

GIACOMO CASANOVA

THE MEMOIRS OF
JACQUES CASANOVA DE
SEINGALT, 1725-1798.
VOLUME 30: OLD AGE
AND DEATH

Giacomo Casanova

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Volume 30: Old Age and Death**

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The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt, 1725-1798. Volume 30: Old Age and Death

APPENDIX AND SUPPLEMENT

Whether the author died before the work was complete, whether the concluding volumes were destroyed by himself or his literary executors, or whether the MS. fell into bad hands, seems a matter of uncertainty, and the materials available towards a continuation of the Memoirs are extremely fragmentary. We know, however, that Casanova at last succeeded in obtaining his pardon from the authorities of the Republic, and he returned to Venice, where he exercised the honourable office of secret agent of the State Inquisitors—in plain language, he became a spy. It seems that the Knight of the Golden Spur made a rather indifferent "agent;" not surely, as a French writer suggests, because the dirty work was too dirty for his fingers, but probably because he was getting old and stupid and out-of-date, and failed to keep in touch with new forms of turpitude. He left Venice again and paid a visit to Vienna, saw beloved Paris once more, and there met Count Wallenstein, or Waldstein. The conversation turned on magic and the occult sciences, in which Casanova was an adept, as the reader of the Memoirs will remember, and the count took a fancy to the charlatan. In short Casanova became librarian at the count's Castle of Dux, near Teplitz, and there he spent the fourteen remaining years of his life.

As the Prince de Ligne (from whose Memoirs we learn these particulars) remarks, Casanova's life had been a stormy and adventurous one, and it might have been expected that he would have found his patron's library a pleasant refuge after so many toils and travels. But the man carried rough weather and storm in his own heart, and found daily opportunities of mortification and resentment. The coffee was ill made, the macaroni not cooked in the true Italian style, the dogs had bayed during the night, he had been made to dine at a small table, the parish priest had tried to convert him, the soup had been served too hot on purpose to annoy him, he had not been introduced to a distinguished guest, the count had lent a book without telling him, a groom had not taken off his hat; such were his complaints. The fact is Casanova felt his dependent position and his utter poverty, and was all the more determined to stand to his dignity as a man who had talked with all the crowned heads of Europe, and had fought a duel with the Polish general. And he had another reason for finding life bitter—he had lived beyond his time. Louis XV. was dead, and Louis XVI. had been guillotined; the Revolution had come; and Casanova, his dress, and his manners, appeared as odd and antique as some "blood of the Regency" would appear to us of these days. Sixty years before, Marcel, the famous dancing-master, had taught young Casanova how to enter a room with a lowly and ceremonious bow; and still, though the eighteenth century is drawing to a close, old Casanova enters the rooms of Dux with the same stately bow, but now everyone laughs. Old Casanova treads the grave measures of the minuet; they applauded his dancing once, but now everyone laughs. Young Casanova was always dressed in the height of the fashion; but the age of powder, wigs, velvets, and silks has departed, and old Casanova's attempts at elegance ("Strass" diamonds have replaced the genuine stones with him) are likewise greeted with laughter. No wonder the old adventurer denounces the whole house of Jacobins and canaille; the world, he feels, is permanently out of joint for him; everything is cross, and everyone is in a conspiracy to drive the iron into his soul.

At last these persecutions, real or imaginary, drive him away from Dux; he considers his genius bids him go, and, as before, he obeys. Casanova has but little pleasure or profit out of this his last journey; he has to dance attendance in ante-chambers; no one will give him any office, whether as

tutor, librarian, or chamberlain. In one quarter only is he well received—namely, by the famous Duke of Weimar; but in a few days he becomes madly jealous of the duke's more famous proteges, Goethe and Wieland, and goes off declaiming against them and German literature generally—with which literature he was wholly unacquainted. From Weimar to Berlin; where there are Jews to whom he has introductions. Casanova thinks them ignorant, superstitious, and knavish; but they lend him money, and he gives bills on Count Wallenstein, which are paid. In six weeks the wanderer returns to Dux, and is welcomed with open arms; his journeys are over at last.

