

Questions from Readers, Answers from Deborah Harkness.

Q: I thought it was an interesting choice that you chose to make Matthew religious and I was wondering if you can talk more about that? I would imagine that someone who knows so much about science and evolution (and was friends with Darwin!) and has lived so long and has proof that life and afterlife isn't what it is as explained in the Bible. Why does he still hold on to a mortal religion? Especially one that shuns witchcraft and he may even know creatures older than when the Bible was written.

A: Actually, there's nothing inherently incompatible between science and religion. Some of the greatest scientists in history--Copernicus, Galileo, Newton--were men of faith, like Matthew. There are witches in the Bible. There are also wise men who read signs in the heavens and travel to Bethlehem (we would call that astrology...) Most popes throughout the medieval and early modern periods had staff astrologers! It is appropriate to Matthew's great age, his education, and his background that he would be deeply Catholic.

Q: Hi Deborah from South Africa! Can I ask you to tell me, what YOU love about the female characters in your books and what are their strengths (In your opinion)?

A: Love that you are a fan of the books! I think what I love about my characters--female and male--is that they are struggling with aspects of themselves they don't particularly like. That's something we can all relate to, I think: having something about ourselves we would rather not have. Even "gifts" like intelligence or magical talent can make us feel different and we want to hide. Though it is a terribly trendy way to put it, I think I love best that my characters are "in process" and still have work to do. They definitely aren't perfect!

Q: Hi Deborah! Thank you for your respect of your reader's intelligence - especially in the paranormal romance genre where a lot of stories entail "wham-bam-thank-you-ma'am" and not much else!

Anyway! I'm about to read book 2 now for the first time, and one of the questions I have for you is about daemons. Will you be elaborating further about what makes them tick? (Maybe you might not answer that as you may have answered that question in the books themselves ;))

My last question has two parts - are you intending to write more books, and will they be in the same 'universe' but about different characters? (Hopefully more about daemons - have you noticed I like them?) I have loved the whole trilogy. Is there going to be another one with the same characters, I would love to know what happens next?

A: I think by the end of the trilogy you will have a deeper sense of daemons. That said, the stories are really from the perspective of a witch and a vampire and daemons are fairly marginal beings in the world of creatures. Like most creatures on the edges of society, we don't always understand them as well as we should.

I'm just beginning to think about what I will write next. I am playing around with a few ideas, and as soon as I know for sure I will let my agent, editor, and then all of you know. :)

Q: I wanted to know if you would be open do writing more with the characters from the AST. I was absolutely taken with Gallowglass and would love to see what he is doing after the events of the trilogy. and if he will get over his love of Diana.

A: I'm honestly not sure. I love these characters, and their world, and as Philippe says "never is a long time," so I wouldn't rule out returning to them at some point in the future.

Q: Hi, Deb! How did you come to chose your vampires' cultures of birth? How did you decide Baldwin was from Roman times or that Matthew Royden, a shadowy figure in English history, was actually a 6th century French Catholic? Thanks so much.

A: Hi, Jean! That's a great question. It's not a deliberate thing, you sort of drift into it and the characters lead the way. So with Matthew, I knew he was "like" Matthew Roydon. And then I thought, ok, what if he *is* Matthew Roydon? Then I realized Matthew's personality wasn't really Elizabethan, and he had to be Catholic, so I just thought myself back into a period that clicked. I also knew that Matthew was younger than Baldwin. So I thought back from Matthew's birth date until I found a period I felt could produce a soldier like Baldwin

Q: Baldwin question, but not about the one you'd think! In Shadow of Night, you mention Lacey Baldwin Smith. I know a little of his background, but I've long wondered what made him a master story teller? (Takes one to know one I would say!)

A: What made Lacey Baldwin Smith a great story teller--and a great historian--was that his research subjects were "alive" to him. He truly could imagine himself right into the period he was studying, tell you how someone would have reacted to a situation, etc. That was all born out of many decades of reading state papers and other documents from the era. That kind of life-long expertise is something truly awe inspiring when you come into contact with it.

Q: What 3 places would Ransome recommend that a warmblood visit in NOLA?

A: As for NOLA, Ransome would definitely recommend coffee at Cafe du Monde--with chicory in it, of course. He likes the powdery sugar smell of the beignets, too. Ransome has spent rather too much time at the Old Absinthe House, starting back when it was Aleix's Coffee House and continuing on when the signature drink was the (now illegal) Absinthe House Frappe. He also likes to fish at Bayou Sauvage. I think I'll stop there before you get into too much trouble!

