



Sankofa Archives

Did You Know? Tidbits #2

“Casanova”



I bet you are wondering what he is doing here while according to J.A. Rogers who claims in *Nature Knows No Color-Line* that:

“Casanova, most famous lover of history, probably came of Negro stock. He had “an African complexion.” In his coat-of-arms are two Negroes.” [Rogers, p.122]

There must be some truth to what Rogers is claiming, because in Appendix I of *The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt the Prince of Adventures Vol. 1.* from 1902, the Prince De Ligne describes Casanova as follows: “He would be a very fine man if he was not ugly. He is tall, built like Hercules, but with an almost African completion...” [Casanova 1902, p. 477 *See pages.2-3*]

Giacomo Girolamo Casanova, later known as Jacques Casanova de Seingalt, was born at Venice on April 2, 1725. He was the first of six children born to Gaetano Casanova and Zanetta Farussi. Although the family was Italian, the name “Casanova” is Spanish; Casanova claimed that his father was descended from a certain Don Jaime Casanova who fled from Spain to Rome in 1428. However, Don Jaime Casanova did not flee from Spain alone, for he had with him an heiress whom he had abducted from a convent. It seemed that womanizing ran in the family. [Casanova, 2007 p.1173]



Altera nunc rerum facies me quero, nec adsum
Non sum qui fueram non putor esse: fui.

JACQUES CASANOVA DE SEINGALT.

a l'âge de 63 ans

[Frontispiece]

THE MEMOIRS OF
JACQUES CASANOVA
DE SEINGALT

THE PRINCE OF ADVENTURERS

A New and Abridged Edition, with
Introduction, Two Portraits,
Notes, and Appendices

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

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1902

AVENTUROS

PORTRAIT OF CASANOVA BY THE PRINCE DE LIGNE¹

HE would be a very fine man if he was not ugly. He is tall, built like a Hercules, but with an almost African complexion; his eyes are bright, truthful-looking, and intelligent, but they indicate an uneasy susceptibility and a revengeful ferocity; it would seem easier to make him angry than to make him laugh. He seldom laughs, though he makes others do so. He has a way of saying things which reminds one of Harlequin and Figaro.

He knows everything, excepting the things which he prides himself on knowing—such as dancing, the rules of the French language, good taste, and the ways of high society. In the same way, it is only his comedies which are not comic, his philosophical works in which there is no philosophy, all the others are full of it, and of depth, character, piquancy, and originality. He is a mine of science and learning, but wearies one with quotations from Homer and Horace.

His witty sallies have a flavour of Attic salt. He is sensitive and grateful; but when he is displeased, is grumbling, bitter, and altogether detestable. No sum which one could give him would atone for a little joke at his expense. His style is like that of old prefaces—long, diffuse, and heavy—but if he has anything to tell—his adventures, for instance—he tells them so amusingly and dramatically that one is quite carried away. He beats *Gil Blas* or the *Diable Boiteux* in interest. He believes in nothing except what is least worthy of credence, being superstitious on many points. Fortunately, he is high-minded and delicate, for when he says, 'I have sworn to God,' or 'God so wills it,' there is nothing can stop him. He wants everything, and covets everything, and after having possessed everything, he knows how to do without everything.

¹ See de Ligne's *Mémoires et Mélanges historiques et littéraires*, Paris, 1828, vol. iv. p. 291.

Notes:

Casanova, Giacomo. 2007. *History of My Life*. New York: A.A. Knopf.

Casanova, Giacomo. 1902. *The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt the Prince of Adventures Vol. 1*. London Chapman and Hall, limited. [Book at Archive.org]

Rogers, J.A. in *Nature Knows No Color-Line: Research into the Negro Ancestry in the White Race*. United States