



# **Gabriele D'Annunzio: Poet, Seducer, and Preacher of War**

*Lucy Hughes-Hallett*

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**Winner of the Samuel Johnson Prize for Nonfiction**

**Winner of the Costa Biography Award**

**\*\**Washington Post* Best Books of 2013\*\***

**\*\**Economist* Best Books of 2013\*\***

This fascinating life of Gabriele d'Annunzio—the charismatic poet, bon vivant, and virulent nationalist who prefigured Mussolini—traces the early twentieth century's trajectory from Romantic idealism to Fascist thuggery.

D'Annunzio was Italy's premier poet at a time when poetry could trigger riots. A brilliant self-publicist, he used his fame to sell his work, seduce women, and promote his extreme nationalism. At once an aesthete and a militarist, he enjoyed risking death no less than making love, and he wrote with equal enthusiasm about Fortuny gowns and torpedoes. In 1915 his incendiary oratory helped drive Italy into the First World War, and in 1919 he led a troop of mutineers into the Croatian port of Fiume, where he established a delinquent utopia. Futurists, anarchists, communists and proto-fascists descended on the place, along with literati and thrill-seekers, drug dealers and prostitutes. Three years later, when the fascists marched on Rome, they belted out anthems they'd learned in Fiume, while Mussolini consciously modeled himself on the great poet. Lucy Hughes-Hallett's compelling biography is a revelation both of d'Annunzio's flamboyant life and of the dramatic times he helped to shape.

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