

Homo sive Natura?
Leopardi and the Natural Contract.
A Serresian Reading

SABRINA FERRI

University of Notre Dame

Abstract

*This essay places Giacomo Leopardi's ideas on the relationship between nature and culture in dialogue with Michel Serres's reflection on the bond between the natural world and humanity as discussed in *The Natural Contract*. It argues that, in Serresian terms, the social contract for Leopardi coincides initially with a destabilizing break from nature. Following Serres's reflections, emblematic characters from Leopardi's verse and prose, such as the shepherd and Columbus, are reinterpreted as figures exploring the consequences of a lost connection with nature. The essay then discusses how Leopardi reframes the idea of a natural contract by interrogating the relationship between humans and nature in terms of *cura*, or worry and solicitude. In conclusion, a Serresian reading of Leopardi makes it possible to reconcile the antagonism between humans and nature at the core of his philosophy with an approach that sees humanity and social life as inextricable from their place in the natural world.*

Keywords: social contract; natural contract; care; Serres Michel; Columbus.