But not his troubles. A week after his return there are strawberries at dessert; everyone is served before himself, and when the plate comes round to him it is empty. Worse still: his portrait is missing from his room, and is discovered 'salement placarde a la porte des lieux d'aisance'!

Five more years of life remained to him. They were passed in such petty mortifications as we have narrated, in grieving over his 'afreuse vieillesse', and in laments over the conquest of his native land Venice, once so splendid and powerful. His appetite began to fail, and with it failed his last source of pleasure, so death came to him somewhat as a release. He received the sacraments with devotion, exclaimed,—

"Grand Dieu, et vous tous temoins de ma mort, j'ai vecu en philosophe, et je meurs en Chretien," and so died.

It was a quiet ending to a wonderfully brilliant and entirely useless career. It has been suggested that if the age in which Casanova lived had been less corrupt, he himself might have used his all but universal talents to some advantage, but to our mind Casanova would always have remained Casanova. He came of a family of adventurers, and the reader of his Memoirs will remark how he continually ruined his prospects by his ineradicable love for disreputable company. His "Bohemianism" was in his blood, and in his old age he regrets—not his past follies, but his inability to commit folly any longer. Now and again we are inclined to pronounce Casanova to be an amiable man; and if to his generosity and good nature he had added some elementary knowledge of the distinction between right and wrong, he might certainly have laid some claim to the character. The Prince de Ligne draws the following portrait of him under the name of Aventuros:

"He would be a handsome man if he were not ugly; he is tall and strongly built, but his dark complexion and his glittering eyes give him a fierce expression. He is easier to annoy than amuse; he laughs little but makes others laugh by the peculiar turn he gives to his conversation. He knows everything except those matters on the knowledge of which he chiefly prides himself, namely, dancing, the French language, good taste, and knowledge of the world. Everything about him is comic, except his comedies; and all his writings are philosophical, saving those which treat of philosophy. He is a perfect well of knowledge, but he quotes Homer and Horace ad nauseam."

**SUPPLEMENT TO
THE MEMOIRS OF
JACQUES CASANOVA
DE SEINGALT**

Containing an Outline of Casanova's career from the
year 1774, when his own Memoirs abruptly
end, until his death in 1798

PART THE FIRST

VENICE 1774-1782 CASANOVA'S RETURN TO VENICE

Thus Casanova ended his Memoirs, concluding his narrative with his sojourn at Trieste, in January 1774, where he had remained, except for a few excursions, since the 15th November 1772. He was forty-nine years of age. Since his unfortunate experiences in England, the loss of his fortune and the failure of his efforts to obtain congenial and remunerative employment in Germany or Russia, he had come to concentrate his efforts on a return to his native city.

Of his faithful friends, the nobles Bragadin, Barbaro and Dandolo, the first had died in 1767, having gone into debt "that I might have enough," sending Casanova, from his death-bed, a last gift of a thousand crowns. Barbaro who had died also, in 1771, left Casanova a life-income of six sequins a month. The survivor, Dandolo, was poor, but until his death, he also gave Casanova a monthly provision of six sequins. However, Casanova was not without influential friends who might not only obtain a pardon from the State Inquisitors but also assist him to employment; and, in fact, it was through such influence as that wielded by the Avogador Zaguri and the Procurator Morosini, that Casanova received his pardon, and later, a position as "Confidant," or Secret Agent, to the Inquisitors at Venice.

Casanova re-entered Venice the 14th September 1774 and, presenting himself, on the 18th, to Marc-Antoine Businello, Secretary of the Tribunal of the Inquisitors of State, was advised that mercy had been accorded him by reason of his refutation of the History of the Venetian Government by Amelot de la Houssaie which he had written during his forty-two day imprisonment at Barcelona in 1768. The three Inquisitors, Francesco Grimani, Francesco Sagredo and Paolo Bembo, invited him to dinner to hear his story of his escape from The Leads.

