

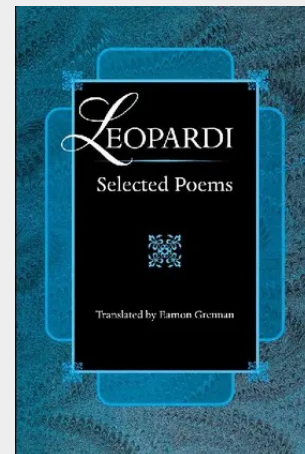
Leopardi

Leopardi

Selected Poems

These translations of the major poems of Giacomo Leopardi (1798--1837) render into modern English verse the work of a writer who is widely regarded as the greatest lyric poet in the Italian literary tradition. In spite of this reputation, and in spite of a number of nineteenth-and twentieth-century translations, Leopardi's poems have never "come over" into English in such a way as to guarantee their author a recognition comparable to that of other great European Romantic poets. By catching something of Leopardi's cadences and tonality in a version that still reads as idiomatic modern English (with an occasional Irish or American accent), Leopardi: Selected Poems should win for the Italian poet the wider appreciative audience he deserves. His themes are mutability, landscape, love; his attitude, one of unflinching realism in the face of unavoidable human loss. But the manners of the poems are a unique amalgam of philosophical toughness and the lyrically bittersweet. In a way more pure and distilled than most others in the Western tradition, these poems are truly what Matthew Arnold asked all poetry to be, a "criticism of life." The translator's aim is to convey something of the profundity and something of the sheer poetic achievement of Leopardi's inestimable Canti.

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