



Casanova: The World of a Seductive Genius

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The definitive biography of the impoverished child, abandoned by his parents, who became the famous writer, notorious libertine, and self-invented genius whose name still resonates today: Giacomo Casanova.

Today, “Casanova” is a synonym for “great lover,” yet the real story of this remarkable figure is little known. Giacomo Casanova was raised by his maternal grandmother, an illiterate peasant. His birthplace, Venice, was a republic in decline, reputedly the most debauched city in Europe. Casanova would add to the republic’s reputation. Over the course of his lifetime, he claimed to have seduced more than 100 women, among them married women, young women in convents, girls just barely in their teens, and in one notorious instance, his own illegitimate daughter.

Casanova came of age in a Venice filled with spies and informers. Naturally brilliant, he was intellectually curious and read forbidden books, for which he was jailed. He staged a dramatic escape from Venice’s notorious prison, the only person known to have done so. He then fled to France, where he invented the national lottery that still exists to this day. But, intemperate by nature, he made enemies at the French court. He crisscrossed Europe, landing for a while in St. Petersburg, where he was admitted to the court of Catherine the Great. He corresponded with Voltaire and met Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte—assisting them as they composed the timeless opera *Don Giovanni*. And he wrote what many consider the greatest memoir of the era, the 12-volume *Story of My Life*.

A figure straight out of a Henry Fielding novel: erotic, brilliant, impulsive, and desperate for recognition, Casanova was a self-destructive genius. This witty, roisterous biography exposes his astonishing life in rich, intimate detail. At the same time, it is a dazzling portrait of eighteenth-century Europe from serving girls to kings and courtiers. Esteemed biographer Laurence Bergreen brings a sensual world vividly alive in this irresistible book.

Casanova: The World of a Seductive Genius Details

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From Reader Review Casanova: The World of a Seductive Genius for online ebook

William DuFour says

An interesting, complex and intriguing man of his era also tells insights on how the government worked back in the 18th century in Italy.

James says

Basically an author recounting the memoirs of Giacomo Casanova, the famed (or infamous) seducer of women during the 1700s in Venice, Paris, London, Austria, practically everywhere ... it's exhausting and tedious. Casanova is highly unlikeable and a sociopath and a liar. He does meet Voltaire and Catherine the Great and I did learn he aided in the libretto of Mozart's DON GIOVANNI (which the author states is actually a shaded story of Casanova).

This is an endless tiring history that is just one sexual exploit after another and no woman was safe no matter the age. Casanova liked them young, but if he thought he could something from a rich older woman, then ... he was oozing charm. He even dabbled slightly in homosexuality and found castratos (young men who were tempered in the groin area by surgery in order for them to sing in a high voice) quite appealing. Venereal disease? Please. He gets it time and time again and goes through tedious medical procedures by quack physicians. He is imprisoned and escapes and fights duels and gambles. He insinuates himself into royal palace employ. But, he basically has sex. Over and over again in any way you can imagine and with as many people as possible.

If Casanova was alive today, he's be the ultimate target of the #MeToo Movement. He would make any story of any celebrity or workplace sexual abuser pale in comparison. You'd hearing the chanting of "TIME'S UP"! In fact, that was the phrase I had in my mind after finally finishing this well researched, beautifully illustrated, but exhausting boring read.

Riley Johnson says

I think there may be such a thing as over-quoting. The bulk of the information comes directly from Casanova's autobiography, and I would've preferred more input from those around him instead of taking his word for everything. Finishing this was a chore.

In the future, I will never refer to someone as a Casanova in a complimentary fashion. Dude was a predator, and while there's always the argument of "He was a man of his time, you can't judge him by today's standards!", pardoning rape and pedophilia is never cool no matter how much time has passed. 2 stars because I now feel confident in my ability to obliterate a Jeopardy category entitled "Casa-know-va". You read it here first.

Jennifer says

Received through FirstReads...

I'm kind of conflicted about this book, which is why I only gave it three stars. It's a very enjoyable book, fascinating, never dull. But I often felt like I was reading a very condensed version of Casanova's memoirs, as they are quoted in nearly every paragraph. Still a good read, though.

Jade Schulz says

Didn't finish the slop. I really tried my best but it's really a crappy cut and paste job of Casanova's diary. The chapter breakdown doesn't really make sense either. Try his Magellan book. It was much better.

Melissa says

I must give the man credit. He has real charm and charisma: his words are enough to bring a modern woman to an incredible orgasm so many hundreds of years after his death. Now that, my friends, is seductive genius!!

I do not know if it was the author's writing style or the kind of life Casanova led, but reading the book was too much for me. It was like too much rich chocolate without a glass of milk to quench the thirst.

Casanova jumped around from place to place, never sleeping in the same place for more than a few weeks at a time. It got exhausting trying to keep up. It shows that he had an indomitable spirit, an incredible charm that was irresistible, as everyone (except his mother) seemed to want him around and to help him.

I wonder if perhaps according to today's standards he might be considered bipolar... With a mainly manic diagnosis. Sexual promiscuity and shiftlessness are a big part of people with that diagnosis.

But considering that it was so "rich", like The Doors movie about the music group- an overwhelming amount of sex, drugs, and rock n roll - and considering i had trouble finding admirable character traits i would want to or be able to emulate, i had to put it down to move on to my next biography: "A Sorrow in our hearts" about Tecumseh. Now there is someone i truly admire!! Time much better spent!

Susan Shapiro says

Fascinating, funny, sexy, revealing biography. Couldn't put it down

Mishelle Beagle says

Casanova's adventures and conquests were spellbinding! More than just a lover. Con artist, academic writer, prison escapee and teller of tales. His charisma must have knocked them all over! You might need a fan for

swooning.