In 1772, Bandiera, the Republic's resident at Ancona, drew this portrait of Casanova:

"One sees everywhere this unhappy rebel against the justice of the August Council, presenting himself boldly, his head carried high, and well equipped. He is received in many houses and announces his intention of going to Trieste and, from there, of returning to Germany. He is a man of forty years or more," [in reality, forty-seven] "of high stature and excellent appearance, vigorous, of a very brown color, the eye bright, the wig short and chestnut-brown. He is said to be haughty and disdainful; he speaks at length, with spirit and erudition." [Letter of information to the Very Illustrious Giovanni Zon, Secretary of the August Council of Ten at Venice. 2 October 1772.]

Returning to Venice after an absence of eighteen years, Casanova renewed his acquaintance with many old friends, among whom were:

The Christine of the Memoirs. Charles, who married Christine, the marriage being arranged by Casanova while in Venice in 1747, was of financial assistance to Casanova, who "found him a true friend." Charles died "a few months before my last departure from Venice," in 1783.

Mlle. X- C- V-, really Giustina de Wynne, widow of the Count Rosenberg, Austrian Ambassador at Venice. "Fifteen years afterwards, I saw her again and she was a widow, happy enough, apparently, and enjoying a great reputation on account of her rank, wit and social qualities, but our connection was never renewed."

Callimena, who was kind to him "for love's sake alone" at Sorrento in 1770.

Marcoline, the girl he took away from his younger brother, the Abby Casanova, at Geneva in 1763.

Father Balbi, the companion of his flight from The Leads.

Doctor Gozzi, his former teacher at Padua, now become Arch-Priest of St. George of the Valley, and his sister Betting. "When I went to pay him a visit . . . she breathed her last in my arms, in 1776, twenty-four hours after my arrival. I will speak of her death in due time."

Angela Toselli, his first passion. In 1758 this girl married the advocate Francesco Barnaba Rizzotti, and in the following year she gave birth to a daughter, Maria Rizzotti (later married to a M. Kaiser) who lived at Vienna and whose letters to Casanova were preserved at Dux.

C- C-, the young girl whose love affair with Casanova became involved with that of the nun M- M- Casanova found her in Venice "a widow and poorly off."

The dancing girl Binetti, who assisted Casanova in his flight from Stuttgart in 1760, whom he met again in London in 1763, and who was the cause of his duel with Count Branicki at Warsaw in 1766. She danced frequently at Venice between 1769 and 1780.

The good and indulgent Mme. Manzoni, "of whom I shall have to speak very often."

The patricians Andrea Memmo and his brother Bernardo who, with P. Zaguri were personages of considerable standing in the Republic and who remained his constant friends. Andrea Memmo was the cause of the embarrassment in which Mlle. X- C- V- found herself in Paris and which Casanova vainly endeavored to remove by applications of his astonishing specific, the 'aroph of Paracelsus'.

It was at the house of these friends that Casanova became acquainted with the poet, Lorenzo Da Ponte. "I made his acquaintance," says the latter, in his own Memoirs, "at the house of Zaguri and the house of Memmo, who both sought after his always interesting conversation, accepting from this man all he had of good, and closing their eyes, on account of his genius, upon the perverse parts of his nature."

Lorenzo Da Ponte, known above all as Mozart's librettist, and whose youth much resembled that of Casanova, was accused of having eaten ham on Friday and was obliged to flee from Venice in 1777, to escape the punishment of the Tribunal of Blasphemies. In his Memoirs, he speaks unsparingly of his compatriot and yet, as M. Rava notes, in the numerous letters he wrote Casanova, and which were preserved at Dux, he proclaims his friendship and admiration.

Irene Rinaldi, whom he met again at Padua in 1777, with her daughter who "had become a charming girl; and our acquaintance was renewed in the tenderest manner."

The ballet-girl Adelaide, daughter of Mme. Soavi, who was also a dancer, and of a M. de Marigny.

Barbara, who attracted Casanova's attention at Trieste, in 1773, while he was frequenting a family named Leo, but toward whom he had maintained an attitude of respect. This girl, on meeting him again in 1777, declared that "she had guessed my real feelings and had been amused by my foolish restraint."

