makes perfect sense that so much attention is given to the star that appeared when Jesus was born and to the darkness and earthquake that surrounded his death.

A lot of times, Christians aren't sure how to view these things. We're willing to accept them for Jesus, of course, but everyone else . . . ?

I look at it this way—we believe God created the universe, right? And we believe that he orchestrates history. We believe that he put each leader in power for a purpose, even if that purpose isn't godly. So why is it a stretch to say that his nature reflects his plan for history?

I love reading about how creation responded to Jesus. The star that heralded his birth, how the wind and sea obeyed him, the darkness and earthquake at his death. To me, it speaks to the total majesty of this God, this Savior I serve.

Yes, people have perverted it by turning it into mystical attempts to know the future—but that can be said about most things rooted in Truth. Our feeble minds latch onto something and twist it until it becomes a picture we better like or understand.

I think that in ancient history, back before modern science ruled the day and CG dominated the screen and made us doubt everything we think we see, people were more willing to believe in miracles and cosmic events.

Another example is dreams (though they may not be exactly “cosmic.”) Lots of historical and Biblical people had dreams that portended what was to come. The example I touch on in *Stray Drop* is Pilate's wife. We all know the story, that she dreamed her husband should not be involved in Jesus's death, hence the wash-his-hands-of-it thing. I opted to have Abigail view it with cynicism, because Pilate's wife (in my version—not documented in reality, LOL) always claimed to have portentous dreams.

This time, she really did.

And that, in my mind, is the coolest thing. That God showed so many people in so many different way what he was doing. He spoke to Jews and Gentiles, Romans and Greeks, young and old. And all his creation recognized the glory of it.

ANCIENT HEBREW FASHIONS

It's kind of funny, because we've all done those low (or NO) budget plays in church, right? Where we want to look biblical, so we don an old bathrobe, throw a towel over our head, and voila! If we want to be really authentic, maybe we'll get a long length of cloth to drape over our shoulders or something, right?

It's an image that's hard to shake, so I had to do some research when working on Stray Drop. I mean, some things I know about the time makes me think, "Okay, maybe it's not so far off, especially for women. They were second-class citizens at the time, so maybe they did wear formless, bland stuff." But . . . no. I mean, come on. When in history have women ever been happy to let their figures go totally unnoticed??

Men:

Men's fashions in Israel started out with the basic tunic. Robe-like thing, two seams up the sides, neck hole. They then covered it with a cloak or mantle. This isn't the cape/coat type of cloak so much as an over-jacket. It would be decorated and adorned. When out in the deserts, men would cover their heads to protect them from the sun, though much of what I looked at didn't include head coverings for city-dwellers.

Women:

Women's fashions started out much like the men's, in that they wore a tunic. But even back then, they were all about emphasizing assets. Tunics were belted, knotted, draped to show off curves.

Their hair was usually just tied back with a strip of cloth, and the head covers we all associate with them from our Sunday School plays were also practical, meant to protect them from the sun.

Egyptian paintings prove that makeup was popular, especially eye makeup, and Israel notoriously borrowed fashion from the Egyptians all the time.

This is a helpful site I used for my Biblical fashions: http://www.womeninthebible.net/3.3.Clothing_housing.htm

ANCIENT ROMAN FASHION

Men:

Men in Ancient Rome are pretty well known to have worn togas. But what college frat boys don't seem to understand is that these are overclothes. Underneath, men wore tunics--think two pieces

of cloth sown up the sides, with a neck hole in the top. There was some Roman dude whose name escapes me who horrified society by not following the customs with his tunics. I can't remember if he went out without them sometimes or dyed them funny colors . . . maybe both.

Romans were really proud of their togas, though. Senators had special markings on them so everyone would know at a glance how important they were. Those of the higher classes had really extravagant togas, though servants' would be shorter and less cumbersome. In Virgil's Aeneid, he refers to Rome as "that civiliation of proud toga-wearers."

Women:

Women also wore tunics, or, to jazz it up a bit, a Greek chiton, which is similar but has sleeves that are held closed at intervals with clasps. (Oddly, we call that kind of sleeve "roman," though the Greeks did it first.) When a woman married, she had the option to wear a stola, the female counterpart of the toga, but not all did. They were hard to handle and not very flattering.

Women being women (come on, you know it's true!) they weren't about to let their figures go unnoticed. They would drape, tie, belt, and loop their tunics and stolas to show off their curves.

Since they favored undyed wool (especially for stolas), ladies made up for the plainness by having extravagant hairstyles, headdresses, and jewelry.

And if you think makeup's a modern invention, you're waaaaay off. Women have been painting their faces pretty much since the dawn of time, and Roman women were no exception.

This is one of the sites on these fashions that I have bookmarked is <http://www.vroma.org/~bmcmanus/clothing2.html>.

HOUSES IN BIBLICAL ISRAEL

In *Stray Drop*, the house plays a pretty critical role in the story, it being where most of the action takes place. Adventurous, I know, but my heroine's a house servant, so . . . you know. I've spent a lot of time studying houses of the day. Thank you to all those diligent archeologists out there who have uncovered some for me!

What did I learn? That in Israel in Jesus' day, much of the household was run on the roof. The rooftop was usually on multiple levels, each section of the house being a varying height, and it's where people did the weaving, the cooking, the everything. For some reason, I hadn't envisioned this. I had assumed there would be something like a porch or portico, something that would provide shade. But apparently they went outside for the light, so . . . this is why I shouldn't assume. The actual kitchen was very small, and most of the cooking was done out there where the heat wouldn't build up. Makes sense, huh?

