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## If writer Casanova disturbs, it's not for the 122 women he slept with

Laurence Bergreen's book describes figure that in the 18th century foreshadowed the fluidity of our modernity

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### João Pereira Coutinho

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CASANOVA ★★★★★

**Price** R \$ 109.90 (488 pp)

**Author** Laurence Bergreen (Translation: Cássio Arantes Leite)

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I spent the last few days reading the biography of Laurence

([https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2019/05/historia-da-poesia-visual-obras-de-samico-e-mais-5-](https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2019/05/historia-da-poesia-visual-obras-de-samico-e-mais-5-dicas.shtml)

[dicas.shtml](https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2019/05/historia-da-poesia-visual-obras-de-samico-e-mais-5-dicas.shtml)) Bergreen ([https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2019/05/historia-da-poesia-visual-obras-de-samico-e-](https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2019/05/historia-da-poesia-visual-obras-de-samico-e-mais-5-dicas.shtml)  
[mais-5-dicas.shtml](https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2019/05/historia-da-poesia-visual-obras-de-samico-e-mais-5-dicas.shtml)) , "Casanova: The Life of a Genius Seducer". I was the target of

suspicious looks. When we talk about Casanova, the imagination of men and women plunges into the alcove's pleasures and envisions feats worthy of an Olympic athlete.

I understand the excitement. I advise a cold shower. Giacomo Casanova

(<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrada/2017/04/1875036-filme-sobre-casanova-se-torna-jogo-pos-moderno-enfadonho.shtml>)

was born in 1725. He died in 1798. If we consider that slept with 122 women (his estimate) and that sexual initiation occurred 16 years of age (with two sisters, which inflates once the final accounting), this gives two to three women a year. I've seen better.

If Casanova disturbs the spirits, it is not for the quantity of the achievements - but for the detail with which he described them. In his "Histoire de Ma Vie", 12 volumes written at the end of his life, Casanova spares no one. In such a way that the descriptions of his intimacies, which Bergreen reproduces abundantly, become the least interesting part of the biography, so repetitive.

The modus operandi was almost always the same: Casanova saw a maiden; he fell at his feet; declared a withering love; and then waited — one night, two — until the maiden appeared in her room.

Apparently, these methods worked with aristocrats, commoners or religious, individually or in pairs. And when he was not the predator, he became prey to the appetites of others. How to explain so much success?

Beauty helped, though not a canonical beauty: Giacomo had a high forehead, a prominent nose, contemporaries describe him as a giant goose. But it was the libertine, insolent, theatrical personality that made all the preliminaries.

This personality may have been a paternal and regional heritage: the son of actors, born and raised in Venice, a labyrinthine city that is by definition disguised. He still thought of an ecclesiastical career, understanding that the devotions of the spirit did not necessarily clash with the devotions of the body.

It did not work. Leaving the church without ever losing faith, he opted for a career in gambling, cheating and, of course, venereal disease. Not that it disturbed him. As I would say in old age, composing her memories, I missed being healthy just to be able to ruin it again.

But not only from vices did man become. To speak in the eighteenth century is to speak of continental Enlightenment, read 'French', which Casanova inhabited fully.

He corresponded with everyone who was a person. He left us portraits of Rousseau or Voltaire (unflattering). He collaborated with Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte, his countryman, in an opera whose title is very evident ("Don Giovanni"). He met and liked Catherine of Russia.

He knew and disliked Empress Maria Teresa, who lacked "the virtue of tolerance in matters of illegitimate love between a man and a woman." (This is a good phrase to use in a tight moment: "Dear, where is your virtue of tolerance for illegitimate love etc. ")

And there was still time, after a spectacular escape from the fearsome "I Piombi" prison (he was sentenced by the Inquisition to five years in jail for "atheism"), to be reborn to wealth in Paris, creating the French lottery that lasts to this day. That this draw was never interrupted, not even during the 1789 Revolution, is proof that money is stronger than ideology.

Laurence Bergreen's book is a fun and literary description of a man who, repeatedly reinventing himself for adventure and glory, foreshadowed the fluidity of our modernity. If the world is a stage, Venetian Casanova knew how to wear all the masks.

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