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Poetry

Casanova in Venice: A Raunchy Rhyme
Kildare Dobbs
The Porcupine's Quill
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How exactly did the world-renowned playboy come to be, and what was it that made him tick? Kildare Dobbs' most recent poetry collection, *Casanova in Venice: A Raunchy Rhyme*, provides insight into these questions and more as he takes readers on a very rollicking and sometimes thought-provoking journey through the great lover's life.

Using Casanova's own *Mémoires* as the framework for the nineteen narrative poems in this collection, Dobbs provides readers with a broad understanding of Casanova's life—from his early childhood to his later years, when the myth of the man grew to epic proportions. Dobbs presents Casanova's experiences of abandonment by his promiscuous mother; his adolescent years, when he was surprised by early stirrings of desire; the reversal of fortune, when he saved a senator and became his heir; his arrest and jailing by the Venetian Inquisition; and his later escape. While the collection may be read for the sheer pleasure of the "raunchy rhyme," Dobbs's use of Casanova's history fleshes out the hero's story, lending additional realism to the tales of his earthly enjoyments with countesses, nuns, and everyone in between.

The "raunchy rhyme" of the title, is the supreme delight of Dobbs's collection. Throughout the book, readers watch outrageous trysts develop while listening to hilarious double entendre ("Awake, my lute!") and surprising, memorable rhymes ("fondle her" and "gondola").

In "Pheromones," Dobbs explores Casanova's powerful chemicals: "Two nuns a hundred yards away: / one whiff—they're in the family way." In "Love of Women," Dobbs lets readers in on Casanova's affair with the young 'Countess Countless:' "He loves her truly for her mind / and really exquisite behind / who to behold evolves a pang, / —it's like a beautiful meringue!" The poet's use of rhythm and rhyme not only moves the narrative forward, but lends an extra kick of fun to the ribald situations Casanova puts himself in.

Throughout the collection, Dobbs immerses readers in beautiful, spare depictions of

Venice as the backdrop of Casanova's tale. In "Peripeteia," he writes: "A summer night—the rising moon / casts sequins on the dark lagoon." In "Apotheosis," readers are given "gondolas nodding at their tether / like restive horses crowd together." On a visual level, the book contains nine beautiful (some titillating) wood engravings by the artist Wesley W. Bates. Additionally, a small line drawing of a different Venetian mask ends each poem, giving the book an extra fanciful touch.

Jennifer Fandel