

Leonardo, the desire to know, desiderio di Conoscere.

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LEONARDO THE DESIRE TO KNOW

DESIDERIO DI CONOSCERE

NON fa sì gran mugghio il tempestoso mare, quando il settentrionale aquilone lo ripercote, colle schiumose onde, fra Scilla e Cariddi; nè Stromboli o Mongibello, quando le sulfuree fiamme, per forza rompendo e aprendo il gran monte, fulminano per l'aria pietre, terra, insieme coll'u scita e vomitata fiamma; nè quando le infocate caverne di Mongibello, rivomitando il male tenuto elemento, spigniendolo alla sua regione, con furia cacciano innanzi qualunque ostacolo s'interpone alla sua impetuosa furia. . . . E tirato dalla mia bramosa voglia, vago di vedere la gran commistione delle varie e strane forme fatte dalla artificiosa natura, raggiratomì alquanto in fra gli ombrosi scogli, pervenni all'entrata d'una gran caverna, dinanzi alla quale restando alquanto stupefatto e ignorante di tal cosa, piegato le mie rene in arco, e ferma la stanca mano sopra il ginocchio, colla destra mi feci tenebra alle abbassate e chiuse ciglia. E spesso piegandomi in qua e in là per vedere dentro vi discernessi alcuna cosa, questo vietatomì per la grande oscurità, che là entro era, e stato alquanto, subito si destarono in me due cose: paura e desiderio; paura per la minacciosa oscura spelonca, desiderio per veredere se là entro fussi alcuna miracolosa cosa. — Leonardo da Vinci

The raging sea makes not as great a roaring when with frothy crest the heavy northwind beats it back between Scylla and Charybdis; neither does Stromboli or Mongibello when the sulphurous flames, breaking and opening the massive mountain with their violence, blast stone and earth and vomited fire through the air; neither when the incandescent caverns of Mongibello, spewing out anew the evil element therein, crowding it to its rightful place, drive before them with fury whatever obstacle is interposed before their impetuous rage.... So, drawn by my longing desire, I was eager to see the mingling of the varied and strange forms created by ingenious nature. Winding around in among the shadowy rocks, I arrived at the opening of a great cavern, in front of which I stood somewhat astonished and unknowing of such things. My back bowed, I then rested one tired hand on my knee and with my other hand shaded my narrowed eyes, often bending to look here and there and attempting to discern something, this vision forbidden me by the great darkness which was within. Remaining there awhile, there soon awoke in me two things: fear and longing; fear of the dark threatening cave, and longing to see whether some wondrous thing might be within.

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