



**1- Welcome Virginia! It is a great pleasure having you as my guest in concurrency with the arrival of your novellas in Italy. Would you like to begin this interview by telling the readers something that they wouldn't otherwise find in your official Bio page?**

Thank you Eleonora for giving me the opportunity to speak directly to my Italian readers. They have been devoted and generous to me for many years and I truly appreciate their loyalty.

I was born in Lancashire, England and after the war, I immigrated to Canada with my mother and father when I was twelve. We sailed on the SS Aquitania in March. It was a rough crossing and though the dining room served lavish food that we had not seen during the war, my seasickness prevented me from eating anything. I lived on sips of ginger-ale for the entire seven-day voyage.

Because the kids in school laughed at my English accent, I was determined to lose it and it wasn't long before I spoke like every other Canadian. When I was fourteen, in my second year of high school, I met my future husband, Arthur Henley.

We went steady for five years, and were engaged for a year-and-a-half before we were old enough to get married. We had two sons, Sean and Adam, and I was a

full-time mother until they were grown. I was an avid reader and history was my passion, but it wasn't until I was forty that I began to write.

One day I read a book by Kathleen E. Woodiwiss that combined history with a sensual love story and I knew immediately that I too could write an historical romance. It took me a year to research and write the book, and four years mailing it to publishers. Finally, an editor at Avon Books bought it, and I've been writing ever since.

After I made the NYT, my husband and I bought a house in Florida. I lived there for twenty years. After being married for 56 years, I became a widow and moved back to Canada to be closer to my family.

**2- Your first novel – The Irish Gypsy- was published in 1982 and you are still writing, (thank God !) but since then, publishing has been changed a lot: ebooks, amazon, self publishing etc. What is your opinion on the current state of publishing? Do you think readers tastes have changed as well?**

In the 35 years I've been writing, the book business has changed immensely. I was lucky enough to be part of what I call "The Golden Age of Publishing". I have a great agent, who sold me to Bantam Dell, and for the next fifteen years, I wrote one long historical each year. Dell flew me to New York for a publicity photo, and with each release they arranged a book tour to all the major cities in the USA. My historical romances were given gorgeous step-back covers, and full-page ads in Cosmopolitan Magazine.

Gradually, things began to change. Most of the book companies were bought by conglomerates and the emphasis became corporate profits. Book tours became a thing of the past, money for advertising dried up, and it was a luxury to have your author photo in the back of the book.

At one time, self-publishing carried a stigma because you had to pay all the costs of producing a book through a Vanity Press. Suddenly, with the arrival of Amazon, you could order your books over the Internet and have them delivered, rather than making a trip to the bookstore. Then ereaders were invented and ebooks that could be downloaded in a few seconds became popular.

Now, when an established author can get the rights back to one of her books, she can put it up on the internet herself. Most writers I know still have contracts with a traditional publisher, but they self-publish backlist books to which they own the rights.

For writers there are many advantages to self-publishing. You don't need a traditional publisher, agent, or editor, and you can set your own book price. This means that there are millions of books available that would never have been published before Amazon and the other ebook outlets.

But I do believe that readers' tastes have changed. People's lives are so busy that they don't have the same amount of time to devote to reading. Novella-length books and short stories are extremely popular, and shorter historical romances are preferred to the longer historicals.

Far more genres are devoured these days, than in the past. Erotica is popular, as well as vampires, shape-shifters, fantasy and futuristic. In the past, editors would turn down anything that wasn't traditional, but now that writers are able to self-publish, they are free to write anything they wish, and don't seem to have trouble finding readers.

**3- In a few days, Follie Letterarie will release the italian edition of “Hot as Fire”. Can you tell us a little bit about this story?**

HOT AS FIRE is the only contemporary story I have ever written. I truly enjoyed writing about a modern woman who has a successful career, and a traditional hero who holds feminists in contempt. This male and female clash from the moment they meet, but when a blizzard traps them together for a number of days, all their ideas start to change.

Their survival depends upon their cooperation with each other, and their physical attraction grows stronger with each passing hour until finally it cannot be denied. As usual, my hero is dark, dominant and dangerous, so I created a heroine who is a match for him, or more than a match. LOL!

**4- Follie Letterarie will release “Love and Joy” by 2017. This is an historical novella, set during the Restoration in England. History is one of your great passion, would you like to tell us how this passion has influenced your writing?**

I went to school in England and as you can imagine they taught us history every day. English, Irish and Scottish history became my passion and I enjoy doing the research for my books far more than sitting down to write them.

My research is meticulous, but a large chunk of history is hard to digest unless it is leavened with a passionate love story, and of course the heavier the history, the more sensual the love story must be. I like to put the reader in bed between

my hero and heroine and let her in on all their intimate secrets. I vowed early in my career that my love scenes would not end at the bedroom door and I would give a reader her money's worth.

I soon got a reputation as a sensual writer, and I honestly believe this is the reason I became a New York Times bestselling author. I love to write about real people in history, especially Kings and Queens and their Royal Courts.

