
Italo Calvino

Marcovaldo ovvero Le stagioni in città



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Description

Marcovaldo is an unskilled worker in a drab industrial city in northern Italy. He is an irrepressible dreamer and an inveterate schemer. Much to the puzzlement of his wife, his children, his boss, and his neighbors, he chases his dreams-but the results are never the expected ones.

Insightful reviews

Dhanaraj Rajan: Another wonderful literary experience with Italo Calvino. Calvino seems to be a person who is incapable of disappointing me. On the other hand he seems to be making his hold on me firmer and I am more than willing to comply.

About the book: It is a collection of 20 short stories and the main character in all the short stories is a peasant-turned-city labourer named Marcovaldo. The stories are biting satires on the insensitive and greedy urbanization process and the incurable sickness of consumerism identified with urban set up. The stories are very simple and the events of ordinary city life are the situations for the setting - eg: a walk in the super market; lunch break in the office; senseless invading of the privacy by the sales representatives; etc. As one reads the story one is entertained (there are many funny events)and at the same time tossed into few critical reflections. In short, it is a story of how the ordinary folks cope with the fast 'development'.

A Sample: "At six in the evening the city fell into the hands of the consumers. All during the day the big occupation of the productive public was to produce: they produced consumer goods. At a certain hour, as if a switch had been thrown, they stopped production and, away!, they were all off, to consume.."

A terrific satire but said in a funny way. Do not miss the stories.

arcobaleno: ***Ma esiste ancora la natura?***

Venti racconti uniti dallo stesso protagonista: un uomo semplice con una famiglia numerosa e una vita grama. Ma Marcovaldo è un sognatore con un cuore di bambino: trova la bellezza e la poesia nelle piccole cose, quelle nascoste dal caos cittadino e invisibili ai più.

I racconti affascinano per l'atmosfera sospesa da favola, per la magia, per la tenerezza e la malinconia, per la capacità di fermarsi a guardare le foglie che cadono, uno spicchio di luna, un arcobaleno dopo la pioggia.

Algernon:

Calvino has been on my radar for a long time, and I think I made a good choice in picking Marcovaldo for a first try. This is a small book, but it has a big heart. The stories are set in the poverty ridden early 1950's and follow up to the relative abundance of the 1960's, the immediate connections that spring to mind are the grand masters of Italian neo-realism: de Sica in The Bicycle Thieves, Fellini in Amarcord and Roma, Visconti in Rocco and his Brothers or White Nights. Going further afield, similar explorations of the condition of the less fortunates members of society, i could mention Truffaut or Kurosawa in his modern films. What they share with Italo

Calvino is the poetry angle, "diamonds in the rust" and all that jazz, the hope that springs eternal when you are down and the only way is up. If we take the quote by Thoreau about "the mass of men that live lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them" , it becomes clear that Calvino has taken this singing responsibility upon his shoulders, as he follows his Marcovaldo in his ordinary dreams of improving his life by outsmarting the system and in his stubborn perseverance to keep trying despite countless defeats. The book could be classed as comedy, the kind that made Chaplin famous for getting us to laugh and cry at the same time at the tragic clown who walks into the sunset with his too short, patched pants and his oversized shoes.

Subtitled Seasons in the City, this collection of 20 short stories is tied together by the protagonists and the setting: Marcovaldo is a handyman (unskilled worker) in a big city, burdened by low pay, a querulous wife and six children. His background is not explicitly given, but he must have been born somewhere in the country and transplanted to the concrete jungle of big city, witness his eternal fascination with nature:

This Marcovaldo possessed an eye ill-suited to city life: billboards, traffic-lights, shop-windows, neon signs, posters, no matter how carefully devised to catch the attention, never arrested his gaze, which might have been running over the desert sands. Instead, he would never miss a leaf yellowing on a branch, a feather trapped by a rood tile; there was no horsefly on a horse's back, no worm-hole in a plank, or fig-peel squashed on the disewalk that Marcovaldo didn't remark and ponder over, discovering the changes of season, the yearnings of his heart, and the woes of his existence.

