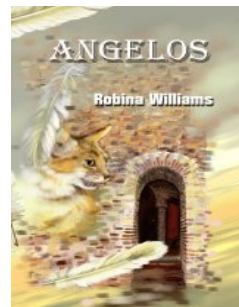
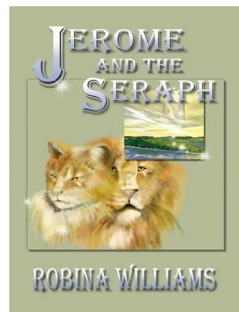


An Interview with Robina Williams

By:

TANNIA E. ORTIZ-LOPES

<http://timewithtannia.tripod.com>



1) **Tell us about yourself.**

After leaving university, I spent several years teaching language and literature in schools. Then I worked as a journalist, writing feature articles for newspapers and magazines. I've also been a secretary—I took a typing course and have found it to be one of the most useful things I've ever done. Word-processing came easily to me since I knew my way around a keyboard. I couldn't have written my books if I didn't have proficiency in word-processing, as I write straight to screen. Most of my time now is taken up with novel-writing.

2) **You have two co-related titles, a M.A. in Modern Languages from Oxford University and an M.Phil. in English Literature from Liverpool University. What motivated you to study languages and literature?**

Since my schooldays I have been interested in language and literature—and I just love grammar! I lament the fact that grammar is studied so little in our schools today. I think that Latin should be taught to all students for a year or two, as it is so analytical and precise that it forces one to get one's sentences sorted out logically and make sure that everything ties up. The Greek myths are wonderful, but they need to be read with the understanding that in many of the stories, the prime movers are the gods. The deities may be at odds with each other on occasion, and they fight their battles through the agency of

humans—as with the Trojan War, the return of Odysseus to Ithaca, and the arrival of Aeneas in Latium. Of course, the Greek gods are remarkably, and charmingly, human in their characteristics. I think it is the very humanity of the classical deities that makes them so suitable for use in modern-day storytelling. The study of literature, in whatever language and of whatever period, helps to cast light upon today's events and issues. The stories of past times are relevant today. And besides, they're such a good read!

I think it's also a good thing to have a familiarity with a language that's spoken today, for, outside of the Vatican, who speaks Latin with fluency nowadays? An ability to converse with locals in a foreign country greatly assists one's understanding of the culture of that country, and of course pleases the local residents.

As to my research degree in English Literature: I am fond of the writings of the Victorian novelist Wilkie Collins, and I also very much like Pre-Raphaelite painting. Collins was a painter before he became a writer. He was a friend of the leading Pre-Raphaelites—and his brother was a Pre-Raphaelite painter—and I felt that his writings were much influenced by the painting style of the Pre-Raphaelites: their use of detail and brilliant, jewel-like colors, and their “modern” subject matter—which horrified some of the traditionalists. Collins is, to my mind, a very painterly writer, and my research thesis was a study into this aspect of his work. I brought my interest in art into both *Jerome and the Seraph* and *Angelos*, for both plots are centered around paintings. On my website, www.robinawilliams.com, there are illustrated articles about the paintings in the stories.

3) What curiosity effect caused in your inner self the concept of the Schrödinger's Cat that inspired the creation of Quant, your books' main character?

That's such an interesting question, Tannia! Well, I came across the details of Erwin Schrödinger's cat-in-a-box quantum theory while I was researching the issue of perception and the role of the observer for my postgrad thesis. In this imaginary experiment, a cat would be shut in a steel container together with a small amount of radioactive substance, a geiger counter, a small hammer and a glass vial of poisonous gas. If a radioactive atom decayed, it would trigger the process whereby the hammer would shatter the vial, the poison would be released, and the cat would be killed. The exact status of the cat would not be determined until an observer opened the container: until then, the creature would, in quantum theory, be both dead and alive—it would be in each state simultaneously.

Apparently, Schrödinger wished afterward that he had never met up with the cat—he'd gotten so fed up with it. However, I am very glad he thought up the cat, for a cat that can exist in two states at once is a most useful fictional character. It gives a novelist great flexibility, as a dead-and-alive cat affords an *entrée* into the afterworld as well as the here-and-now world.

4) **What inspired the storyline of your first book, *Jerome and the Seraph*? Give us a brief description of the book.**

A few years ago, when I was living in a stone house on a Welsh hillside, I was sometimes visited by a cat. The cat was friendly and would keep me company for a while, then disappear—reappearing again at intervals. He was something of a mystery cat, for he looked well fed and didn't want a new home; he came and went as he pleased. I combined this mystery cat and Schrödinger's cat of indeterminate status, and created Quant, my quantum cat: a ginger tomcat.

Nearby, on the hillside, was a monastery, and I would sometimes see the robed monks strolling around their gardens. I added a monastery to my story, and imagined an order of monks who had a pet cat—that had strolled by one day and decided to stay. The cat seems to be particularly attached to Brother Jerome. Jerome, the monastery's cook, thinks that he is looking after the cat. The contrary is the case, of course: the cat, a quantum creature, is actually looking after him. In his true form, Quant is a seraph, sent by his Lord to keep an eye on Jerome and his brothers-in-faith.

The book opens with Jerome finding himself unexpectedly, and to his mind prematurely, in the afterworld, after slipping on a patch of ice in the graveyard, and cracking his head on a tombstone. The afterworld is singularly lacking in cherubs, harps and all the paraphernalia he had been expecting; it seems to be empty, and he wonders how he is going to pass the time. Then, to his surprise and joy, his pet cat turns up—and turns out to be a quantum creature, with powers Jerome had never dreamed he possessed. With the cat at his side, Jerome sets out on his adventures—as you can read!