Gerard Villegas says

Poet, writer, free spirit, gambler, lover, and seducer. These are words that are synonymous with the legendary Libertine Giacomo Casanova. However, we should add a couple others as well. Pervert, pedophile, lech, cad, player, and a walking STD. Despite all the notoriety and infamy surrounding this mythical lover, he was far from perfect.

Author Laurence Bergreen shares historical documents and excerpts from Casanova's personal diaries to tell the story of a worldly scholar who enjoyed life, especially when it concerned the ladies and, allegedly, a few men as well. Beginning as the abandon child of two theater performers, Giacomo Casanova raised himself in a world where money, power, and sex played a game into his successful career as a lover of life all over Europe. His quick wit, charisma, sex appeal and ability to ingrain himself into European high society bestowed upon him all the notoriety that he is now known for.

Casanova is an informative and fascinating portrait of a man who was addicted to sex and used his body to fulfill some kind of abandonment issues. I highly recommend this for observing a psychological study of sex addiction and drawing upon your own conclusions of someone who might have been a legendary lover but had many demons.

Linda Rae says

DNF after about 100 pages. Junk history.

Laura Zimmerman says

Surprisingly, I found the sex to be some of the most boring parts. But when you compare it to his feats such as escaping a never before escapable prison, starting the lottery in Paris, meeting royalty, and other craziness that makes you go, "Wait, that couldn't have happened. That sounds like it came out of a fiction novel," the sex is boring.

dejah_thoris says

Bergreen does a wonderful job of explaining and describing Casanova's life. As expected, much of it is erotic. Some may be triggered by descriptions of his wooing and deflowering several young girls. I'm merely skeptical about their enthusiasm when he finally does reach his goal. Of course, once the prize is gained the thrill of the hunt is gone and he moves on to someone or somewhere else. He sleeps with everyone from common prostitutes to aristocrats yet still remains surprised every time he gets a venereal disease. He's good about abstaining during his treatment, but he's back in the game the instant it's gone. There's also plenty of broken hearts in convents, with his children, etc.

Sexcapades aside, Casanova led a very successful life. He was born in Venice to an actress who abandoned him at a young age. So, he assumed new identities whenever he needed to. In France he brought the lottery from Venice to start a national lottery that would fund the monarchy instead of taxes. He also helped compose the opera Don Giovanni. He loved Catherine the Great. Finally, he became a private librarian and devoted his old age to writing his memoirs.

I loved Bergreen's biography, but he uses lots of obscure words. I like it because I get to learn new ones. He also goes to great pains to explain and describe Venetian culture, which is very unique.

Kim says

Based, it would seem, entirely on Casanova's own exploits of his life and featuring little, if any, outsider research to the libertine's actual life. Everything is seen through Casanova's eyes, which, as much as I tried to put aside my modern perspective - he's not a very sympathetic character, he's not endearing, and honestly, not what I'd call a reliable narrator by any means. Bergreen does mention Casanova's more academic pursuits, but more time is given to his love affairs - and even then, the attention paid to them is what I'd almost want to call "fleeting." There's time spent on the salacious aspect of them, but not really the aftermath (unless you count the multiple cases of venereal disease, which, in all honest, I'm pretty sure he had more than the accounted for 11 times). There are probably better biographies of Casanova out there, or you might be interested enough in slogging through the God knows how many volumes of his autobiography, but I think for the time being, I'm quite done with this libertine.

Dexter says

Geez it has taken me about fifteen thousand years to get through this thing.

Casanova was an interesting dude who did a lot of very interesting and sometimes brilliant things. He also seemed to have an uncanny ability to seduce women and make them believe he would marry them, but then he'd run away. He also sexually assaulted half of them in the first place.

And then there was the BLATANT GANG RAPE.

I can't get over that one.

No matter what else Casanova did in his life, no matter how great and amazing and intelligent he was...he does not deserve the title of "seduction Genius," and I'm still pretty upset that the author portrayed him in such a positive light, almost glossing over the explicit and unavoidable gang rape.

It's still a very thorough biography that includes plenty of context and information on everything going on in the world during Casanova's lifetime.

Bill Wallace says

I was hoping for a book that set Casanova's remarkable life in the context of his times and this volume does

that to a point, but it's mostly a labored retelling of the Memoirs with a focus on the most salacious of the man's conquests and orgies. Giacomo was a scoundrel in the truest sense of the word and some of his actions were appalling. When one reads the Memoirs, the sense of disturbance is tempered by the humanity of the teller -- a rusted rake who has lived long enough to acquire some sense of philosophical reflection if not an actual sense of guilt. Recounted here, albeit with whole pages of quotations, the scamming, seduction, and rape are harrowing. I was also hoping for more of a focus on Casanova's "occult" practices, mostly used to pry money out of the fingers of gullible believers but occasionally a true glimpse into the mostly shrouded world of 18th Century kabbalists and magicians. The book addresses this aspect the rogue's adventures but doesn't provide significantly more insight than the Memoirs themselves. I did enjoy the side notes on Venetian culture and, especially in the later chapters, the insight into Casanova's declining years as Europe begins to throw off the chains of monarchy, to the horror of the man who had lived on the excesses of the dying era. The numerous illustrations are great, portraits of the people Casanova writes about and examples of the erotic art he used to catch the interest of his conquests. On the whole, I enjoyed this book and had no trouble finishing it but I think a reader who had read the Memoirs would find it more entertaining than I did, and that reader would probably be better served by a good annotated edition of the source material.
