



L'infinito
To Himself
To Silvia

GIACOMO LEOPARDI



The Infinite

It was always dear to me, this solitary hill,
and this hedgerow here, that closes off my view,
from so much of the ultimate horizon.
But sitting here, and watching here,
in thought, I create interminable spaces,
greater than human silences, and deepest
quiet, where the heart barely fails to terrify.
When I hear the wind, blowing among these leaves,
I go on to compare that infinite silence
with this voice, and I remember the eternal
and the dead seasons, and the living present,
and its sound, so that in this immensity
my thoughts are drowned, and shipwreck
seems sweet to me in this sea.

5

15

Translated by A. S. Kline ©2003 All Rights Reserved

This work may be freely reproduced, stored, and transmitted, electronically or otherwise, for any non-commercial purpose.

L'infinito

Sempre caro mi fu quest'ermo colle,
e questa siepe, che da tanta parte
dell'ultimo orizzonte il guardo esclude.
Ma sedendo e mirando, interminati
spazi di là da quella, e sovrumani 5
silenzi, e profondissima quiete
io nel pensier mi fingo, ove per poco
il cor non si spaura. E come il vento
odo stormir tra queste piante, io quello
infinito silenzio a questa voce 10
vo comparando: e mi sovvien l'eterno,
e le morte stagioni, e la presente
e viva, e il suon di lei. Così tra questa
immensità s'annega il pensier mio:
e il naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare. 15

To Himself

Now you'll rest forever
my weary heart. The last illusion has died
I thought eternal. Died. I feel, in truth,
not only hope, but desire 5
for dear illusion has vanished.
Rest forever. You've laboured
enough. Not a single thing is worth
your beating: the earth's not worthy
of your sighs. Bitter and tedious,
life is, nothing more: and the world is mud. 10
Be silent now. Despair
for the last time. To our race Fate
gave only death. Now scorn Nature,
that brute force
that secretly governs the common hurt, 15
and the infinite emptiness of all.

To Silvia

Silvia, do you remember
those moments, in your mortal life,
when beauty still shone
in your sidelong, laughing eyes,
and you, light and thoughtful, 5
leapt beyond girlhood's limits?

The quiet rooms and the streets
around you, sounded
to your endless singing,
when you sat, happily content, 10
intent on that woman's work,
the vague future, arriving alive in your mind.
It was the scented May, and that's how
you spent your day.

I would leave my intoxicating studies, 15
and the turned-down pages,
where my young life,
the best of me, was left,
and from the balcony of my father's house
strain to catch the sound of your voice, 20
and your hand, quick,
running over the loom.
I'd look at the serene sky,
the gold lit gardens and paths:

this side the mountains, that side the far-off sea. 25
And human tongue cannot say
what I felt then.

What sweet thoughts,
what hope, what hearts, O my Silvia!
How all human life and fate 30
appeared to us then!
When I recall that hope
such feelings pain me,
harsh, disconsolate,
I brood on my own destiny. 35
Oh Nature, Nature
why do you not give now
what you promised then? Why
do you so deceive your children?

Attacked, and conquered, by secret disease, 40
you died, my tenderest one, and did not see
your years flower, or feel your heart moved,
by sweet praise of your black hair
your shy, loving looks.
No friends talked with you, 45
on holidays, about love.

My sweet hopes died also
little by little: to me too
Fate has denied those years.
Oh, how you've passed me by, 50
dear friend of my new life,

my saddened hope!
Is this the world, the dreams,
the loves, events, delights,
we spoke about so much together? 55
Is this our human life?
At the advance of Truth
you fell, unhappy one,
and from the distance,
with your hand you pointed 60
towards death's coldness and the silent grave.