At Pesaro, the Jewess Leah, with whom he had the most singular experiences at Ancona in 1772.

II

RELATIONS WITH THE INQUISITORS

Soon after reaching Venice, Casanova learned that the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel, following the example of other German princes, wished a Venetian correspondent for his private affairs. Through some influence he believed he might obtain this small employment; but before applying for the position he applied to the Secretary of the Tribunal for permission. Apparently nothing came of this, and Casanova obtained no definite employment until 1776.

Early in 1776, Casanova entered the service of the Tribunal of Inquisitors as an "occasional Confidant," under the fictitious name of Antonio Pratlioni, giving his address as "at the Casino of S. E. Marco Dandolo."

In October 1780, his appointment was more definitely established and he was given a salary of fifteen ducats a month. This, with the six sequins of life-income left by Barbaro and the six given by Dandolo, gave him a monthly income of three hundred and eighty-four lire—about seventy-four U. S. dollars—from 1780 until his break with the Tribunal at the end of 1781.

In the Archives of Venice are preserved forty-eight letters from Casanova, including the Reports he wrote as a "Confidant," all in the same handwriting as the manuscript of the Memoirs. The Reports may be divided into two classes: those referring to commercial or industrial matters, and those referring to the public morals.

Among those of the first class, we find:

A Report relating to Casanova's success in having a change made in the route of the weekly diligence running from Trieste to Mestre, for which service, rendered during Casanova's residence at Trieste in 1773, he received encouragement and the sum of one hundred ducats from the Tribunal.

A Report, the 8th September 1776, with information concerning the rumored project of the future Emperor of Austria to invade Dalmatia after the death of Maria Theresa. Casanova stated he had received this information from a Frenchman, M. Salz de Chalabre, whom he had known in Paris twenty years before. This M. Chalabre [printed Calabre] was the pretended nephew of Mme. Amelin. "This young man was as like her as two drops of water, but she did not find that a sufficient reason for avowing herself his mother." The boy was, in fact, the son of Mme. Amelin and of M. de Chalabre, who had lived together for a long time.

A Report, the 12th of December 1776, of a secret mission to Trieste, in regard to a project of the court of Vienna for making Fiume a French port; the object being to facilitate communications between this port and the interior of Hungary. For this inquiry, Casanova received sixteen hundred lire, his expenditures amounting to seven hundred and sixty-six lire.

A Report, May-July 1779, of an excursion in the market of Ancona for information concerning the commercial relations of the Pontifical States with the Republic of Venice. At Forli, in the course of this excursion, Casanova visited the dancing-girl Binetti. For this mission Casanova received forty-eight sequins.

A Report, January 1780, remarking a clandestine recruiting carried out by a certain Marrazzani for the [Prussian] regiment of Zarembal.

A Report, the 11th October 1781, regarding a so-called Baldassare Rossetti, a Venetian subject living at Trieste, whose activities and projects were of a nature to prejudice the commerce and industry of the Republic.

Among the Reports relating to public morals may be noted:

December 1776. A Report on the seditious character of a ballet called "Coriolanus." The back of this report is inscribed: "The impressario of S. Benedetto, Mickel de l'Agata, shall be summoned immediately; it has been ordered that he cease, under penalty of his life, from giving the ballet

Coriolanus at the theater. Further, he is to collect and deposit all the printed programmes of this ballet."

December 1780. A Report calling to the attention of the Tribunal the scandalous disorders produced in the theaters when the lights were extinguished.

3rd May 1781. A Report remarking that the Abbe Carlo Grimani believed himself exempt, in his position as a priest, from the interdiction laid on patricians against frequenting foreign ministers and their suites. On the back of this Report is written: "Ser Jean Carlo, Abbe Grimani, to be gently reminded, by the Secretary, of the injunction to abstain from all commerce with foreign ministers and their adherents."

Venetian nobles were forbidden under penalty of death from holding any communication with foreign ambassadors or their households. This was intended as a precaution to preserve the secrets of the Senate.

