

Richard Gere Embodies the Compassion of Italo Calvino

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Hosted by New York University's Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, Richard Gere, the award-winning Hollywood actor, performed a reading from Italo Calvino's new English adaptation of 'The Baron in the Trees.' After the lecture the popular actor commented on the book and on his passion for Italian writer Italo Calvino, in conversation with Stefano Albertini, Director of Casa Italiana, and Calvino's daughter, Giovanna Calvino.

[Italo Calvino](#) [2]'s 1957 novel, "[Il Barone Rampante](#)" or "[The Baron in the Trees](#)," [3] is renewed through [Ann Goldstein's](#) [4] 2017 English adaptation. Goldstein, a renowned Italian to English translator, is highly praised and respected in her field. Her version of "The Baron in the Trees," one of Calvino's bestselling novels, is particularly esteemed and was put into discussion on October 25th at NYU's Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò with actor Richard Gere, alongside the director of "Casa Italiana," Stefano Albertini, and Calvino's daughter, Giovanna Calvino.



A Celebration of Words

"Baron in the Trees," recounts the adventurous 18th century tale of Cosimo di Rondó, a young Italian aristocrat who decides that he has had enough of his parents' rules and consequently goes to live outside in a tree as a final act of defiance. His rebellion and newly found independence in the forest help him to develop a new sense of self and a new perspective. Cosimo grows and adapts to his environment, and constantly learns on his journey. Calvino's whimsical story takes the reader on a philosophical and metaphorical exploration while also experiencing the Age of Enlightenment through Cosimo's eyes.

Gere, wanting to honor the author and his works, brings the story to life by reading two passages to the audience, beginning with the first chapter. Later in the humorous Chapter eight, Calvino's words brought laughter to the room when Gere recited Cosimo and his father's witty, yet insightful banter. Immersing himself in the text, Gere read with conviction, though he was sure to take a moment to check his Italian pronunciation. The audience intently listened and enthusiastically applauded as the chapter came to a close.

Gere's passion for Calvino's words was evident as he was reading, but he expressed his passion further when he sat down to talk to Giovanna Calvino and Stefano Albertini. Smiling to himself, he conveyed his gratification for Calvino's and Goldstein's work when he emphatically announced, "such good writing, and such good translation. It's just a pleasure to be around these words and these thoughts."

The Impact of an Author

It is more than evident that Calvino's literature has a profound effect on those who read it. Gere acknowledged this notion when he praised Calvino's "depth of understanding of people in the world." For Gere, Calvino's writing goes beyond the text. Giovanna Calvino also spoke about the power of her father's writing and how his "books are very spiritual" because he was able to go beyond his ego. In addition to admiring the power of her father's language, she complimented Goldstein's work saying that she provided new life to the book because even if "the original doesn't get old, the translations do."

Compassionately reflecting on Calvino's writing, Gere offered his own wisdom to the audience. When describing "The Baron in the Trees," he explained that "the book is saturated with generosity, and a sense of love and care and concern...it's inherent." Gere encouraged everyone to embody these empathetic qualities. He mused about the power of self-reflection and how we need to think about our own actions, choices, and values, and through this process of taking personal responsibility we can better ourselves and create a better world.

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[4] https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Ann+Goldstein&spell=1&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiUneKhxI_XAhWB7SYKHS5BHYQvwUllYgA&biw=1435&bih=713