

The still pilgrim revisits the British Museum for the first time in twenty years

by [Angela Alaimo O'Donnell](#) in the [September 14, 2016](#) issue

*When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe.  
—Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"*

We know these columns, this pediment,  
angels and sages serene as stone  
stand at attention, embodiment  
of past grandeur, for this we've come,  
to see the marble men and maids,  
the *attic shape*, the heifer's march,  
the ancient truth that met Keats' gaze  
and fired his poems that light the dark

knowledge of our mortal being,  
sing the song of fleeting time,  
the static creatures we are seeing  
live and breathe in his sweet lines.  
The poem endures, though Keats is dust.  
All remains unchanged but us.