As I was writing I kept going to this site, which has a ton of helpful info about Biblical Israel: http://www.womeninthebible.net/3.3.Clothing_housing.htm#HOUSES

HOUSES IN ANCIENT ROME

I doubled my work when I decided to move half my story to Rome. Think things are the same there as in Israel of the day? Huh uh. That would have been way to easy on me.

Most of my references came from this super-easy-to-navigate site: <http://www.roman-empire.net/society/soc-house.html>

The parts that are most used in Stray Drop:

Atrium -- the part of the house you enter, which is largely an open space. In the middle was the impluvium, which is a pool that rain water collects in. (There's obviously an opening in the roof to allow for this.)

Peristylum -- the central courtyard of a house, where there would be gardens.

Tablinum -- this connects the atrium to the peristylum and is the main gathering room in the house.

Cubiculum -- bedroom. The largest bedrooms are off the peristylum

Procoeton -- a servant's room connected to a cubiculum

ISRAEL AND JERUSALEM

by Mary Proctor

The land of Israel is a testament to the love and faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God. So I especially looked forward to my first visit there. But when I discovered that the terrain in and around Jerusalem had vastly changed from New Testament times, I was disappointed. Now I couldn't trod in the same places Jesus did—as if that would have made me feel closer to Him. Duh. It took me a few minutes to regain my perspective that He'd never leave nor forsake me whether I walked in His footsteps or not.

With today's urban sprawl, at first I also struggled to picture the rural localities that existed in the first century. Though very few sites are touted by *all* scholars to be the "real thing," most of the time a strong sense of reverence permeated the atmosphere where we visited. Archeological diggings are ongoing with exciting new discoveries showing up as time goes on. For example, a new Pool of Siloam and a portion of the south wall of the second temple were unearthed last year, places where Jesus would have visited.

As with the older structures, modern buildings in Jerusalem are built with limestone (Jerusalem stone), and at sunset the city takes on a marvelous golden hue, which is breathtaking to behold. And seeing the hills reminded me of Jesus weeping over the city. It rests on Mt. Moriah, and many of the streets were so steep, it was a challenge to walk up them. Not only that, we had to zigzag from one side of the street to the other to come back down those sharp grades. Hurrying down in a straight line would have done bad things to my calf muscles and ankles, since I wasn't used to those severe angles. People either did the zigzag thing or walked with slow, cautious steps. In the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, I sensed the hovering presence of our loving Father. It was as if His arms embraced the area and the people within, many of whom had dark hair and eyes. I found them very beautiful—a fact Roseanna brings out in her character, Abigail, in *A Stray Drop of Blood*.

The "holy sites" moved me deeply whether they were authenticated or not. But when I first saw Golgotha, or Calvary, I was stunned. I'd expected a hill in a rustic location where worshippers could come and draw near to the place Jesus gave His life. But it's not like that at all. Today's Golgotha is a small, inaccessible hill with a Moslem cemetery on top of it. And it's flanked on one side by a widely used blacktopped road that leads to Jericho and Damascus. Two thousand years ago, it was an ideal location for the Romans to display those whom they crucified. They purposely used sites near heavily travelled roads so as many people as possible would see their victims—a reminder to the living to obey their conquerors, or else. Most scholars feel certain Jesus trudged on it to Calvary. But now a noisy Arab bus station sits at the base of the hill, which is easily seen from across the street where the Garden Tomb is. Even so, meditating on Jesus' final hours before His death helped me see with spiritual eyes, and I was able to ignore the secularism and worship Jesus for the sacrifices He made for my eternal salvation.

The Garden Tomb contains an ancient cistern and a network of irrigation channels, is inside the city gates across from Golgotha, and is hewn out of rock with a groove across the front for the large round stone to seal it. For these reasons most scholars feel that it likely is the sepulcher where Jesus' body lay until God raised Him from the dead. Though there was a crowd each time I visited, I couldn't linger, but I experienced a sense of awe when I stepped into the tomb and found it empty. Jesus isn't there. He is risen. Hallelujah!

MIRACLES SURROUNDING THE CRUCIFIXION

One of the big inspirations for *A Stray Drop of Blood* was simply reading the stories of the crucifixion and resurrection in the Gospels. Have you ever sat down and really looked at some of the

things reported to take place? It's amazing stuff.

When I was writing this, I had my Bible handy, with sticky notes on all the appropriate pages in each Gospel. I made notes of all the amazing things I wanted to include in the story.

Matthew 27 tells us how darkness covered the earth (verse 45) and (in 51) how in the moment of his death, the veil of the temple was torn in two. (I couldn't find a way to work that into the book, but I still think it's really cool; the fact that his death tore down the thing meant to keep normal people out of the Holy of Holies. I love symbolism!). The same verse says there was an earthquake that split the rocks. More amazingly, the graves were opened, and bodies of the saints were raised and they were seen by many in the city. You can bet I had to use that!

Mark 15 also records the darkness and the tearing of the temple's curtain. The addition worth noting from verse 39 is the centurion proclaiming that Jesus was surely the Son of God.

Luke 23 offers the tale of the one thief rebuking the other, and Christ promising him that he would be with him in Paradise. It also notes the darkness and temple curtain.

John 19 concentrates on the fulfillment of prophecy, such as the soldiers casting lots for his garments, that none of his bones were broken, and that they looked on him who they pierced.

The stuff in Matthew is obviously the most amazing, but I took pieces from all of them. In chapters 24-28 of *Stray Drop* (pages 163-192), I make some of my crucial story elements come straight from the Bible. I use the darkness (which I attribute to a coming storm) to force the household to move before Abigail returns; Abigail hears one of the thieves standing up for Jesus; Titus snarls at his soldiers when they start to fight over the tunic that is without seam and tells them to cast lots for it; he is also the centurion who can no longer deny that Jesus is the Son of God; in the earthquake, the pottery bowl holding down their note gets lost, and the note is never found; the open grave brings Jason back into it, first appearing to Titus, and then to Abigail and all of them. This remains one of my favorite parts of the story.