5) ***Angelos*, the sequel to *Jerome and the Seraph*, is full of Greek mythology and complex topics such as: time traveling, life after-death, and the dark night of the soul. How did you manage to combine them all in a manner distinctively entertaining for the reader?**

Thank you. It's good to know that you found *Angelos* an entertaining read. I love the Greek myths. They're full of fascinating stories, themes that I believe to be relevant today, and a host of interesting personalities—whether human, animal or a blend of the two, such as the Minotaur. As the central character of *Angelos* is a quantum creature—a divine messenger, the *Angelos* of the title—I made him into a bridge between the ancient world and the world of today: he can travel with ease from present to past and back again. So, Quant, the seraph in feline form, is the link between the Cretan King Minos, the early Christians Androcles and the Desert Fathers, and the twenty-first century monks whose Guardian, Aidan, is doggedly crossing his own desert, believing he has been abandoned by his Lord, but continuing to press forward in His service nonetheless; the seraph, in his true form, is with him at the end of his journey.

6) **The book covers are simple and at the same time create curiosity in the mind of the reader. What inspired both book covers?**

The cover artist for both *Jerome and the Seraph* and *Angelos* was Judith Huey, and I greatly admire her visualization of the quantum cat. Quant adopts two feline forms—a big cat and a domestic ginger tom. As a big cat, he was the lion who protected Saint Jerome in the Wilderness; as a small cat, he keeps a protective eye on the little community of monks. Judith Huey designed a clever blend of Quant as both cat and lion for *Jerome and the Seraph*—I think her artwork for this cover is stunning: it is beautifully conceived and executed, and it illustrates Quant’s dual aspect as a cat. In *Angelos*, Judith again portrays Quant in her cover art, this time as a lively-looking ginger cat, ready for adventure, but now, floating down around him, are some long white feathers, indicative of his angelic provenance. I like both covers very much, and am grateful to my publisher Lida Quillen for having engaged the services of such a clever artist. I am also indebted to Judith Huey for her wonderful artwork.

7) **Why did you choose Twilight Times Books as your publishing house?**

Well, it was more a case of my hoping that Twilight Times Books would be my publisher—and I am glad to say that they chose me to be one of their authors. When I had finished writing *Jerome and the Seraph*, I looked around the Internet to try to find a publisher interested in fantasy and Sci-Fi, and who was sympathetic to books that didn’t seem to fit into a specific category, for, while I knew that *Jerome and the Seraph* was fantasy, it did not have any dragons in it; it was not hard Sci-Fi, for I do not have the requisite technical knowledge; it featured characters from mythology and early Christian history; and its present-day setting was a monastery. I did not know exactly what genre it belonged to. I saw that the Twilight Times Books publishing company was interested in fiction that blended genres. Happily for me, when I asked Lida Quillen if she would be willing to take a look at *Jerome and the Seraph*, she kindly agreed; she liked it and offered to publish it. She also accepted the sequel, *Angelos*, I am glad to say. I am very fortunate that she liked my third book in the series, and recently offered me a contract for that, too. I am very grateful to Lida Quillen for her encouragement, and honored to be published by Twilight Times Books.

8) **Where can our readers purchase your books?**

My books can be bought in paperback from Amazon.com and various online bookstores. *Jerome and the Seraph* is available at http://www.amazon.com/Jerome-Seraph-Robina-Williams/dp/1931201544/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1/103-2392372-5055864?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1190478404&sr=1-1

and *Angelos* at http://www.amazon.com/Angelos-Quantum-Cat-Robina-Williams/dp/1933353600/ref=pd_bxgy_b_img_b/103-2392372-5055864?ie=UTF8&qid=1190478404&sr=1-1 . The ebook versions of both books can be

purchased from Fictionwise. Anyone having a problem in purchasing the books is welcome to contact me direct, on the Mail link from my website, www.robinawilliams.com .

9) In addition to your sequel books, have you written or publish other articles? If yes what other genre, when, and where were they published?

Yes, in past years I wrote lots of feature articles on a wide variety of topics: people, places and events in the news or of general interest—whatever the newspaper or magazine editor asked me to write about. I also wrote regular weekly and monthly columns on real estate. I have not worked as a journalist for a while, though. Now, I write books.

May I add that, although I was used to writing about other people, I am now finding it difficult to write about myself! I write with more ease about my quantum cat and his friends. I hope your readers will find my answers of interest to them, Tannia.

10) Are you working on any new projects?

I have just completed *Gaea*, the third book in my Quantum Cat series, and it will be published by Twilight Times Books in September, 2008. Like its predecessors, *Gaea* again has Quant as a principal character, but this time he is accompanied by the earth goddess herself and members of her very varied family—plus, of course, the monks among whom he lives in the guise of a domestic cat, and whom he is anxious to protect. *Gaea* is wrathful about the damage Man is doing to her planet, and Quant is endeavoring to restrain her, in her own interest as well as Man's.

I am planning to write a further book about Quant and his friends. Readers seem to like my quantum cat, fortunately. I should like to write a book of short stories, too—I already have a few ideas for this.

11) How can our readers contact you? Do you have a website?

Yes, I have a website—www.robinawilliams.com . Readers can contact me via the “Mail” link on this site, or through robinawilliams@hotmail.com . I really love to hear from my readers.

12) **A word of advice for new writers.**

I hesitate to offer anyone advice, but I would say to new writers: Keep going. Writing a book is very hard work, and tiring, but press on. And when you have completed the book, go back over it carefully, to make sure it all ties together and that there are no loose ends—unless, of course, you mean to leave loose ends, to be taken up in a following story.

Above all, keep writing!



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