The first story sets the tone and the format for all the rest: the alienation of living in the big city, the poverty, the sudden glimpse of an opportunity for improvement (in this case a row of mushrooms appearing in the gutters of a tramway station), the enthusiasm and the impulsive action (*To Marcovaldo the gray and wretched world surrounding him seemed suddenly generous with hidden riches; something could still be expected of life, beyond the hourly wage of his stipulated salary, with inflation index, family grant and cost-of-living allowance.*), followed by the Irony of Fate when his plans are crushed by the steamroller of Reality. From free of charge mushrooms, to a quiet night sleeping on a park bench, trapping birds on rooftops or stealing rabbits from a hospital, bee venom or sand baths treatments for arthritic pains, excursions in search of clean air or clean fish - everything poor Marcovaldo plans tends to turn to dust in his hands. His children are not excluded from the family curse, I especially liked the one story when his older boy runs from home to spend a summer in the mountains with a herd of cattle. For all his poverty and bad luck, Marcovaldo is not a revolutionary, he doesn't plan to overturn the social order and he doesn't rant about the general injustice of life. Mostly he is sad and tired, his dreams mostly trivial and his moments of happiness cheap and fleeting. Here's an example:

He is sitted on a bench by an avenue, near the place where he works; since his house is far away and to go there at noon costs time and tram tickets, he brings his lunch in the box, bought for the purpose, and he eats in the open air, watching the people go by, and then refreshes himself at a drinking fountain. If it's autumn and the sun is out, he chooses places where an occasional ray strikes; the shiny red leaves that fall from the trees serve him as napkins; the

salami skins go to stray dogs, who are quick to become his friends; and the sparrows collect the bread crumbs, at a moment when no one is going past in the avenue.

As he eats, he thinks: "Why am I so happy to taste the flavor of my wife's cooking here, when at home, among the quarells and tears, the debts that crop up in every conversation, I can't enjoy it?"

I found it easy to identify with the main character, not only because I'm a big fan of the Italian school of cinema: I grew up in a big industrial town, playing around construction sites and unfinished apartment blocks, craving a green park or a holiday by the seaside, frozen in winter and stifling hot in summer: *In every human presence Marcovaldo recognized sadly a brother, stuck like him, even in vacation time, to that oven of cooked and dusty cement, by debts, by the burden of the family, by the meagerness of his wages.* . Like him, I sought refuge from reality in the magic of the silver screen : *For anyone who dislikes his home and finds it inhospitable, the favorite refuge on cold evenings is the movies.* . Calvino inserts in one of his stories a homage to one of the most famous cuts from **La Dolce Vita** , making Marcovaldo hold the lights for the filming of a scene with a diva splashing in a fountain at night.

As summer follows spring and winter follows autumn and Italian economy slowly gathers steam, Marcovaldo moves from a basement room to a rooftop one, acquires a motorcycle and starts going to the movies or to the supermarkets. The tone of the stories changes slightly, to a more overt condemnation of consumerism, city alienation and inequality: billboard signs that hide the stars and keep the family from sleeping, supermarkets full of products they can't afford and yet couldn't help coveting, Christmas holidays marketed to death, free samples of shady products that they don't really need, luxury restaurants with restricted access, and so on. But through all these stories of woe and sadness, Calvino manages to find a glimpse of beauty, a lyrical touch, a good word or a kind gesture. His development as a writer was also evident as I progressed through these seasons in the city, starting with stark, elegant neo-realism and later flirting with magical realism, supra-realism, urban fables and a few closing paragraphs that are an allegorical poem of the fight between light and darkness, life and death. Simply beautiful.

I guess I'll have to read now my other two books by him that are waiting on my shelves :

Cosmicomiche and **If On a Winter Night a Traveller.**

David: Italo Calvino is often enjoyable to read. whereas Marcovaldo doesn't have the Borgesian or post-modern tropes of Invisible towns or If on a winter's evening a traveller, it's a heart-warming number of brilliantly crafted stories, the head success being the cute naivete and artistic mind's eye of the titular Italian, Marcovaldo. The whimsy and lyricism of Calvino's prose is worth it sufficient to embark at the too-short sleek voyage of this brief book, although it has a lot else to supply as well. The personality of Marcovaldo is a guy stuck among abysses. He lives in a northern business urban of Italy within the postwar 1950's via 1960's (though the actual urban is rarely mentioned, and sure is an imagined city, I imagined it as loosely according to the industrialized urban of Turin) which bridged the eras of poverty with financial boom. Marcovaldo is the lovable-loser, a personality trope highly regarded in post-modern/post-modern fiction, as a holiday with the nice thinkers and heroes of past literary hobbies and from the classical characters of Hamlet, Odysseus, etc. He works at a delivery firm, doing menial paintings which

