The sonnet "*Bright Star!"* (c.1819)[1] was long thought to be John Keats' last poem prior to his death. The recent debunking of this does nothing to alter the emotional power of the poem, engendered through the knowledge of Keats' imminent sickness and death and his relationship with Fanny Brawne, the sonnet is wistful and contemplative. It is written in the Shakespearian or English sonnet form, which is somewhat ironic when you consider that Keats was 'one of the greatest exponents of the Italian sonnet in English.'[2]

Iambic pentameter is a convention of the sonnet as well as being popular with the Romantics due to its accessibility for the reader. 'A five-stress line is *not* metrically satisfying in itself at all…its main power lies in this very fact in that it is able to merge its rhythms with those of the lines which precede and follow it.'[3] We see that to achieve this Keats utilises enjambment to run meaning between lines. This shifts the emphasis from the rhymes giving the poem a more organic flow. But Keats retains the octave and sestet division of the Petrarchan sonnet, the octave being about the external world and the sestet concerned with the private.

Keats said that beauty was truth and truth beauty, this connects with the Romantic search for and fascination with the sublime. The eternities of life, love and death are all present here as the poet stares into the eternal void of night. 'If love, and beauty, and delight are the only permanent things, then human life is unreal and fleeting like a dream, and our lives are mysterious in their purpose and content. The poet's duty is to celebrate those moments of life in which love, and beauty and delight are found.'[4] The sonnet concludes on a potent

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[1] Keats, J. "*Bright Star!*" from Keegan, P. (ed.) *The Penguin Book of English Verse*. Second Edn. London, Penguin Classics. 2004, p.640.

[2] Roberts, P. *How Poetry Works*. Second Edn. London, Penguin. 2000, p.98.

[3] Ibid p.31.

[4] Watson, J. R. *English Poetry of the Romantic Period 1789-1830*. Second Edn. Harlow, Longman. 1992,

binary opposition - the eternity of unending love or the eternal void of the grave. Something truly felt is not brief, it is forever.