26th November 1781. A Report concerning a painting academy where nude studies were made, from models of both sexes, while scholars only twelve or thirteen years of age were admitted, and where dilettantes who were neither painters nor designers, attended the sessions.

22nd December 1781. By order, Casanova reported to the Tribunal a list of the principal licentious or antireligious books to be found in the libraries and private collections at Venice: la Pucelle; la Philosophie de l'Histoire; L'Esprit d'Helvetius; la Sainte Chandelle d'Arras; les Bijoux indiscrets; le Portier des Chartreux; les Posies de Baffo; Ode a Priape; de Piron; etc., etc.

In considering this Report, which has been the subject of violent criticism, we should bear in mind three points:

first—the Inquisitors required this information; second—no one in their employ could have been in a better position to give it than Casanova; third—Casanova was morally and economically bound, as an employee of the Tribunal, to furnish the information ordered, whatever his personal distaste for the undertaking may have been. We may even assume that he permitted himself to express his feelings in some indiscreet way, and his break with the Tribunal followed, for, at the end of 1781, his commission was withdrawn. Certainly, Casanova's almost absolute dependence on his salary, influenced the letter he wrote the Inquisitors at this time.

"To the Illustrious and Most Excellent Lords, the Inquisitors of State:

"Filled with confusion, overwhelmed with sorrow and repentance, recognizing myself absolutely unworthy of addressing my vile letter to Your Excellencies confessing that I have failed in my duty in the opportunities which presented themselves, I, Jacques Casanova, invoke, on my knees, the mercy of the Prince; I beg that, in compassion and grace, there may be accorded me that which, in all justice and on reflection, may be refused me.

"I ask the Sovereign Munificence to come to my aid, so that, with the means of subsistence, I may apply myself vigorously, in the future, to the service to which I have been privileged.

"After this respectful supplication, the wisdom of Your Excellencies may judge the disposition of my spirit and of my intentions."

The Inquisitors decided to award Casanova one month's pay, but specified that thereafter he would receive salary only when he rendered important services.

In 1782 Casanova made a few more Reports to the Tribunal, for one of which, regarding the failure of an insurance and commercial house at Trieste, he received six sequins. But the part of a guardian of the public morals, even through necessity, was undoubtedly unpleasant to him; and, in spite of the financial loss, it may be that his release was a relief.

III FRANCESCA BUSCHINI

Intimately connected with Casanova's life at this period was a girl named Francesca Buschini. This name does not appear in any of the literary, artistic or theatrical records of the period, and, of the girl, nothing is known other than that which she herself tells us in her letters to Casanova. From these very human letters, however, we may obtain, not only certain facts, but also, a very excellent idea of her character. Thirty-two of her letters, dated between July 1779 and October 1787, written in the Venetian dialect, were preserved in the library at Dux.

She was a seamstress, although often without work, and had a brother, a younger sister and also a mother living with her. The probabilities are that she was a girl of the most usual sort, but greatly attached to Casanova who, even in his poverty, must have dazzled her as a being from another world. She was his last Venetian love, and remained a faithful correspondent until 1787; and it is chiefly from her letters, in which she comments on news contained in Casanova's letters to her, that light is thrown on the Vienna-Paris period, particularly, of Casanova's life. For this, Francesca has placed us greatly in her debt.

With this girl, at least between 1779 and 1782, Casanova rented a small house at Barbaria delle Tole, near S. Giustina, from the noble Pesaro at S. Stae. Casanova, always in demand for his wit and learning, often took dinner in the city. He knew that a place always awaited him at the house of Memmo and at that of Zaguri and that, at the table of these patricians, who were distinguished by their intellectual superiority, he would meet men notable in science and letters. Being so long and so closely connected with theatrical circles, he was often seen at the theater, with Francesca. Thus, the 9th August 1786, the poor girl, in an excess of chagrin writes: "Where are all the pleasures which formerly you procured me? Where are the theatres, the comedies which we once saw together?"

On the 28th July 1779, Francesca wrote:

"Dearest and best beloved,

". . . In the way of novelties, I find nothing except that S. E. Pietro Zaguri has arrived at Venice; his servant has been twice to ask for you, and I have said you were still at the Baths of Abano . . ."