MOSAIC LAW CONCERNING SLAVERY

In Dueteronomy 15, Moses outlines how the Jews are to handle the poor among them who sell themselves into bondage. Though they're permitted to buy foreigners and treat them as property, pass them down to their children, etc., they are expressly forbidden to call fellow Hebrews "slaves." They do not own them--the unfortunates simply serve them.

According to the Law, bondservants serve for six years, and in the seventh, they are offered their freedom. Not just that, but the master is to give to the servant of his own flocks and property so that the servant is equipped to go into the world and make something of himself. If the servant chooses instead to serve his master forever, his ear is pierced with an awl, and he is bound forever to his master's house. The same goes for female bondservants who sell themselves because they are too poor to sup-

port themselves.

In the event that a daughter is sold to someone else, it is considered a betrothal to her master. If her master chooses not to wed her or give her to a son of the house, then he must release her from her bonds.

I complicated matters in Stray Drop by having Abigail's family sell her to a Roman. Technically, this would be cause for some major frowning, but I'm sure it happened on occasion. Cleopas, however, still observes Hebrew Law. Hence why he and Ester treat their servants as family, and why Andrew boasts an earring in his ear to proclaim his allegiance to the Visibullis house.

Abigail is in her sixth year of service during the main part of the book, and that is another underlying reason that Ester would be wanting to arrange her marriage soon. Abigail would undoubtedly have chosen to serve her for life, and that is not what Ester envisions for the girl she loves like a daughter. Instead, she would like to arrange her marriage to an upstanding citizen of Jerusalem and send her off with an impressive dowry.

When Jason comes home, thinking as a Roman--slaves are slaves forever, you can do whatever you will with them--he seriously messes up these plans. When Cleopas gives her to him as his slave, that means that she is, by Hebrew law, his wife. But according to Roman law, she is just a slave, so he has whatever rights to her he wants without the title and honor due a wife. I created this loophole and have no idea how it may have played out in the situation in reality, LOL. It's unclear what happens when Mosaic Law and Roman law clash like this. Hence, that's where fiction steps in.

MOSAIC LAW CONCERNING RAPE

Deuteronomy 22 outlines what the Law has to say about rape (not that the word existed at the time).

If a woman is engaged and someone forces himself on her, the man is to be killed--unless she didn't cry out, in which case they both will be killed. This is considered taking another man's wife, which is a disgrace worthy of death.

If the woman is unmarried and not betrothed and a man forces himself upon her, he must pay her father fifty shekels of silver and marry her, and he is never permitted to divorce her.

I found these laws soooooo interesting. Can you imagine being an innocent girl, raped by some stranger, and then forced to marry him? If the girl is a virgin, she basically has no right to demand justice against the man, because justice states he is her husband. Yet if she is betrothed, it is an affront against her husband, hence the punishment of death. (It should also be noted that this law protects the woman, since no *other* man would be expected to marry a girl who isn't a virgin.)

This is why Andrew says he wishes they had been betrothed, because then he would have had

the right to do something about Jason's actions. But given that he is a slave and Jason his master, he also falls under the law that says a servant to raise his hand against his master shall be put to death. Hence why Abigail chose to accept the shame and not cry out, to save her friends from stumbling into such a situation.

Oh the complicated, tangled web . . . makes for a great story!

ROMAN RULE OF ISRAEL

When under Roman rule, Israel was considered a client kingdom; a king was appointed, but he answered to Caesar.

Herod the Great was called King, but he couldn't decide who should succeed him. He ended up dividing the kingdom among three of his sons—none of which were too fond of that idea. They had to travel to Rome for it to be approved by Caesar, where each argued that he ought to get sole control of the kingdom.

Caesar said no. It would be divided; and further, none of them would get to be called king. They were instead called tetrarch and ethnarch. So Herod Antipas, who we see in the Gospels, was the tetrarch of Galilee.

There's some debate as to why Herod Antipas became involved in the trial, since Jesus was not in Herod's province for the alleged crimes (though Galilee was both's home province). It's generally considered to have been a courtesy (or attempt to pass the buck) on Pilate's part, to send him to Herod.

Pilate, generally referred to as the governor of Judea in the Bible, was technically the prefect appointed over the province. (Antipas' brother was declared incompetent, and he was stripped of his title. Rule of Judea was then given to these prefects.)

I avoid using the term "prefect" with Pilate because Cleopas was prefect of the military installation, and I didn't want it to be confusing.

STOICISM

Stoicism is a philosophy created by Epictetus in his Discourses. The main precept of Stoicism is that everyone has a sphere of influence and a sphere of choice. These determine what effect we can have on others and what effect others can have on us. The idea is that if we don't allow things into our sphere, we can't be moved by them. Hence the emotional-distance thing that is synonymous with "Stoic" today.

Stoicism wasn't just a philosophy though—it became a way of life. The character who most epitomizes the Stoic dictates is Titus, who has successfully kept all emotions at bay until he comes face to face with Jesus. One of the major challenges to his character is the process of opening up his heart. When he stumbles, it involves turning back to his Stoic roots to keep guilt at bay.

LANGUAGE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ANCIENT GREEK LANGUAGE

I'll never forget arriving at my college, opening my mailbox for the first time, and getting my assignments for the first day of class. I was used to high school, where first days were pretty much a waste. You know, where they handed out books, assigned seats, took role . . . first assignment for my Greek class? Memorize the alphabet and read the first chapter of the language book.