he doesn't take pleasure in yet which places meager meals on his family's table. He has a spouse and 5 little ones which proportion his whimsy and naivete, although they're much extra conversant in the trendy global during which they live. Marcovaldo is torn among the realm of good looks which he feels is very unlikely in urban life, the wonderful thing about nature and of romantic notions, and the world, the reality, which consistently makes calls for on him, awakes him rudely from his reveries. This Marcovaldo possessed an eye fixed ill-suited to city-life: billboards, traffic-lights, shop-windows, neon signs, posters, regardless of how rigorously devised to seize the attention, by no means arrested his gaze, which would were working over the barren region sands. in its place he may by no means leave out a leaf yellowing on a branch, a feather trapped through a roof-tile; there has been no horsefly on a horse's back, no worm-hole in a plank, or fig-peel squashed at the sidewalk that Marcovaldo did not comment and think of over, researching the adjustments of the season, the yearnings of his heart, and the woes of his existence. Each tale represents a quick aphoristic anecdote, happening in a single season of 1 of the five-years encompassed within the assortment (spring-summer-autumn-winter). such a lot tales are very short, and each one is fascinating in a fanciful if no longer magical way. some of the tales stand out to me after having finished: Marcovaldo goals of drowsing out underneath the stars, between nature, yet after sneaking out together with his pillow, he's held at bay via an arguing couple, then is distracted via a site visitors light, the scent of a cabbage truck, etc. till he ultimately can get to sleep purely to moments later be woken at dawn. one other tale has him jealously hoarding the key of a few wild mushrooms becoming alongside the road, purely to discover one other has stumbled on them to boot - he relents and invitations all people to hitch in selecting them, just for every body to get ill from the toxic fungi. Marcovaldo's romantic mind's eye is consistently foiled by means of the truth within which he lives. the place he sees fresh, wild mushrooms he reveals toxic ones, the place he sees a river surfeit with fish he reveals them poisoned by means of an upstream paint company, a mountain break out is the grounds of a sanatorium, the romantic sleep underneath the stars: no sleep at all. There are layers to the message of Marcovaldo: at the one hand, Marcovaldo is consultant of a wrong view of the world, and the sadness and unhappiness inherent in unreasonable attachment to the past, or out of succeed in ideals. occasionally I want I were born in 1900, long past to literary salons and stylish soirees, rode in hansom cabs. yet that's an excessively romanticized imaginative and prescient of a prior era, and period gone. And it really is long gone as the international I reside in now could be better, even more accommodating, a long way fairer, and folks more often than not are higher off. definite i'll by no means comprehend what it truly is wish to gather love letters in a small gilt-rim cigar box, or visit an illustrious debutante ball and gossip within the nook beside a girandola mirror, yet at the different hand, t-shirts are a lot more cozy than these starchy collared shirts and breast-coats, so, there is that. whereas Marcovaldo's attachment to a flora and fauna that is a ways past the town limits, and past his sensible grasp, he's by no means disheartened, and that's what makes him so lovable. he's a fool, yet a truly adorable fool. On the opposite hand, there's a stress among some great benefits of industrialization and the wonder and advantages of naturalization. Calvino is much from aiding an unindustrialized world, one with no cities, one made for the Marcovaldos of the world; yet he's additionally condemnatory of the excesses in commercial cities: pollution, traffic, waste, blind consumerism. the nature of Marcovaldo is planned in his ridiculousness, yet so are the numerous electorate of the foolish urban someplace in Northern Italy. those that withstand industrialization appear as ridiculous as those that violently help it. Calvino sees it as an inevitability, although one that calls for a greater balance. Cannibalistic consumerism infringes at

