

Your second paper assignment is to write an essay (about 1500 words) discussing the novel and film versions *Possession*. Below I will mention three of the more obvious but general terms of such a comparison. These are only *suggested* topics: you are encouraged to work on a topic of your own devising, providing (1) it covers both the film and the novel, and (2) you clear it with me beforehand. Even as suggested topics, the following are probably too general to be covered fully in a short essay. Therefore, focus on a limited aspect of your topic, and devise a specific thesis for your essay which explains why that aspect of it is significant. To support your readings and to make your analysis clear, you will need to quote short passages from the text, integrated into your own prose, that relate to the central points or themes of your essay; please cite the page number for each quotation or group of quotations parenthetically at the end of the phrase or sentence, and avoid using long, indented quotations. Using shorter quotations makes it easier to establish what your reading of each is, through discussion and analysis, as well as to employ that reading in supporting the thesis of your essay. Documenting references to the film offers a greater problem and, while the film is available to be checked out and reviewed, no number of viewings can guarantee a completely accurate account of a film. Therefore, try to be as specific as possible in descriptions of the film, paying as much attention to visual elements as to dialogue and plot. Revise for content and to strengthen your thesis and transitions; proofread thoroughly, even if you use a spell-checker first; and follow MLA style, including a Works Cited list at the end, even if that list consists only of the two works themselves, in the editions used in class.

1. Poetry in Motion (Pictures). One of the outstanding features of Byatt's novel is her creation of pseudo-Victorian poetry for both Ash and LaMotte, which adds a dimension to the novel that the film cannot even try to match. Instead, the film resorts to cinematic clichés (and predictable jokes) based on American stereotypes, including greed, violence, and a lack of refinement. (There are, to be sure, plenty of British stereotypes in the film, as well.) As a result, the novel and the film, while telling basically the same story, are very different in almost every important way. Discuss the achievement of Byatt's poetry in the novel, and the results of its loss in the movie.

2. Roland. Probably the most notable change between the novel and of the film is the alteration in Roland Mitchell's character, from erstwhile British drudge to freelancing American cowboy. You have already had a chance to write on the assumptions about cultural contrasts that this kind of change is based on. Here, you are asked to consider the effects of such a change on the remaining elements of the novel and film. Discuss what accommodations have been made so that the same actions (for example, purloining the original letters, or beginning the affair with Maud Bailey) can fit both characters (the novel Roland and the film Roland) while indicating different things about them that fit in with the personalities given them in the novel and film, respectively.

3. Myth and Ms. While poetry is difficult to translate into film script, and there are commercial considerations for making Roland into an attractive American with a consistent three-day-growth of beard, myth is one of those things that movies usually do well. Yet the myths underlying much of *Possession* the novel are completely missing from *Possession* the movie, reducing the latter to little more than a double love story connected by literary sleuthing. If you do *not* want to write about the film at all, then, this is your opportunity: discuss the use and importance of myth, and especially the myths related to Melusina, in the novel.

Remember that an essay should have a specific point—a thesis. Though it need not be stated in so many words within the essay, you should keep that thesis in mind as you are outlining, and then writing your essay. Be sure that each of your paragraphs somehow supports that thesis, and that there are clear and logical transitions between one paragraph and the next.

Essay due: Wednesday, May 5th, as an email attachment (please use 117Yourname.doc as the name of your file). I will print out those essays submitted via email once I return to San Jose, and grade them there. Graded essays will be available for pickup by arrangement.

Any essays printed out and submitted by Wednesday, April 28th, will be graded and returned by May 6th in Bath. Please do *not* print out essays you will be submitting anytime after April 27th.