One of the first things we learned in class was that fraternities and sororities have no clue how to pronounce Greek letters. There's no long-I sound made a single letter, so traditional pronunciations of ioto, pi, psi, chi, etc. are all WRONG. Should bee pronounced ee-ota, pee (no snickering, please—we have a letter pronounced that way too;-), psee, etc.

Then we got into the really complicated stuff. See, Greek's pretty much the opposite of English. In English, our meaning depends entirely upon word order. If you write a sentence like "Man dog tells the to deck get the off the," you'll leave your readers scratching their heads. In Greek, however, this would be perfectly acceptable—everyone would know what you mean, because the cases, genders, numbers, and aspects tell you what goes logically with what.

Confused yet? Number and gender we English-speakers get okay. Granted, we don't often have words that denote gender (and even though we do with some, they're being phased out), and number's a no brainer. We all know the difference between singular and plural. But what in the world are those other things?

Well. Case is what tells you the role of a noun in the sentence. If it's the subject, it will be in the nominative case (will also be nominative if it's a predicate nominative, which usually follows a "being" verb). If it's possessive, then it'll be genitive case. The dative case signifies an object of a preposition, the thing to, for, or with which something is done, as well as its location in or at. Direct complements are in accusative case, and vocative is reserved for direct address (tell me, woman, what you mean).

The only way you can tell what adjectives and adverbs modify in the sentence is by matching up cases.

Verbs get voice and aspects instead of cases (and of course, number). These denote things like whether the subject is acting or being acted on, whether it's progressive, past, present, future, or per-

fect—and they get waaaaay more picky than we do about it!

Oy, and then there are moods! Imperative, subjunctive, optative, indicative, imperative . . .

Translating Greek texts must be done in sections. First, we generally parse. That means we go through the sentence and look up each word, noting what case, aspect, mood, voice, or whatever it is, as well as the basic definition. (Not that there's always a basic definition. Just like Greek has four words for "love," often one of their words equals four [or twenty] of ours.) Meanings often change greatly depending on what other words it's going with. It's complicated.

Thankfully, by the time the New Testament was written (and Stray Drop takes place) the extra-complicated Homeric and Attic Greeks had given way to Quasi-Greek, which is far closer to being a synthetic language than its uber-analytic predecessors. After a year of studying Ancient Greek, most of use could translate the New Testament with only a small lexicon to help us. (Lexicon=dictionary, FYI.)

I think what I most gained from these classes, though, wasn't just the ability to translate Greek: it was the lessons about linguistics in general, about what transcended the particular languages and was universal to all. And, too, what changed in the thought processes because of those things that were different.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LATIN LANGUAGE

by Andee S. Davis

You may by now have heard a version of the old schoolboy's lament, "Latin is a dead language, as you can plainly see. It killed off all the Romans, and now it's killing me!" As a Latin student in high school, I fully understood their point of view. Latin was anything but an easy A and it took time, effort, and brain power to stay alive ourselves, in that class. But there was always something curiously satisfying about making it to the end of a tough Latin translation. Like figuring out a secret code.

A "dead language," it is so often called. But though it is no longer taught by mothers to their babies in any culture, calling Latin a dead language is a misnomer. Rather, I would say, Latin lives on in so many forms that it will not die in the foreseeable future.

It is said that 75% or more of our English language comes from Latin, yet English is considered Germanic in origin. Languages like French, Spanish, Italian and Romanian descend directly from Latin and are therefore called Romance Languages. Romance, meaning: one that descends from the ancient Roman tongue. Why is it, then, that Latin derivatives dominate our English vocabulary?

While English owes most of its words pertaining to home, family, and farm to Germanic languages, the words we use which refer to knowledge, education, science, religion or the arts come directly from Latin. The written records of Old Latin don't go as far back as those of Greek, which was also widespread

as a language of the educated. But despite their similarities, Latin did not evolve from the Greek. The origins of Latin and Greek are likely an earlier language known as Indo-European.

What contributed to the widespread use of Latin over Greek was the conquering of many nations by the Roman army and the rise of the Roman Empire. A map will illustrate the vast lands that the leaders of Rome dominated for the greater portion of the thousand or so years of its existence, in a wide ring around the Mediterranean Sea and northwest to Britain.

By the age of Classical Latin, basically from the first century B.C. to the first century A.D., enough literature survived to provide a small but impressive library of this highly stylized form of the language. At the same time the ordinary citizens of Rome spoke a common version called the Vulgate. As the centuries passed Latin evolved somewhat into Medieval, Renaissance, New Latin and Recent Latin. There are even now those who promote the speaking of Latin in everyday situations, but their numbers are few and likely limited to professors and students: enthusiasts of the Latin language.

There arose, in the centuries after Julius Caesar and his contemporaries, an institution so enduring that it survived the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 A.D. and continues to this day. The Roman Catholic Church, established by Emperor Constantine in the year 312, has contributed greatly to the continued life of the Latin language. Not until the middle of the twentieth century did the Catholic Church abandon its strict adherence to Latin, but it has left the world with countless examples of Latin writing in ecclesiastical documents. As well, Latin was the language of science and learning throughout Europe and east to the Byzantine nations.

As Rome declined, the conquered peoples retained Latin as their written and spoken language. However, without Rome as their unifying force, the provinces of Gaul (France), Hispania (Spain), Dacia (Romania), and Italia (Italy) developed their own dialects of Latin and combined it with their native tongues. That is why, today, these languages are called Romance Languages. Things were different in Britain, though. As far back as the days of Julius Caesar, the Romans made their presence known in the land they called Britannia. They were able to conquer the island as far north as the area of modern Scotland. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Germanic invasions into Britain influenced the language, thus English is considered Germanic. However, many centuries later, the Normans attacked Britain from the east and finally conquered that land, bringing into the English language the influence of French, which is Romantic, or Latin, in origin.