the traditional beauty, however it is in a position to a great thing about its own, and the city photographs which Calvino fills those pages with illustrate that power beauty. Marcovaldo went again to examine the moon, then he went to examine a site visitors light, a piece farther on. the sunshine flashed yellow, yellow, yellow, continually blinking on and off. Marcovaldo in comparison the moon with the traffic-light. The moon along with her mysterious pallor, additionally yellow, but in addition green, in its depths, or even blue; the traffic-light with its universal little yellow. And the moon, all calm, casting her mild with no haste, streaked every now and then through nice wisps of clouds, which she majestically allowed to fall round her shoulders; and the traffic-light meanwhile, constantly there, on and off, on and off, throbbing with a fake vitality, yet really weary and enslaved. The urban has a coldly glossy artwork to it, a "false vitality" - it truly is art, it might merely imitate life. To Marcovaldo there's not worth to this fake beauty, it's unnatural and mechanical. yet Calvino's descriptions of it exhibit that even though it doesn't healthy the ideal, there's a few artwork on hand within the synthetic world. guy is just like the site visitors gentle within the city, morning:on, evening:off, in to paintings then again to home, enslaved to routine, chained to the consumerism which drives him. town isn't really an unsightly place, yet really is the criminal of a stifling life. Marcovaldo, for all his dislike of the city, isn't an unsatisfied man, although he's stricken by smooth troubles, and even though he's regularly made the idiot of his personal gambits, he's a many chuffed in his childhood-in-middle-age. He has now not misplaced the innocence of youth, now not misplaced that power or winsome desire for adventure, invention, imagination. even though Calvino helps a sojourn in nature, he doesn't thoroughly condemn the area that is reality, the area with winking site visitors lights. extra very important that escaping the town is escaping routine, being spontaneous, being enthusiastic, loving existence for what it has to supply and never grudging it for what it lacks.

Patty: Ci sono libri che van bene a ten anni così come a 40. Marcovaldo è uno di questi. Leggerlo è stato come scorrere le immagini di tavolette di fumetti, quelle di tanti anni fa. Anche i nomi dei personaggi delle 20 novelle sembrano appartenere ai fumetti di un pace lontano: los angeles moglie Domitilla, il vigile Tornaquinci, il capo-magazziniere Viligelmo, il dottor Godifredo... una galleria di personaggi buffi e reali, a metà strada tra il mondo reale e quello fantastico. Fiaba e realtà si intrecciano sapientemente nella scrittura leggera e veloce di un grande maestro qual è Calvino. Ogni novella inizia con buffo disincanto, come una favola according to bambini, in line with finire poi con un melanconico umorismo che fa riflettere. C'è tutta los angeles vita in Marcovaldo: los angeles povertà di un manovale che non riesce a sfamare los angeles sua numerosa famiglia, il delirio del "divertimento" di massa, l. a. corsa ipnotica al consumismo, l'incapacità di adattarsi al nuovo mondo urbano ostinandosi a cercare los angeles natura anche dove mai potrebbe esserci, le prepotenze dei capi... Vita, filosofia, temi importanti, ma trattati con una leggerezza e una competenza stilistica raffinata ed elegante che fa di Calvino uno scrittore morale, mai moralista o ancora peggio propagandista, proprio come afferma Alberto Asor Rosa: " Lo scrittore morale non si pone il problema di dire qual è il bene e qual è il male.(...) in line with me lo scrittore morale è quello che si limita a suggerire dei comportamenti e advert additare una linea di condotta." La prima pubblicazione di Marcovaldo risale alla vigilia del Natale del '63 con le bellissime tenere illustrazioni di Sergio Tofano, celebre illustratore de "Il Corriere dei Piccoli", anche se parte dei racconti erano già usciti con L'Unità. Nel '72 a dei ragazzi di scuola media Calvino rispose così: "Mi chiedete se Marcovaldo sono un po' io. Direi di sì, ma il fatto strano è che ho cominciato a sentirmi simile a Marcovaldo dopo

aver scritto il libro. Quando lo scrivevo credevo che fosse un personaggio un po' buffo un po' triste ma molto diverso da me. Col passar degli anni invece..."

Karlo Mikhail: This slender quantity of little greater than a hundred and twenty pages is now my favourite Calvino volume, much more than *Invisible Cities*. Bursting with comedian moments and sardonic insights, the e-book portrays slices of the standard lifetime of the employee Marcovaldo in an unnamed Italian city. The booklet depicts how Marcovaldo copes with the day-by-day drudgery of capitalist life via little adventures in seek little areas of nature amidst the concrete jungle of trade and industry. This jogs my memory of Chaplin's sleek *Life*, yet unveiled in a single small episode for every Season (Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter) via a interval of 5 years.

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