

1817

ON SEEING THE ELGIN MARBLES

John Keats

Keats, John (1795-1821) - Widely regarded as the most talented of the English romantic poets, Keats, whose work was poorly received during his lifetime, could not have foreseen his later recognition. Ironically, he wrote for his own epitaph: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." On Seeing the Elgin Marbles (1817) - Keats reflects on his first contact with classical Greek art. Opening lines:

My spirit is too weak- mortality / Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep, ...

THE ELGIN MARBLES

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My spirit is too weak- mortality
Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
And each imagin'd pinnacle and steep
Of godlike hardship tells me I must die
Like a sick Eagle looking at the sky.
Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep
That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
Such dim-conceived glories of the brain
Bring round the heart an undescribable feud;
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
Wasting of old Time- with a billowy main
A sun- a shadow of a magnitude.

THE END