



# Ardor

By Roberto Calasso

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**Ardor** By Roberto Calasso

**In a meditation on the wisdom of the Vedas, Roberto Calasso brings ritual and sacrifice to bear on the modern world**

In this revelatory volume, Roberto Calasso, whom *The Paris Review* has called "a literary institution," explores the ancient texts known as the Vedas. Little is known about the Vedic people, who lived more than three thousand years ago in northern India: They left behind almost no objects, images, or ruins. They created no empires. Even the *soma*, the likely hallucinogenic plant that appears at the center of some of their rituals, has not been identified with any certainty. Only a "Parthenon of words" remains: verses and formulations suggesting a daring understanding of life.

"If the Vedic people had been asked why they did not build cities," writes Calasso, "they could have replied: we did not seek power, but *rapture*." This is the ardor of the Vedic world, a burning intensity that is always present, both in the mind and in the cosmos.

With his signature erudition and profound sense of the past, Calasso explores the enigmatic web of ritual and myth that defines the Vedas. Often at odds with modern thought, these texts illuminate the nature of consciousness more vividly than anything else has managed to till now. Following the "hundred paths" of the *Satapatha Brahmana*, an impressive exegesis of Vedic ritual, *Ardor* indicates that it may be possible to reach what is closest by passing through that which is most remote, as "the whole of Vedic India was an attempt to *think further*."

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## Editorial Review

### Review

Praise for "La Folie Baudelaire"

"Roberto Calasso [is] the most inquisitively suggestive literary critic in the world today." --Thomas McGonigle, "Los Angeles Times"

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"[A] careful, thoughtful, and detailed exploration . . . Richard Dixon's supple and elegant translation brings Calasso's poetic meditations to life. Readers will return again and again for wisdom and insight." -- "Publisher's Weekly" "Illuminating . . . The author pursues his own quest for enlightenment by questioning, treading carefully and humbling himself before a body of knowledge that has not always been well-served by his Western predecessors. . . . 'The whole of Vedic India was an attempt to think further,' writes Calasso. He demands no less from his readers." --"Kirkus Reviews" "Calasso is not only immensely learned; he is one of the most original thinkers and writers we have today." --Charles Simic "Roberto Calasso [is] the most inquisitively suggestive literary critic in the world today." --Thomas McGonigle, "Los Angeles Times" "Roberto Calasso [is] a writer about the foundational myths and tales of human society who has no equal in the sparkle of his storytelling and the depth of his learning." --Boyd Tonkin, "The Independent" "[Calasso] has certainly managed to open a new road through the old landscape of literature." --John Banville, "The New York Review of Books" "Roberto Calasso [is] an exceptionally accessible thinker, original and profound." --Muriel Spark, "The Times Literary Supplement"

""Ardor" is Calasso's mode in his serpentine, allusive, and expansive readings . . . provocative . . . Calasso's profuse, high-wire exegesis brings the intricacies and marvels of Vedic thought vividly and evocatively to life." --"Donna Seaman, "Booklist" ""[A] careful, thoughtful, and detailed exploration . . . Richard Dixon's supple and elegant translation brings Calasso's poetic meditations to life. Readers will return again and again for wisdom and insight." --"Publisher's Weekly" "Illuminating . . . The author pursues his own quest for enlightenment by questioning, treading carefully and humbling himself before a body of knowledge that has not always been well-served by his Western predecessors. . . . 'The whole of Vedic India was an attempt to think further,' writes Calasso. He demands no less from his readers." --"Kirkus Reviews" "Calasso is not only immensely learned; he is one of the most original thinkers and writers we have today." --Charles Simic "Roberto Calasso [is] the most inquisitively suggestive literary critic in the world today." --Thomas McGonigle, "Los Angeles Times" "Roberto Calasso [is] a writer about the foundational myths and tales of human society who has no equal in the sparkle of his storytelling and the depth of his learning." --Boyd Tonkin, "The Independent" "[Calasso] has certainly managed to open a new road through the old landscape of literature." --John Banville, "The New York Review of Books" "Roberto Calasso [is] an exceptionally accessible thinker, original and profound." --Muriel Spark, "The Times Literary Supplement"

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#### About the Author

**Roberto Calasso** is the publisher of Adelphi Edizioni in Milan and is the author of many books. *Ardor* is the seventh part of a work in progress, following *The Ruin of Kasch*, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*, *Ka, K.*, *Tiepolo Pink*, and *La Folie Baudelaire*.

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