



# Understanding Italo Calvino (Understanding Modern European and Latin American Literature)

*Beno Weiss*

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Weiss highlights Calvino's fascination with folk tales, knights, social and political allegories, and science fiction. He emphasizes Calvino's effort to redefine writing and reality and his penchant for the spectrum of narrative theories including semiotics, structuralism, post-modernism, and post-structuralism. Calvino frequently broke stride with fashionable literary movements, as with the publication of his trilogy *The Cloven Viscount*, *The Baron in the Trees*, and *The Nonexistent Knight* and such later works as *Invisible Cities*, *If on a winter's night a traveller*, and *Mr. Palomar*. Weiss evaluates the early experiences--exposure to his parents' botany careers, participation in the Italian Resistance during World War II, an extended residence in Paris--that influenced this very private man. Through careful reading of Calvino's fiction and literary essays, Weiss identifies a quest to defy the malaise of life in a dehumanizing world and a desire to gain a cosmic sense of harmony as the driving forces behind Calvino's work.

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