

21L481 Victorian Literature and Culture

Topics for paper #2

Due by the end of term

Remember to observe the all-important guidelines I included with assignment #1; I won't accept papers not following these guidelines.

Review the "Advice for a Successful Paper" and my comments on your first paper while working on your second.

Suggested topics:

1. Mayhew, Beeton, Tennyson, Carroll (choose any combination): write about the alluring, alarming idea of an amoral and uncontainable desire or hunger that emerges from these works - sometimes against the writer's apparent intentions. (For example: Mayhew on the "locomotive stomach," Beeton on fish, Tennyson's "Ulysses" or *In Memoriam* #56, Carroll's Cheshire Cat, etc.)
2. Tennyson's *In Memoriam*: choose one early poem in the series and one late one that "answers" it. Use a close analysis of these two poems to illustrate the structure of *In Memoriam* as a whole. Make sure to consider not just what the poems say, but also the way that technical aspects (rhyme scheme, stanza form, enjambment, etc.) contribute to our experience of the poems.
3. Mill: write about how Mill tries in *On Liberty* to develop an ideal of culture that balances the competing attractions and limitations he sees in strict Benthamism and in "the East" (i.e. the Orient, non-Western societies like China or India).
4. Mayhew, Beeton, Dickens and the Victorian sense of "information crisis": write about how these authors use their huge, detail-packed books to stage the contest between information (which may amount to nothing more than an overwhelming, chaotic pile of facts) and knowledge (which involves the successful management of information). If you've read the Sherlock Holmes excerpts before you start writing, you may wish to bring those into the discussion, too.