

Epigraph for a Condemned Book by Charles Baudelaire

Translated from the French

by [Thomas Banks](#) (August 2021)



Girl with Book, Hermann Max Pechstein, circa 1909

Easygoing, provincial Reader,
Clean-living Bourgeois, cast away
This saturnine, corrupting book;
Reader, be rid of it, I say.

Unless you've studied rhetoric
With Doctor Satan for your dean,
You'll either think my book stark mad,
Or miss entirely what I mean.

But if, immune to charms and spells,
Your eye can scan the deep abyss,
Then take me up, and learn to love
Him who within these pages is—

Curious Soul, who, suffering,
Wanders in search of Paradise,
Have pity on this book of mine;
If not, curse you, and damn your eyes!

Épigraphe pour un livre condamné

Lecteur paisible et bucolique,
Sobre et naïf homme de bien,
Jette ce livre saturnien,
Orgiaque et mélancolique.

Si tu n'as fait ta rhétorique
Chez Satan, le rusé doyen,
Jette! tu n'y comprendrais rien,
Ou tu me croirais hysthérique.

Mais si, sans se laisser charmer,
Ton oeil sait plonger dans les gouffres,
Lis-moi, pour apprendre à m'aimer;

Âme curieuse qui souffres
Et vas cherchant ton paradis,

Plains-moi!... Sinon, je te maudis!

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Thomas Banks has taught literature and Latin for many years in Idaho, Montana, and North Carolina, where he currently lives. Other writings of his have appeared in *First Things* and the *St. Austin Review*.

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