### **5- Can you tell us some fun or curious facts about writing these novellas?**

When LOVE AND JOY came out, I was at a Romantic Times book convention where a man came up to me and said, "I want to thank you for writing your books. I don't read them myself, but I always know when my wife is reading a Henley!"

I was doing a radio interview to publicize HOT AS FIRE when they asked me if I practiced all the sex scenes with my husband. I answered, "Yes! That's why he's so short. It's from banging his head on the headboard."

### **6- What novel of yours would you suggest to a reader who hasn't read your books yet? (I think there is no reader who hasn't read one of your books)**

Well, my favorite book is A WOMAN OF PASSION. It's about Bess Hardwick who started as a servant girl and became the second richest woman in England, after Queen Elizabeth. Along the way she married four husbands, and the book includes all four love stories.

Another book I would recommend is UNDONE. It tells the story of the famous Gunning sisters, Elizabeth and Maria. Because of their extraordinary beauty, their manipulative mother brought them from Ireland to the Royal Court of King George where they pretended to be of noble birth. Both sisters married into the aristocracy. Maria became a countess, and Elizabeth became a double duchess. Her first marriage was unhappy, but mercifully short. Then she married the love of her life, John Campbell, the powerful Duke of Argyll.

### **7- In your opinion, what are some of the most important elements to write a good romance book?**

First and foremost, there has to be chemistry between the hero and heroine. I want the reader to be able to see them, hear them, smell them and even taste them. I want to make the reader laugh, make her cry, and experience every emotion from joy to sorrow. The reader must admire and identify with the

heroine and fall in love with the hero.

The story should move from one setting to another so it doesn't happen in the same place and become static. I keep the chapters short, and if possible have a cliff-hanger at the end of each chapter to keep the reader from putting the book down. The intimate scenes have to be sensual and passionate, and the couple must fall so deeply in love that they cannot live without each other. And of course any great romance must have a happy ending.

### **8- Among characters, plot and setting, which element would you rather develop to enchant the reader?**

That's an easy one. My books are character driven. The plot is secondary because I just follow history. My hero must be strong, dominant, and courageous, yet have the ability to be tender, kind, and generous.

My heroine must be feisty and brave, and have the ability to get herself out of trouble, without always needing the help of a man. When I create a villain, he must be evil rather than just wicked, and in the end he must get exactly what he deserves.

To me, minor characters are extremely important. I want them to jump off the page. I want my reader to experience every emotion, so when I'm writing, I become all my characters. I feel the hero's lust, I feel the servant's aching back, the beggar's hunger, and the whore's need to get the coins from her customer's pocket. I want to take the reader away to another time and place and have her experience the history as if she were actually living it.

I want the ending to be deeply satisfying to my reader, but at the same time, I want her to feel sad that she has finished the book and there is no more to read.

### **9- What do you love to be surrounded from when you're writing? What you can't do without?**

When I write, I need to be surrounded by silence. I need to be completely alone without any interruptions. I used to say to my husband, "Don't call me unless the dog is on fire." At the same time I need to see a beautiful setting outside my window so my imagination can take flight.

When I lived in Florida, my office overlooked the pool and beyond that, the ocean. I loved to watch the pelicans, cranes, herons, and flocks of wild green parakeets. Now that I have moved back to Canada, I have 30 acres of woods

inhabited by deer, moose, fox, owls,  
coyotes and snow-shoe hares.

**10 - How do you feel when one of your books is going to be released?**

I feel a great deal of anxiety. I sit alone for a whole year, dressed in rags, then when my book comes out I'm expected to spread my wings like a butterfly and gather as much attention as I can for myself and my book. Then as soon as I start to enjoy it, they stick me back in the room and say, "Write another."

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**11- Do you allow yourself to be influenced by the reviews?**

Not really. I write for myself alone. But a good review is very gratifying, and a bad review upsets me. I still remember my first scathing review.

It was for THE FALCON AND THE FLOWER. It said, "Only a hard-core fan of soft-core pornography could slog their way through this one." It gave me hives, but the book immediately jumped on the bestseller lists.

**12 - Can you tell us if there are any new works in progress and if there are any new projects in sight?**

I haven't started to write the book yet; it's just bubbling around in my imagination. But I would like to write a time-travel about Princess Diana.

**13 - Is there anything that you would like to say to Italian readers?**

I would like to thank them for being such loyal readers. I love Italy. A few years ago I went on a Romantic Times tour to your beautiful country with about a dozen other writers. We toured Tuscany and stayed at a winery. Then we went to Venice which is steeped in history. I took a speedboat into the Adriatic Sea to visit the island of Murano where the crystal is made.

Finally, we went to Rome, visited the Vatican, saw the Sistine Chapel, the Colosseum, the magnificent churches, squares, and fountains. On the last day we did a book signing. The readers flocked in to make us welcome and buy our books.

I shall never forget it.

**Thank you Virginia for your attention!**