It is fortunate that Latin, a highly inflected and well-structured language, continues to be studied...and tolerated...by students of every sort even today. It is still pervasive in science, medicine, and music, worldwide. A language that survived the rise and fall of so many cultures, Latin's influence permeates practically every modern culture across the globe today. A dead language? *Viva lingua Latina!*

MY WAY OF KEEPING IT TRUE

In the time of my story, the common language was Greek (Quasi-Greek, to be precise. See the

overview on the language for details). Since this was what my characters mostly would have spoken and thought in, unless otherwise noted, English=Greek.

Having studied Ancient Greek and spent endless hours giving myself headaches trying to translate texts, I can tell you that sometimes it's really hard to turn a Greek thought into an English sentence. Because they arrange things so differently, it's a challenge to convey the feel as well as the literal meaning.

One of the ways I chose to do this was not to use contractions. Now, I am a big fan of contractions, so this was really a challenge. But here's why I did it: in Greek, there are elisions, but that's only when one word ends in a vowel and the following one starts with a vowel. It would be hard to pronounce, so they elide the two words by leaving off the end vowel. Lots of languages do that.

I don't know of too many others that do like English does and shortens words whenever they please. Greek certainly doesn't. But we, as English speakers, use contractions versus whole words to convey casual versus formal in a lot of cases. Unlike elisions, contractions are totally a matter of choice. This subjectivity is what makes it hard for those who are not native English-speakers to learn when to contract and when not to.

So, largely for the sake of it, I decided to try to convey these differences as they would in Greek, through word choice. I also use phrases that may seem a little much in English but which are used all the time in Greek, like "to me, at least, it seems . . ." Hopefully it works to create a feel that is truer to the setting than American-isms would be.

I should also note that there are things that I had to do but which bothered me to no end. Right up there is the whole "love" thing. There is no single word in Greek that means what we think of as "love." Philo probably comes closest, but it's also used to mean love of things and friends. When you toss romance into the mix, Greeks attribute it to eros (from which we get erotic). Then there's the unconditional agape version . . . I hated that I felt untrue to the language when I have my characters saying "I love you" and meaning it as we do when we say it to that special someone who has stolen our hearts and gets us all fired up physically. But given that my readers are probably not Ancient Greeks, but rather modern day Americans . . . we'll just go with it. =)

One more minor note--you'll notice that in both the book and on this website, I call it "Hebrew," though many refer to the language as Aramaic. I did this because that's what they call it in the Gospels.

LANGUAGE AS INSULT

There's a section in my book where Abigail and Ester go out into the markets, in the end of chapter 4. We hear all the shouting of the merchants selling their wares (all the Hebrew words I use there are foods), and one of them hails Abigail. This merchant acts as though he doesn't notice Ester at first, and then finally greets her in Greek, though he had been talking to Abigail in Hebrew.

I hope that the subtlety of this comes through clearly, but just in case you were left scratching your head about the whole thing . . .

When the merchant switched his language before talking to Ester, he was in effect saying that she wasn't a Hebrew, so he had to speak to her in Greek. Ester pretty much ignores it by answering him in Hebrew, but Abigail gets offended on her mistress's behalf and then refuses to answer him in Hebrew. Get it?

I got the idea for this from reading *The Charterhouse of Parma*; it's a French novel about Italians, and the subtleties in the ways language were used astounded me. When they wanted to insult Napoleon, they called him "Buonaparte" instead of "Bonaparte"--in effect, this says he's more Italian than French, which he denied with all his being, though his birthplace of Corsica is about as Italian as a French district can get.

It really made me think about how we use the very language we speak to insult each other. I wanted to use something like that in this book because of the multi-lingual aspect of the characters. I took great care in choosing what they spoke in which of the three languages featured, and I hope those decisions help reflect the languages themselves as well as the speakers.

PSALMS

One thing that always struck me as I read through the Psalms was the musical instructions at the tops of some of them. For some reason, it took me forever to realize that these were actual songs. As in, things people sang. Performed. Hummed throughout their day.

I'm a musical person, and I sing constantly. In an office I worked in for a while, one of the agents joked that he talked to himself, but not me--I sang to myself instead. It's true. And whenever I write a character, I try to think of what songs they would be humming or singing as they go about their day.

I love that for these characters, I have a whole book of their cultural songs right there in my Bible. I can read through them just as they did, and though I don't know their melodies, I can still pick which one they may have chosen to sing on a given day. I'm sure there were other songs of the day, probably some that weren't aimed at God, but I love the idea of these characters lifting their voices to the Lord on a daily basis . . . even on those days when their hearts aren't in it. When we speak words, praises, they have a way of getting inside us. We may not mean them at the time, but they get embedded. And then they have a way of coming back to us when we need them most.

REFERENCES

HOMER

ILIAD AND ODYSSEY

There are several references to Homer in *A Stray Drop of Blood*. In case it's been a while since you've read them or haven't at all, I'll point them out and give some basic info on them.

Abigail, when serving Jason's friends in chapter 13, mentions that without the many gods, Odysseus wouldn't have been ten years returning to Ithaca. In the *Odyssey*, it is by offending the gods that Odysseus gets flicked around the world. Looking at things geographically, the trip from Troy to Ithaca is incredibly short. But when you throw in all the problems he ran into . . . that three-hour tour turned into a regular shipwreck.

In chapter 19, Jason mentions a lesson learned from Odysseus and the Cyclops--that one should never trust a man with no name. In the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus is in the clutches of the Cyclops, he tells him his name is something that translates "no one." So when the Cyclops called out for help and his one-eyed-giant friends asked him who was hurting him, he cried, "No one! No one!" Isn't it nice that humor is timeless?

