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D.H. Lawrence

# The Virgin and the Gypsy

Read by **Georgina Sutton**

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1	Chapter 1	6:14
2	The children were brought up in this atmosphere...	6:36
3	Chapter 2	7:11
4	So the months went by.	4:56
5	The crossword puzzles, invented by Satan himself...	3:44
6	Then in the afternoon Lottie and Ella and Bob Framley came...	6:53
7	Chapter 3	5:37
8	The party had been silent for some time.	5:39
9	The gypsy man had been sitting loosely...	4:35
10	The woman took two wooden stools...	5:30
11	So, with curiosity, she followed the woman up the steps...	4:40
12	Chapter 4	6:50
13	When things went very wrong...	5:24
14	Hate kindled her heart, as she lay with numbed limbs.	7:17
15	Granny, who had been in a semi-coma...	4:32
16	Then Aunt Cissie, livid, sprang upon Lucille...	4:35
17	Chapter 5	6:21
18	Aunt Cissie began to bargain for the candlestick...	5:14
19	The two girls started downstairs in state...	6:28

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20	She remained soft and remote in her amazement.	6:31
21	Chapter 6	5:55
22	He put down his tools and the pot, and rose from the ground.	5:34
23	Obediently she went to the stool by the fire...	5:58
24	Behind her the two men were talking briefly.	5:29
25	Chapter 7	5:06
26	'What is it Lucille,' she asked...	5:47
27	Yvette did not tell the rector, or Granny...	4:45
28	'Do you mean to say you don't know what love is?'	5:02
29	Chapter 8	7:26
30	She looked at him, as he stood there...	5:38
31	It was Granny whom she came to detest with all her soul.	7:50
32	The second time, she met the gypsy by accident.	4:42
33	Chapter 9	6:28
34	The sun was yellowing to decline.	6:05
35	With a low thud like thunder...	4:32
36	Yvette, naked, shuddering so much that she was sick...	4:53
37	Chapter 10	5:14
38	She was tugging at her hair when the policeman tapped...	5:38

**Total time: 3:37:13**

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**D.H. Lawrence**

(1885–1930)

# The Virgin and the Gypsy

D.H. Lawrence's reputation as a promoter of sexual freedom and liberator from the prudish constraints of Victorian morality means that if he had written a life of the Virgin Mary, people who had only read the title would open it looking for the dirty bits. This is largely the result of the furore that surrounded his most explicit novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which was banned in its full form for decades and only published in unexpurgated form after a very public trial in the 1960s. The eager hands hankering after illicit thrills were happily shocked when they finally got to open that one; but they would find little to satisfy any prurient cravings in *The Virgin and the Gypsy*, despite its title. The shame is that this could be seen as a disappointment.

*The Virgin and the Gypsy* was written in 1926, two years before *Lady*

*Chatterley's Lover*; but Lawrence had already established a reputation as a breaker of taboos. He was born in Nottingham into a poor mining family where the poverty was exacerbated by his father's drunken violence. Lawrence hated him, and with a similar passion loved his mother, who responded with a devotion that showed itself in a determination to see him educated. He went on to become a teacher for a while; but he had also discovered an ability to write and had a lifelong interest in books. Poems, short stories, plays and his first novel were all being written and published by 1912, at which point he decided on a career as a writer.

Partly because of his poor health he travelled extensively throughout his life, beginning with trips through Europe in the years prior to the First World War.

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He met and eventually married Frieda Weekley, who, apart from being married to a former tutor of his at Nottingham University at the time they met, was the cousin of Baron von Richthofen, the German air ace known as the Red Baron. This association with a German (quite apart from Lawrence's decidedly un-nationalistic stance) was naturally a matter for suspicion when the couple returned to England at the outbreak of war; they were subject to harassment throughout the conflict, eventually being obliged to leave their home in Cornwall on suspicion of spying.

By this time Lawrence was either known to or a friend of several influential writers, critics, publishers and artists, including T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Katherine Mansfield, John Murray and Edward Garnett; and he was being published in modernist journals. The shift towards modernism had started well before the War and was concerned (among many other things) with a move away from the traditional, Victorian forms of art, with their comfortable morality and predictable narrative forms, towards a deeper and

truer understanding of the workings of the human mind and heart.

