
Bright Star - Jane Campion

Gabby

Biography

- Campion was born in New Zealand into a family that was heavily involved in the arts and theatre
- She initially rejected the idea of a career in the arts and instead graduated with an Arts degree in Anthropology from Victoria University in Wellington
- In 1976, she applied to the Chelsea Arts School in London and traveled throughout Europe
- In 1981, she graduated from the Sydney College of the Arts from the University of Sydney
- After Campion's dissatisfaction with the limitations of painting, she eventually began filmmaking and began studying at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, where she graduated in 1984
- Since she began filmmaking in 1984, she has been very focused on depicting women who are outsiders in society

Campion's Interview on the film

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRHh72YPF4k>

Context

- *Bright Star* is influenced by the real life context of the Romanticists and the life and death of Keats
- Campion was also influenced by the popularity in realism in cinema (a practice that aims to give an authentic portrayal of life, opposed to an idealistic one, which the Romantics aim to give)
- The film is also influenced by the 20th and 21st century society norms and values, which focus on making women realistic and multidimensional, opposed to figments of male ideals
 - This contrasts with Keats' depiction that women are viewed in a one dimensional lens; which women in the Romantic period were often viewed according to

Plot

- In 1818 Hampstead, Fanny Brawne is first introduced to John Keats. Brawne's flirtatious personality contrasts with Keats' aloof nature and she begins to pursue him. She initially has little success though
- They eventually interact after the loss of Keats' brother and strike a connection as a result of their shared interest in poetry and the deep life lessons it holds
- Despite the couple's close connection, Brawne's family disregards Keats due to his lower social class
- The pair eventually become secretly engaged even despite Brawne's family's disapproval of Keats
- However, Keats contracts tuberculosis the following winter and struggles to recover so he travels to Italy in hope the warmer weather helps him recover
- Whilst he is recovering, Keats' books begin gaining recognition and Brawne's mother allows them to marry
- The night before he is set to leave Italy to marry Brawne, he dies due to illness related complications
- In the final scene, Brawne cuts her hair in an act of loss and dons a black attire and walks through the snowy paths that Keats had walked many times before
- She recites the love sonnet he had written for her "Bright Star" as she grieves her loss (the name of the film comes full circle)

Contrast in Themes

Some themes which you could compare and contrast with Keats' poems include

- The contrast between the physical and metaphysical elements of love
- The contrast between finality of death and its spiritual elements
- Questioning of genuine wisdom
- The ideal woman in contrast with the true depiction of a multifaceted woman (feminist depiction)