In chapter 20, Menelaus references the *Iliad*. Since this isn't read as much as the *Odyssey*, it may be a little more confusing. But in the *Iliad*, the character Menelaus (yes, I was reading it when I named Jason's friend, LOL) is the husband of Helen, the one who gathered the Greek forces to wage war against Troy (also called Ilium) to get her back.

In chapter 38, there's brief mention of Abigail being able to sing Homer. This probably sounds strange to most people, but in fact Homer's works were passed down for centuries through song; one of the tutors (St. John's word for professors) at my college was an expert in Ancient Greek, and he put together a chorus that presented some selections from Homer. I loved how rhythmic it sounded, how the cadences embedded themselves in my mind, even though I didn't know all the words. So it's pretty likely that a scholar who spoke Quasi-Greek (the form used by the time of Christ) may have learned how to perform some pieces of literature written in Homeric Greek.

ARISTOTLE

NICHOMACHEAN ETHICS AND POLITICS

Aristotle is one of those philosophers that leaves an impression. The two treatises we read that most influenced my thoughts and writing of this novel were Nichomachean Ethics and Politics. There are a few places where I mention one of the characters reading one of these.

More, his ideas are brought up several times, especially when it comes to relationships. Aristotle gets really detailed about classifications of relationships, depending on the equality of the two involved. If one or the other is superior, then it isn't a friendship. In order for souls to meet, the two people must be equal.

PLATO

REPUBLIC, MENO, PROTAGORUS, CRITO, GORGIAS

Wanna take a wild guess about which Greek philosopher I liked best? Based solely on the list of things I used from each, Plato clearly comes out the winner. =)

And oh, the references I use!

They start in chapter 8, when Jason and Abigail are talking about whether virtue can be taught. This is a question I was first introduced to in Meno, when Socrates and Meno engage in a lively debate on the topic. In this dialogue we're also introduced to the phrase "making the weaker argument the stronger" through rhetoric. Abigail references this on page 244 in conjunction with another Greek writer.

Interestingly, Socrates takes the opposite side of the teachable-virtue argument in Protagoras.

Also in chapter 8, same scene as above, Abigail thinks that talking about Socrates has paralyzed her with his torpedo fish venom, just as he did his friends of the day. This is an accusation one of those friends make of Socrates. A torpedo fish stings its prey and renders it motionless so that it can attack and feast--in much the same way, Socrates was famous for leading his friends into verbal traps and then pouncing with a logical dilemma that forces them to admit the opposite of the opinion they started out with.

In chapter 9, Jason is reading Crito. This is often read in conjunction with The Apology; that one is about the trial of Socrates, Crito is while he is in prison awaiting the delivery of hemlock. What really stands out about this dialogue is that it's the only time Socrates doesn't just choose a side of an argument and deliver it. He actually talks from his heart. As Jason points out, when Caesar's armies were closing in on Cato (a political enemy), Cato read this dialogue three times before he committed suicide. (See the section on Plutarch's Cato the Younger for an interesting tidbit about suicide.)

In chapter 13, Abigail makes a comment about being a sophist and not a true philosopher. This

comes from Gorgias; a sophist is someone who uses words to get their way, making them sound nice and pretty, but there's no substance behind it. Socrates likens it to a pastry chef who offers his confection as medicine. Who wouldn't rather eat a cupcake, right? But it isn't going to make you better. A philosopher, however, uses words to get at truth, because by definition he loves wisdom. It might be painful to get there, the medicine might not taste so great, but it'll do you more good in the end.

In the epilogue, Menelaus asks them if they are running a republic to make Plato proud. Republic is probably the most read of Plato's dialogues, and for good reason. It's a fabulous piece of literature, and I recommend everyone read it. But the gist for those who won't (which would be me if I hadn't already, LOL) is that Socrates wanted to theorize about the perfect society. He at first came up with something very simple, but his friends declared it boring, so he made it more complex. The ruler of this republic would be a philosopher-king, and the ultimate goal is to use philosophy to bring mankind from the darkness of the cave (ignorance) into the light of wisdom. He warns that this is a painful process; when you emerge, you're blinded and ill, and you have to adjust to the outside world after living in a cave all your life. Once you've acclimated and learned, some are selected to go back into the cave to try to convince others to come out into the light too--a difficult task, since many will not even admit that there is an outside. Is this a perfect analogue to Christianity or what?

VIRGIL

AENEID

There are several times I mention Virgil's Aeneid in the novel. During Augustus's reign, Homer was still so popular that he said, "Hmph. It's no fair that the Greeks have this awesome piece of literature. We need one too."

He'd especially think so because Romans claim to have been founded by escapees from Troy, after the Greeks destroyed it. So Augustus commissioned Virgil to write a Roman equivalent of the Iliad and Odyssey. The result is the Aeneid.

My personal opinion (take this with a grain of salt) is that Virgil's masterpiece doesn't measure up to Homer's. Probably because I had read Homer first, but it felt like a copy. (Gee, maybe because it was?) Hence why I have Jason sharing my opinion in the beginning of chapter 8.

EPICLETUS

DISCOURSES

Epictetus has the distinction of being one of the founders of Roman thought as the creator of Stoicism. His Discourses outline the philosophy and were held as all but sacred to our proud toga-wearers.

The main precept of Stoicism is that everyone has a sphere of influence and a sphere of choice. These determine what effect we can have on others and what effect others can have on us. The idea is that if we don't allow things into our sphere, we can't be moved by them. Hence the emotional-distance thing that is synonymous with "Stoic" today.

