



## Pleasure (Penguin Classics)

By Gabriele D'Annunzio

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**Pleasure (Penguin Classics)** By Gabriele D'Annunzio

**Putting the sex back in *Pleasure*, here is the first new English translation since the Victorian era of the great Italian masterpiece of sensuality and seduction**

Like Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, Andrea Sperelli lives his life as a work of art, seeking beauty and flouting the rules of morality and social interaction along the way. In his aristocratic circles in Rome, he is a serial seducer. But there are two women who command his special regard: the beautiful young widow Elena, and the pure, virgin-like Maria. In Andrea's pursuit of the exalted heights of extreme pleasure, he plays them against each other, spinning a sadistic web of lust and deceit.

This new translation of D'Annunzio's masterpiece, the first in more than one hundred years, restores what was considered too offensive to be included in the 1898 translation—some of the very scenes that are key to the novel's status as a landmark of literary decadence.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“A fascinating psychological novel about the mind of a seducer . . . Lara Gochin Raffaelli has performed a real service by restoring *Pleasure* to an English-speaking public, or rather giving it to us, in effect, for the first time. . . . In the wake of *Pleasure*'s spectacular and scandalous success, [Andrea] Sperelli became for an entire generation a type that many chose to imitate—as Goethe's Werther was for readers of the Romantic era, or Jay Gatsby for the Jazz Age.” —**Alexander Stille**, from the Introduction

“[A] superb new translation . . . The writing sparkles. . . . Raffaelli preserves the florid musicality of D'Annunzio's original Italian, its muscular rhythm, and the precious constructions that can make Italian seem like a foreign language in his hands. She also provides a wealth of helpful notes, crucial for entering into D'Annunzio's museum-like imagination. . . . So much contemporary writing gives us sex without sensuality; D'Annunzio revels in a finer erotic touch. . . . The real events in D'Annunzio's life were too noisy to ignore, but they shouldn't drown out the voice of his writing. . . . A close reading reveals an astonishing streak of literary innovation.” —*The Times Literary Supplement*

“Shockingly explicit . . . a kind of portrait of the artist as an irresistible, corrupt young aesthete . . . [It] has now been lushly translated in an uncensored version.” —**Jonathan Galassi**, *The New Republic*

“*Pleasure* is truly a pleasure, and its potency is its own. D'Annunzio's . . . methods and vision are strikingly original, and this novel confidently announces itself not just as a mere echo or harbinger, but as a fully fledged advent of its own. . . . With this new translation, the influence on the subsequent century's literature is now shockingly apparent. Both Marcel Proust and James Joyce were great admirers of D'Annunzio's work, and the influence especially on Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* makes itself retrospectively evident on nearly every page. . . . Raffaelli's new translation of *Pleasure* will perhaps singlehandedly resuscitate D'Annunzio as a world writer and place this glimmering first novel in its key spot among Europe's great works of Decadent literature.” —*Rain Taxi* — **Alexander Stille**

### About the Author

**Gabriele D'Annunzio** (1863–1938), a novelist, poet, journalist, dramatist, and daredevil, is the most influential and controversial Italian author of the twentieth century.

**Lara Gochin Raffaelli** is a professor at the University of Cape Town in South Africa.

**Alexander Stille** is a frequent contributor on Italy to the *New York Review of Books*, the *New York Times*, and the *New Yorker* and is the author of several books. He lives in New York.

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**Donnie Matthews:**

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