Q: Since most chapters in the books are date specific, how strongly did astrology influence the story's timeline as well as the birth dates of Diana and Matthew? Their horoscopes match their personalities.

A: Great question! When I was first writing A DISCOVERY OF WITCHES, I knew Diana was born on August 13, 1976 (Leo, Friday the 13th, Feast of Diana, etc.) so I drew up a horoscope for that day. Then I drew up *two* for Matthew: his birth-birthday and his rebirthday. Matthew, not surprisingly, is a complicated person and his astrology is equally complicated. As a vampire, he has two of everything! You already know he was reborn a Gemini, but his natal chart is in another sign entirely. You will find out what it is at the end of THE BOOK OF LIFE, if you haven't already.

Q: Deb, have you considered publishing an "illustrated" edition of the AST. I'm envisioning something like what Dan Brown did with the DaVinci code. I loved reading about so many things I wasn't familiar with, and I think that the reader's experience can be enhanced by the addition of photographs and excerpts that further describe people, places and events. P.S. I would pay decent money for such a book.

A: We've talked about it but so far we haven't been able to see how such a thing would work without the book being very, very expensive from an image copyright point of view. We're still working on it!

Q: In TBOL, I noticed that Rima recognizes Diana when she first meets her in Venice. Rima says to Diana "You seem so familiar", I know that Rima had Diana's commonplace book for awhile and in SoN Diana put Lavender and Rosemary (for memory spells) when she left it at the Old Lodge. My question is, Rima said that Gonsalves MS 4890 reminded her of another MS that belonged to the Gonsalves heir that was sent to the University on Seville and I was wondering if that MS was the book Mathew bought for Diana in London?

A: no, it's just another commonplace book!not related to Diana at all.

Q: SON was set in Tudor England. What other historical periods and locations appeal to you as potential settings for another fictional outing?

A: All of them! Seriously, I just love history so one of the great attractions of writing is the chance to visit historical periods where I'm not an expert and learn new things!

Q: One thing I become more conscious of as a reader (and re-reader) is pacing; how a writer determines when to change the pace or tone of the story. For example, just when so many horrible things are happening to characters, the writer gives the reader a little respite, either with humor, or a quiet scene to lessen the dramatic tension, so to speak. How do you, as a writer, plan that out? Is this something which happens mostly in revisions? Do other writers/readers/editors give you feedback on that or insert a few red pencil remarks? The ability to manage the ebb and flow of the tension of the story strikes me as being really difficult!

And a second question: is there a temptation and/or pressure to continue a successful

trilogy after you've completed it? How do you decide the story is DONE? As a reader, I'm torn between never wanting a good story to end, and being content with a very satisfying ending to a story (which I believe you accomplished.) As much as I'd love to hear more about other characters' stories (okay, yes, Gallowglass. Not to mention Marcus and Phoebe. And Jack . . .), I am also very content with the way you knotted and tied up the story.

A: My experience writing is probably a bit like yours is when you read. Sometimes the tension becomes unbearable for *me* and I find somebody cracks a joke, or Jack winds up the automaton, or similar. I never plan it, I just know because I'm living inside the story that I need a break. I figure my readers will, too.

As for your second question, I always knew what the ending of the trilogy was. In other words, I was always writing towards a specific goal. The story of Matthew, Diana, and Ashmole 782 is done. That said, there are lots of characters in the books whose story remains untold. Perhaps one day they will tap me on the shoulder and whisper their secrets. But it wouldn't be a continuation of *this* story, per se. I hope that makes sense!

Q: What was your inspiration for All Souls Trilogy? Was it Diana, architecture, or an illuminated manuscript that lit the spark? What is your favorite book in the Trilogy and why? Finally.....keep on writing, please :)

A: My inspiration was a question: if there really were vampires and witches, what did they do for a living and how on earth would they date people?

My favourite book is SHADOW, because I spend most of my time in the 16th century, so it feels like home.

And yes, I will keep writing. I promise.

Q: How did you choose Matthew's name? In SON, he is Matthew Roydon from the School of Night, an obscure historical figure. Was this character named Matthew, knowing what was upcoming in the second book's plot?

A: Yes. He was Matthew almost from the beginning, as soon as I realized that Matthew Roydon, who annoyed me no end when I was writing my master's thesis, was very vampiric. One of the first things I knew about Matthew Clairmont was that he'd been Matthew Roydon in 1590.