The Casanova-Buschini establishment kept up relations, more or less frequent and intimate, with a few persons, most of whom are mentioned in Francesca's letters; the Signora Anzoletta Rizzotti; the Signora Elisabeth Catrolli, an ancient comedienne; the Signora Bepa Pezzana; the Signora Zenobia de Monti, possibly the mother of that Carlo de Monti, Venetian Consul at Trieste, who was a friend to Casanova and certainly contributed toward obtaining his pardon from the Inquisitors; a M. Lunel, master of languages, and his wife.

IV PUBLICATIONS

Casanova's principal writings during this period were:

His translation of the Iliad, the first volume of which was issued in 1775, the second in 1777 and the third in 1778.

During his stay at Abano in 1778, he wrote the *Scrutinio del libro*, eulogies of M. de Voltaire "by various hands." In the dedication of this book, to the Doge Renier, he wrote, "This little book has recently come from my inexperienced pen, in the hours of leisure which are frequent at Abano for those who do not come only for the baths."

From January until July 1780, he published, anonymously, a series of miscellaneous small works, seven pamphlets of about one hundred pages each, distributed at irregular intervals to subscribers.

From the 7th October to the end of December, 1780, on the occasions of the representations given by a troupe of French comedians at the San Angelo theater, Casanova wrote a little paper called *The Messenger of Thalia*. In one of the numbers, he wrote:

"French is not my tongue; I make no pretensions and, wrong or astray, I place on the paper what heaven sends from my pen. I give birth to phrases turned to Italian, either to see what they look like or to produce a style, and often, also, to draw, into a purist's snare, some critical doctor who does not know my humor or how my offense amuses me."

The "little romance" referred to in the following letter to "Mlle. X- C- V-," appeared in 1782, with the title; 'Di aneddoti vinizanimilitari a amorosi del secolo decimo quarto sotto i dogati di Giovanni Gradenigoe di Giovanni Dolfin'. Venezia, 1782.

V
MLLE. X . . . C . . . V . .

In 1782, a letter written by this lady, Giustina de Wynne, referring to a visit to Venice of Paul I, Grand Duke, afterward Emperor of Russia, and his wife, was published under the title of *Du sejour des Comptes du Nord a Venise en janvier mdccclxxxii*. If he had not previously done so, Casanova took this occasion to recall himself to the memory of this lady to whom he had once been of such great service. And two very polite letters were exchanged:

"Madam,

"The fine epistle which V. E. has allowed to be printed upon the sojourn of C. and of the C. du Nord in this city, exposes you, in the position of an author, to endure the compliments of all those who trouble themselves to write. But I flatter myself, Madam, that V. E. will not disdain mine.

"The little romance, Madam, a translation from my dull and rigid pen, is not a gift but a very paltry offering which I dare make to the superiority of your merit.

"I have found, Madam, in your letter, the simple, flowing style of gentility, the one which alone a woman of condition who writes to her friend may use with dignity. Your digressions and your thoughts are flowers which . . . (forgive an author who pilfers from you the delicious nonchalance of an amiable writer) or . . . a will-o'-the-wisp which, from time to time, issues from the work, in spite of the author, and burns the paper.

"I aspire, Madam, to render myself favorable to the deity to which reason advises me to make homage. Accept then the offering and render happy he who makes it with your indulgence.

"I have the honor to sign myself, if you will kindly permit me, with very profound respect.

"Giacomo Casanova."

"Monsieur

"I am very sensible, Monsieur, of the distinction which comes to me from your approbation of my little pamphlet. The interest of the moment, its references and the exaltation of spirits have gained for it the tolerance and favorable welcome of the good Venetians. It is to your politeness in particular, Monsieur, that I believe is due the marked success which my work has had with you. I thank you for the book which you sent me and I will risk thanking you in advance for the pleasure it will give me. Be persuaded of my esteem for yourself and for your talents. And I have the honor to be, Monsieur.

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