As with most philosophies that stuck, there's a lot of truth in what Epictetus has to say. But as Abigail points out in chapter 32, it also doesn't take into account that emotions simply are, and that people respond to other people's. All in all, though, I remember really enjoying my read of the Discourses.

ARISTOPHANES

CLOUDS

Aristophanes took Socrates' talk of making the weaker argument the stronger through rhetoric and ran with it. He set out to do exactly that with his plays, and made a joke of it. Hence Abigail's comment on page 244.

Of course, I feel it necessary to confess that I hated the play I read by this guy, *Clouds*. I found it as close to vulgar as one could get and still make it past the censors. This is the play I had in mind for Abigail and Ester to be reading at the beginning of chapter 16.

PLUTARCH

CATO THE YOUNGER

Plutarch's Lives are considered the authority on ancient biographies; I have no clue where the guy got his information, but his pieces are thorough and take a deep look into the people he writes about.

I reference his Cato the Younger in chapter 9 (and have talked about it a little in my section here on Plato), when Jason is reading Plato's *Crito*. In *Cato*, we learn that the politician, one of the ones that not only opposed Julius Caesar's ascension to the crown but rallied an army against him, read through the dialogue three times before killing himself.

Now, this seems as good a time as any to highlight a little historical tidbit about suicide. I remember the first time I read stuff about Romans falling on their swords I was pretty cynical about it. It seemed like a copout, and I was totally against suicide in general. Then someone told me something that made it not so simple, morally speaking.

According to Roman law, if someone like Cato were captured and executed, then his family

would lose all their holdings in Rome. But if he died, they retained their wealth. So rather than subject their families to this, when someone saw the enemy closing in and knew there was no escape, they killed themselves. It was actually the altruistic thing to do, and it's what Cato did when he saw there would be no getting away from Caesar's armies.

TACITUS

ANNALS

People would probably find it a little funny that one of the books I kept on my desk while writing *Stray Drop* was a history of Rome, Tacitus's *Annals*. In part because I could open it up and see what was going on during the time on my story, and largely because I could say, "Need a name, need a name," flip it open, and voila! A Roman name!

I suppose I shall also note here that Caius Asinius was a real person, recorded as being the consul a few years of Tiberius's reign; he had a particularly easy job of it because the emperor was in a good mood after his longtime rival, General Germanicus, died.

I, of course, totally fictionalized the character of Caius. He is only mentioned once in Tacitus, and it certainly says nothing about him being a womanizing jerk. (Though enough other politicians of the day are described as such that it wasn't a stretch;-)

In any case, I did indeed take notes from Tacitus as to the important historical details of the day. I recommend you just trust me on that instead of wading through hundreds and hundreds of pages of Roman history for yourself. Unless, of course, that floats your boat.

THE BIBLE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

If you think I'm going to mention every single time I reference the Bible, you're certifiably crazy, LOL. The Bible was my constant companion and reference as I wrote *Stray Drop*—if I was working on the story, I'd have my laptop and my Bible.

The Old Testament was my backdrop. During sophomore year at St. John's, we read the Bible more or less straight through within a couple of months, skipping only sections of a few lesser books. This task, which is daunting for sure, was incredibly rewarding for me. Not only because I love reading the Bible, but because doing it so quickly gave me a better, more thorough understanding of the culture and society created around Moses' laws.

I was especially blessed to have as one of my seminar tutors and Orthodox Jew. As we read and discussed the Old Testament, we raised in Christian beliefs often said things like, “Well, that’s obviously a prophecy of Jesus.” To which he would reply, “Says who? It could just as easily be a prophecy of this.” Ester often reflects this tutor’s thoughts in her arguments against Messiah.

I took a lot of notes during these readings, especially of the laws that came into play in my story. The most important two are noted in Mosaic Law section of the Companion Guide, those on slavery and rape.

Another thing worth noting, and which I only saw because of our intense read, is the break in thought between the Old and New Testaments. In the Old, all the incentives, rewards, and punishments are based in the physical. I.e., do this and your belongings will increase, don’t do it and a plague will come upon you. But sometime in the few-hundred years between the last of the Prophets and the opening of the New Testament, a shift occurred. By the time Jesus made his appearance, emphasis had shifted to spiritual matters. There was suddenly talk of Paradise and heaven, which there hadn’t been before.

Movements like that of the Zealots greatly paved the way for Jesus’ message by turning the minds of the people away from purely physical matters and onto the realm of the spirit and condition of the soul.

I make mention of a lot of New Testament events, both the miracles performed by Jesus and some of the early-church events recorded in Acts. The challenge was putting myself in the position of someone who had never heard of this stuff before, who hadn’t been raised to think the accounts true. How would I have reacted if I just heard these stories on the street? Probably, I’d be incredulous.

And once my characters were won to belief . . . then what? They didn’t have a handy-dandy, pocket-sized New Testament to carry around with them. They didn’t have the Gospels, the Epistles, anything. They only had the Law, and the stories they had heard—at least until the coming of the Holy Spirit, when they also had him as guide.

I tried to stay true to the spirit of the Gospels, and to the letter whenever I had it. Sometimes I had to fill in blanks, insert some fiction to help bring the facts into perspective. My hope and prayer is that it’ll direct my readers back to the Bible and help make it more real to them.

BEHIND THE SCENES

WHERE THE IDEA CAME FROM

I was fifteen, and it was Good Friday. The night before, I'd officially become David's girlfriend (he's now my hubby), and my best friend hadn't been too keen on the news. We'd gotten into a huge fight, and it cast a pall over my day.

All things considered, it's a good day to have a pall over. Feeling melancholy, lonely, and a little bitter, I sat down in front of the picture window and looked out at the mountain barely touched by spring. Pulled out my Bible, and opened it to the Gospels so I could read about the day.