Q: Now that the BoL is in paperback will you be updating the Spotify playlist with all of the songs?

A: I will be posting the rest of the playlist on May 26, the day the US paperback is released. There are spoilers in it, of a sort, especially a big one in Chapter

17/18 so I didn't want to ruin things for the readers. After May 26, gloves are off. :)

Q: Will you be continuing the story of Diana and Matthews children?

A: I don't know. They're pretty tiny at the moment, and don't do much that's very interesting...yet.

Q: You have kindled a love for you subjects both with you fiction and your historical non-fiction. Would you please consider teaching an online course?

A: Hanalie, you know the answer to this question already, but I'll give you the same one again: no, because I am teaching at university already, and the little spare time I have is devoted to writing!

Q: When Diana muses about how she would taste, after discussing a wine that reminded her of Matthew, why didn't she clarify that she was referring to how she would taste if she were a wine, not how her blood would taste? Personally, I would think I'd be quick to correct any misunderstandings at the beginning of a new relationship. I wondered why you opted not to have her do that.

[SPOILER ALERT: I'm being intentionally vague, possibly a spoiler for those who haven't finished the series.]

2.) After the main events of the trilogy have unfolded, does Diana still have the physical, tattoo-like marks or do those eventually fade? I'm trying to picture her at the end of their story, and wondered if the events marked her permanently....

A: That remark came VERY early in their relationship, and it's not like Diana is experienced when it comes to vampires. It is a completely innocuous remark--unless you say it to Matthew. I don't even think Baldwin would have reacted that way, or Ysabeau. I think they would have just started laughing. So she needed to say it, and Matthew needed to react, so that you and I and everybody else could know that this was a sensitive issue for him.

As for the second question, Diana is now a palimpsest. That means that she is not walking around all the time like the tattooed lady. Her marks are always there, like Matthew's scars, very faint under the skin--unless her magic becomes very active. Then some of them may rise to the surface

Q: I have just finished reading the first novel. As a Christian I had been put off by the subject but thought how can you judge without reading them. Well I loved it and will be starting SON shortly. What I'd like to know is did you have Richard Armitage in mind when you created Matthew as the description is so like Mr A? Have you always been interested in the paranormal? If not, how did you come up with that story line?

A: I'm glad you gave them a chance. Matthew is, after all, a deeply faithful Christian, too. He was inspired only by Matthew Roydon, for whom no image survives, but I thought he might look a bit like the miniature "Young Man In Flames" that is on the spine of the US edition of SHADOW. That was my starting point. Otherwise, he wasn't based on anyone else though all sorts of bits and pieces of people probably influenced his looks and his character.

As for the second question, I have been interested in the paranormal since 1982 when I went to college. There I took a course on magic in the Renaissance and was fascinated by the way that people then saw no conflict between magic, science, and religion. It was a real eye opener for me!

Q: What books would you recommend us to learn more about alchemy, the school of night, and medieval England? I really loved SON and all the characters and details about them and their lives in the medieval England.

A: I'm going to cut and paste a link here that leads back to my website and has a good long list of further reading suggestions:
<http://deborahharkness.com/shadow-of...>

Q: Hi! Thanks again for creating such a great book series. Just finished re-reading the whole thing. You created such a large, diverse, and wonderful family of creatures by the end of the series. Was there a character or maybe a plot point that you really loved but in the end had to be edited out? Can't wait to see what you write next!

A: I really, really wanted Freyja (another of Philippe's daughters) to be in the final book with Verin. They are quite a pair! But my editor convinced me there were already a lot of new characters--as well as lots of old characters!--and I should leave her in the wings. But I do feel a bit wistful about having her on the sidelines.

Q: The All Souls Trilogy is one of my favorites and I've read it several times over. I am looking forward to seeing the TV adaptation on BBC and to reading whatever you write next.

Thanks for taking the time to do Q&A with your fans. I was wondering who Marcus would choose to change Phoebe into a vampire?

A: I'm afraid that's not my tale to tell at the moment! I have to wait until Marcus and Phoebe feel like sharing it!

Q: Hello! I'm curious about how you chose names for the vampires in the books. Matthew goes by multiple variations of his name depending on the time and place. Was that a factor in choosing the character's name? How did you choose names for the other vampire characters in the book considering that they also live over hundreds of years in various cultures? Was there a lot of research and thought involved, or am I just a nerd? :)

A: You are not a nerd! I did a lot of research on names, including their meaning and their origins and when/where they became common. So it's not an accident that Matthew's many names fit his looks and personality.

