



La Folie Baudelaire

Roberto Calasso

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In *La Folie Baudelaire*, Roberto Calasso—one of the most original and acclaimed writers on literature, art, culture, and mythology—turns his attention to the poets and writers of Paris in the nineteenth century who created what was later called "the Modern." His protagonist is Charles Baudelaire: poet of "nerves," art love, pioneering critic, man about Paris. Calasso ranges through Baudelaire's life and work, focusing on two painters—Ingres and Delacroix—about whom Baudelaire wrote acutely, and then turns to Degas and Manet, who followed in the tracks Baudelaire laid down in his great essay *The Painter of Modern Life*. In Calasso's lavishly illustrated mosaic of stories, insights, close readings of poems, and commentaries on paintings, Baudelaire's Paris comes brilliantly to life.

In the eighteenth century, a *Folie* was a garden pavilion set aside for people of leisure, a place of delight and fantasy. Following Baudelaire, Calasso has created a brilliant and dramatic "Folie Baudelaire"—a place where the reader can encounter the poet himself, his peers, his city, and his extraordinary likes and dislikes, finally discovering that that place is situated in the middle of the land of "absolute literature."

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