For Lawrence this was all connected to his passionate engagement with the rawer, more natural elements of the self which he felt were destroyed either by the industrialisation of the workforce or the stultifying moral obligations that precluded a true expression of feeling. Unfortunately for him, his novels were outraging the authorities (who, one might have thought, would have had greater things to worry them in 1915), and his novel *The Rainbow* was banned for being obscene.

Given this rebuttal from the literary establishment, his experiences in Cornwall, his poor health (tuberculosis and pneumonia especially), and the fact that he had practically no money, it is hardly surprising that he left England as soon as he could. He went into a kind of voluntary exile: to Italy, Australia, France, Sri Lanka, America and then Mexico, and any number of places in between. But for all his travelling there is a sense in which his childhood and the England of his early years never left him. He wrote ceaselessly:

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books of criticism (some of which are outstanding and were influential in their time), lectures, translations, travel writing, poems about the animals he observed in Mexico and elsewhere; but his greatest works were about England and the English, wherever he happened to write them. In the early 1920s, he had bought a ranch in New Mexico where it looked for a while as though the climate and his reputation as a critic might enable him to live comfortably; but further illness forced him back to Europe.

*The Virgin and the Gypsy* was written in Italy, and as with many of his greatest works there is no doubt that the author has a point to make. But Lawrence writes with such an intense sense of place and personality that the descriptions become invested with almost symbolic power, overwhelming any danger of mere pedagogy. In *The Virgin and the Gypsy*, the house is not just a beautifully realised example of a type of repressed home: it is every middle-class repressed home. The moral cowardice of the father is not just a shifted memory of Lawrence's own father: he is the patrician of so many English

households. But whereas in some of his other fiction Lawrence's passions could prohibit humour, here there is an overtly satirical air, with sequences of dialogue that are accurately, uncomfortably hilarious. It is a short novel, but it deals with all his major themes and does so in a manner that is almost playful. He teases the reader with the suggestion of sex, knowing that anyone reading a Lawrence novel will expect something explicit, maintaining the tension only to be surprising and of course moving at the end.

Lawrence was a passionate, sensitive man who believed in the value, perhaps even grace, of humanity's natural self and its capacity for tenderness. The bans and repression that his work suffered caused him suffering, too. It took some years before critical and popular appreciation recognised the effect he had had on literature; but he was profoundly influential on later writers who either consciously tried to emulate him or simply found it was impossible not to be affected by his work. He furthered the nature of the novel and opened the way

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for a fuller understanding and expression of sexuality: almost the opposite of a desire to titillate, it was a central part of a philosophical and artistic vision.

**Notes by Roy McMillan**



**Georgina Sutton** trained at the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art. She has toured extensively to repertory theatres around the UK in plays and musicals and has appeared in numerous pantomimes. Film credits include *The Gallery* (Channel 4) and the presentation and voiceover for a 3G Mobile documentary. Audio work includes voice commercials for Classic FM and recording course and instruction manuals as learning tools. She has read *The Great Poets – Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti* for Naxos AudioBooks.

## Credits

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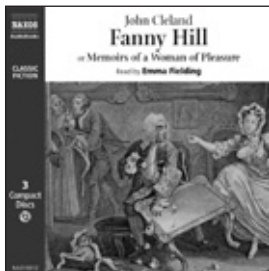
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**D.H. Lawrence**

# The Virgin and the Gypsy

Read by **Georgina Sutton**

In a claustrophobic household, oppressed by her blind, toad-like grandmother and a cowardly, conventional father, Yvette's exuberance seems doomed to suppression. But meeting a gypsy awakens unfamiliar emotions in her, making her challenge the family's accepted morality. As she wavers between conformity and rebellion, a flash flood threatens her home, her world and her life.

This short novel deals with all the major themes of sexuality and identity that made Lawrence one of the most original and influential writers of the 20th century; and it is a satirical, atmospheric, moving and surprising masterpiece.



**Georgina Sutton** trained at the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art. She has toured extensively to repertory theatres around the UK and her audio work includes voice commercials for Classic FM. She has read *The Great Poets – Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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