Q: I was wondering how Matthew could start over again at different universities when he looks 37.

A: There are continuing students--and always have been. Also, he doesn't start over from the beginning. He's enters as a graduate student--someone who already has a degree. My advisor went back to get her PhD in her 40s!

Q: I noticed in all the books, characters have strong feelings about legacy (even the house!). Many characters save items such as books, photos, journals, etc. Is that art imitating life? What books, art, etc. do you plan to save for future generations or what personal possessions would you want people to remember you by?

A: Wow. Great question. I am the keeper of most of my family's assorted stuff--quilts from the 1890s, a wooden box from the Revolutionary War with some of my great-great grandfather's documents (he was on the Committee of Correspondence), farm ledgers from another ancestors farm in Ohio in the 1840s, photos, etc. I do have a few memory boxes filled with items from the past four years of my life, as they have been fairly amazing. :) I think I will be happy to be remembered for my books--both non-fictional and fictional--and for the students I've taught over the past two decades (and hopefully for many more decades to come).

Q: I have another question. I know Satu is a weaver, as is Goody, Abraham, and Diana. I am wondering if each has an affinity toward a certain element. I know Diana has fire and water in her veins. I think Goody's is air. I know that weaver's can borrow from all but can not possess any completely but I had this feeling that a weaver might have more strength with one that they have a affinity for in comparison to the other elements.

A: Yes, weavers do have strong leanings towards elements even though they are not a "firewitch" per se. So Abraham is inclined towards earth. Stephen was inclined towards air and water.

Q: Hi Deb, I'm a bit late to the trilogy, just finishing Shadows, but I love the series nonetheless! I was wondering, what are some of your favorite fiction novels? *I don't honestly read much fiction. I do have soft spots for the Mayfair Witches series by Anne Rice, Possession by A. S. Byatt, and the historical fiction of Dorothy Dunnett. I tend to reread those!*

I recently saw your Instagram posts with the #dianabishop for the day. What would you recommend to a reader as a must see or do in London? Also do you have any recommendations for reading while traveling, besides the AST of course?

A: I would recommend you spend some time in the true City: the square mile around St. Paul's and the Tower of London. There's not much left to see of Diana and Matthew's London, but it's still fun to imagine. There is a video of me leading a walking tour here: <https://youtu.be/t3nruTVx25U>. As for reading, why not read one of Ben Aaronovitch's magical mystery books? His website will tell you more: <http://www.the-folly.com/>. I also loved Victoria Schwab's recently published book about four magical London's, A DARKER SHADE OF MAGIC. Have fun!

Q: Thanks for the Trilogy - I just finished a 2nd read thru. Have you considered picking the story up and writing more - perhaps as the twins reach teenage years? I haven't made any definite plans about what I'm going to write next. At the moment, I will just say that the twins are quite tiny and not very interesting! :)

Gallowglass was the biggest surprise and one of the biggest delights of the series for me. By the end of the third book I was ready to run off with him (don't tell my husband). I'm wondering if he was as big a surprise to you? I think I read somewhere that you weren't planning on writing him, but he showed up for you in the second book. Did his love for Diana show up unexpectedly for you in the third book, or was that in your plans all along?

Also, this may have already been asked, but do you have plans to write any other fictional work? Not even necessarily with these characters, although that would be great. You've got such a unique background and opened up some interesting new worlds for me via these books. I'd love a chance to read more about them via your fiction!

A: I definitely didn't plan on having a Gallowglass at the beginning. He literally waltzed in at the beginning of SHADOW and refused to leave. Once he was in the room, all writing screeched to a halt because I had to stop and reconceptualize EVERYTHING from that moment on. I picked up some threads in the first book, attached them to Gallowglass, figured out his entire life's backstory, and only then could I finish the story of Diana and Matthew.

And yes, I will definitely keep writing. I'm just not sure what I'll be writing, yet!

Q: Will you be writing more stories with these characters?

A: I'm not sure yet, Melissa. We all need a bit of a break first!

Q: Which creature are you most like? Witch, vampire or daemon?

A: Human. Honestly. :)

**This question/answer session was conducted on the 5th of May, 2015. Transcribed by a Daemon. ☺*