

# Interview draft by Melissa for Lesbian **On the Loose** magazine – November 2007

## **1. What does CC stand for?**

As early as '89 while I was still drafting my 1st plot, *North and Left From Here*, I knew I wouldn't want to publish under my own name.

Two reasons for that: I really do not like my surname and I had a gut feeling that it would be in my best interest to keep my writing, along with most aspects of my private life ... private, as in separate from my work as a high school teacher. So, my friends came up with Saint-Clair – a great pick that reflects my French heritage, and yet is friendly to Anglo ears.

I picked C.C. to stand for the private me – as the double Cs are the starting letters for both my first and middle names, as were given to me by my French grandmother. Neither C stands for Catherine or Christine.

## **2. How long have you been a high school English teacher?**

I have been a high school teacher ever since I graduated from the University of Texas, in '74. Though I have taken a few breaks from teaching to accommodate my wanderlust, ironically, it is the opportunity to teach just about anywhere, be it in the private or the state system, that has allowed me to feed this wanderlust. In fact, it was such an opportunity [to teach in a Church of England Grammar School] that allowed me to remain in Australia when I first "landed" here in '81.

## **3. What led you to this path in life?**

Karma. She who teaches must also learn and Learning [capital L] is at the heart of all that matters.

## **4. When did you first start calling yourself a 'writer' or 'novelist'?**

I don't use the term novelist in relation to myself, but that term has been bandied around by several reviewers. I'm not sure why many prefer to use the term novelist rather than author. I became a writer in my own eyes the day I pulled out of its envelope the sample paperback copy of my first novel.

### **5. How do these two occupations (teaching/writing) fit together in your life?**

They fit together as seamlessly as a day job and a night shift might. Totally separate, but they complement each other.

The only links are that I cast my first main character, Alex, as a teacher and that I felt compelled to out myself to the Principal of my school the day after a review of my novels had appeared in Qld Pride and -without my permission – with my photo. The headline was Teacher of English by day – Writer of lesbian romance by night.

### **6. What do you enjoy about writing romance and erotica?**

The romance and erotic moments only make up a fraction of my plots, but I visualise and play with moments of great sensual intensity. I hone and tweak them with tender loving care. I enjoy every second of these interactions, but vicariously. My partner thinks it's great sexual therapy for me and ... totally safe.

### **7. How did you learn the craft of writing in this genre?**

My plots expose the dark emotional baggage that many of us carry – the romance factor, though much talked about is only the sugar coating that helps the bitter pill go down. My genre is lesbian romance within social realism. What I find interesting is how reviewers primarily latch on to the romance elements while readers relate to the life struggles highlighted in every plot. They relate to them on a very personal level.

The idea for my blend of urban grit laced with unbridled sensuality, as well as the manner in which I write about both do come to me totally naturally, as a stream of consciousness – having said that, I do believe I have a personal Muse and that she is never far from my keyboard.

### **8. Why would you encourage readers to check out your novels?**

Melissa, rather than blow my own trumpet, I'm taking the liberty of pasting a few testimonials grabbed from my website as they reflect the general consensus of the feedback I get. You've come across some of them yourself.

“Saint-Clair is the mistress of capturing emotions and trapping them between the lines of her work. Her ability of translating desire, pain, sorrow, longing, joy is so finely tuned the reader can feel with a gasp exactly what the characters are going through – a form of writing both addictive and painful for the intensity of feeling that can be experienced whilst reading.”

“Who else but CC would find a way to make female-to-male transgenderism a sexy topic.”

“There are many things I appreciate about C.C. Saint-Clair’s work in general, including the luminous language and her ability to create remarkably visual scenes.”

### **9. Can you explain the way you publish your novels?**

All 7 of my novels were first born in a digital format – not typeset.

A few years ago, I hooked up with Book Makers Ink who, until recently looked after all aspects of the digital galleys and book covers, forwarding the files to Lightning Source in the UK, the printing firm that has the monopoly on turning digital books into good old-fashion bookstore quality paperbacks.

I pay for these services as a musician might self-fund her own CDs. However, I am currently in the process of removing the ‘middle man’ and will soon be publishing my paperback second editions under my own label, Lazy Moon Productions off Amazon.

### **10. What are the benefits/drawbacks of this style of publishing?**

I truly am on my own when it comes to expenditures and promoting. There is absolutely no industry machinery behind me to push and plug my novels. It’s like being solo out on a limb while authors published the traditional way are a part of a pack – their publishing firm.

Many editors state outright that they will not read my novels. Some have refused complimentary copies because my novels have not been sanctioned by the publishing establishment. That’s the price I chose to pay for absolute creative and artistic freedom back in 2000.

### **11. Can you tell me about your next project? (screenplay/novel?)**

I have adapted 2 of my novels to screenplays. Far From Maddy has already earned a couple of pleasant awards both in GLBT and mainstream international comps, while Morgan in the Mirror is currently a finalist in a Canadian script comp.

I will undoubtedly write Book # 8. The main character will still be a woman, a lesbian. It might be Alex, my debut character, but I sense that I am done with the dark side of life. I sense that my next novel will be of a more spiritual nature, more in the lines of

a personal awakening for the main character. I sense I might embark on this project come Easter.

**12. What else do you like to do when you are not writing or teaching?**

I have been in a long term relationship for the past 10 years, what a lovely even number 😊 so most of all I do is shared and, as luck would have it, we like the same sorts of things: camping wild on the Moreton foreshore, eating sushi, sleeping in, cycling by the river or the seaside esplanades.

We're both mad Cate Blanchet fans. And I also like being 1st Mate on my partner's yacht, as she is a serious sailor and my inspiration for my 3rd novel, *Silent Goodbyes*, which is set at sea.