

Symposium

Change of Scale Leopardi and the Measure of Modernity

From the micro to the macro and vice versa, modernity appears to have brought about multiple changes of scale in the way humans measure, map, and make sense of the world. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Italian poet and philosopher Giacomo Leopardi offered extraordinary insights into these changes of scale and their implications for the modern world. It is no coincidence that sociologist and cultural historian Paul Gilroy identifies Leopardi's cosmopolitanism as a precursor to the *planetary solidarity* he advocates in *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2004), nor that philosopher Eugene Thacker turns to Leopardi, among others, to conceive a *cosmic pessimism* of a 'world-without-us' in *Infinite Resignation* (2018). Engaging with Leopardi from the perspective of the shifts in scale implied by these and other concepts sheds new light on his work and brings it into dialogue with current debates on spatial, temporal, and social scales.

With
Gennaro Ambrosino
Michael Auer
Andrea Capra
Frances Clemente
Paola Cori
Luca Costa
Alice Gibson
Paul Hamilton
Bernhard Huss
Barbara Kuhn
Enrica Leydi
Francesco Marchionni
Christoph Söding
Paul Strohmaier

Organized by
Alessandra Aloisi and
Francesco Giusti

In cooperation with
Leopardi and Post-Enlightenment Studies
at Oxford
and the Italienzentrum at
Freie Universität Berlin

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Programme

Thursday
2 July 2026

10:30	Morning Coffee	16:00 – 16:30	Coffee Break
10:50	Introduction by Alessandra Aloisi and Francesco Giusti	16:30 – 18:00	Panel III Chair: Michael Auer
11:00 – 13:00	Panel I Chair: Paul Hamilton		Alice Gibson Vast Spaces, Stoic Perspectives, and the Role of Scale in Giacomo Leopardi's Ethics of Unity
	Paul Strohmaier Playing with Time: Temporal Scales in Leopardi		Luca Costa On the Insignificance of Man
	Christoph Söding Scaling the Past? Memory and Heroism in Leopardi's 'Canti'		Andrea Capra Scaling Weirdness: On Leopardi's Epistemology
	Enrica Leydi and Gennaro Ambrosino Scala Naturae or Chthonic Ecosystems? The Scaled Perspective in Leopardi's Late Production	19:00	Discussion <i>Planetary Solidarity / Cosmic Pessimism</i> with Alessandra Aloisi, Michael Auer, Paola Cori, Francesco Giusti, and Paul Hamilton
	Paola Cori Leopardi and Antinatalism		
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch Break		
14:30 – 16:00	Panel II Chair: Bernhard Huss		
	Francesco Marchionni Mapping Leopardi's Cosmopolitanism in Translation		
	Barbara Kuhn 'una mobilità che può espandersi in ogni direzione': Gianni Celati in dialogo con l'opera di Giacomo Leopardi		
	Frances Clemente Scales of Creatureliness, Animality, and Ugliness: A Comparative Perspective on Giacomo Leopardi and Elsa Morante		