I'd read the story before, many times. But that day, it really hit me. Wow. The things Jesus went through--the way the very earth reacted--the significance it had for all mankind. And being me, I wondered.

What would it have been like to be there that day? Not as some historical figure, but as an everyday woman, one lost in the crowd? What would she have seen? What would she have felt? And more, what if she had gone to the trial to see Barabbas condemned and had instead seen him set free? Would she have cried against the religious leaders that led the mob? Would she have opened her heart to the forgiveness Jesus offered those who persecuted him, or would she have closed herself off in bitterness? What would have happened if she'd been touched by a drop of his holy blood?

I sat down at the computer and wrote a six-page short story. Called it "A Stray Drop of Blood." And knew, even that day, that it would be a book. Abigail had so much more to tell me about her life, about her heart. I also knew I wasn't ready to write it yet. So I filed it away in the back of my mind and held it close to my heart.

I penned the first words during freshman year of college at St. John's, as we read all those Ancient Greek philosophers. Wrote a little more during sophomore year, when we studied Roman literature and the Bible. I took notes--copious notes--and absorbed the culture like a sponge.

By the time senior year rolled around, the book was about halfway done. It was so intense a story that I couldn't write it while classes were in session. But second semester, we had time off to write our senior theses, and I took the opportunity to hammer the book closer to finished too. I ended up completing it the same week I graduated.

It was a six year journey to that first draft, one that helped me grow in ways I never would have thought.

One thing I really wanted to explore as I wrote was what reality must have been like for those first believers. They didn't have the New Testament yet, they didn't have centuries of scholars whose works they could fall back on. They had the Law. They had Jesus' teachings.

They had the Holy Spirit.

When my husband decided he wanted to get into publishing, he asked if we could use Stray Drop as his launching title. My first reaction? "No way! I want to send it to some huge publisher!"

Ahem. We see how that went. LOL. It's a long book, had some issues (which I didn't realize at the time), and no "big" publisher would touch it. So I became the launching title of WhiteFire Publishing, and we produced a few hundred hardbacks for a limited distribution.

I didn't do much to promote or market, given that it came out about a month before my daughter joined us. I got caught up in mommyhood and let my poor literary baby molder.

Until we ran out of hardbacks. We decided to do a paperback version, and since it needed a separate ISBN anyway, I said, "Let me rewrite it. Let me bring it up to my current writing level."

It deserved it. This story . . . I love this story. Even years later, having learned so much about how to be a writer, I love this story. So it was with great pleasure and a healthy dose of obsession that I sat down with *A Stray Drop of Blood* again and threw myself into the life of Abigail, Ester, Cleopas, Jason, Andrew, Titus, Caius, Samuel, and Benjamin.

I hope you get just as caught up in it as I did.

HOW I DID MY RESEARCH

This is one of the questions I get most asked about *Stray Drop*. I guess because of the references I drop left and right, I've had quite a few people say, "Wow, you must have done a ton of research."

I did. Two years' worth. But I cheated--or at least, we'll call it dual credit. Much of my research was simply my college reading list. I attended St. John's College in Annapolis, a.k.a. The Great Books School. The whole point of the college is that we read the Great Books of Western civilization, those writers who are generally considered to have most impacted our society.

First year, it's almost entirely Ancient Greek. Second year, Ancient Roman, Biblical. So you see where this would be pretty helpful, right? We even learn some Greek, which, since that was the common language of New Testament times, was especially helpful.

Now, once you start reading some of this stuff, you see that they refer to each other constantly,

proving that people of the day knew this literature. Some of the Romans we read talked about Plato and Aristotle like we talk about Grisham and Jeopardy. It was widely read by anyone with the knowledge and leisure time to read. So if you're wondering about how my characters toss around discussions of some of this stuff, rest assured that it's plausible. =)

For more particular research, I turned to the handy-dandy internet and scoured the web for information on fashion and housing, the military, ships, trade . . . you name it.

I'm sure I got some details wrong, and if you catch one and can point me to information that contradicts something I wrote, please contact me using the form in the left margin. I always love to learn!

FUNNY STUFF FROM THE HEAD OF ROSEANNA

Talk to any writer, and you're going to get some interesting stories about when their fictional world intrudes on reality. Pretty much inevitable when someone lives in their imagination.

I was no different when writing *Stray Drop*. Aside from the times when I heard something interesting in class and launched into a daydream about how it could apply to Abigail--and completely overlooking those occasions when I'd get out a notebook and let people think I was taking notes on class when really I was jotting down story ideas--I kept my friends regularly entertained with my double-think.

One of the things I did when writing this was not use contractions. (See the Language section for details.) Which meant that I had to train my brain to think this way, 'cause lemme tell you, it isn't natural for me. It was like there was a censor between brain and fingers. I would think "I don't know" which earned an "Ah! No! It's 'I know not."

Thing is, I couldn't turn this censor off. So I'd be talking or in class and I'd stumble over my words because I was trying to take out the contractions, then putting them back in.

A few other tidbits . . . The first version was a little steamier in a few sections. My dad, being ever-so-supportive, read the book as soon as galleys were available, which was when we all went on vacation together. We could all tell when he got to those parts--got to watch his ears turn red.

One of the highest compliments I received was when an elderly lady from my church bought the book. Then called my mom up and said, "I need another copy. My niece is having surgery and needs reading material, but no way am I lending her mine!"

We belong to a really small denomination, where everybody knows everybody. Except for my church, which is new. My parents went to their first conference meeting in the summer of '09 and were really touched when a line of people queued up to meet them. Then the woman next in line came up, gave them hugs and said, "You're Roseanna's parents! I can't believe it! I love her book!" Made my day. =)