On Friday, I gave you a handout on this assignment. That handout included an initial list of books available for review. Today, I’d like to expand that list—and provide a brief comment on each item. My hope is that my quick comments will help you to narrow your choices and get going a little sooner.


   One of the most controversial items on our list, this book explores Victorian perceptions of their emerging empire, with a special focus on what Cannadine calls “the domestication of the exotic” (xix).


   A good choice for anyone interested in the Empire. This book portrays the city of Delhi in the last days of the Mughal Empire. The central event in the story is the Great Mutiny or Uprising of 1857, when 100,000 Indian soldiers turned against their British masters (13).


   An exploration of Victorian domesticity and the increasingly important idea of “home.” The organization of the book is very clever, since Flanders devotes a chapter to each major room in the house: bedroom, nursery, kitchen, and so on.


   Though this book is billed as a study of Dickens’s London, you don’t need to know Dickens to get a lot out of it. This time, major sections begin with scandalous incidents or episodes—including the 1867 Regent’s Park skating disaster. (It was actually a pretty big deal.)


   Offering an “intimate, personal and physical sort of history” (1), this book moves through the “rhythm of the day” (3), starting in the morning and ending at night. The book tells how the Victorians slept, ate, and dressed. It also tells how they tried to keep clean and stay healthy. As you’ll see, this author has walked the Victorian walk: she’s tested their recipes, worn their clothes, and even followed their hygiene regimes (3).


   This should ring a bell. (We read a chapter from this book earlier in the term.) As he moves through the history of industrialization, Hobsbawm tries to explain why Britain became the first industrial nation and tells how Britain was affected by “the rise of other and more modern industrial powers” (viii).


   A study of the “diversity of perspectives among nineteenth-century writers who engaged with Christianity” (9). “Religion was not just another aspect of the nineteenth century,” the authors argue. “It found its way into every area of life” (9).
8. Steven Marcus, The Other Victorians (1966)

A major work in the field of Victorian studies. This book bills itself as a study of Victorian sexuality and pornography—which is to say, “a study of human fantasies” (1). One little warning, though: the major influence on Marcus is Freud. So if you can’t stand that stuff, this is probably not a good choice for you.


A great example of “metabiography,” this work deals not with the Brontës’ novels or poetry, but rather with biographical and other writings about their lives. Miller’s aim is to show how the Brontës became “popular characters on a level with Jane Eyre and Rochester” (xii).

10. Adrienne Munich, Queen Victoria’s Secrets (1996)

More a collection of essays than a book with a consecutive argument, this item shows how much Victoria contributed to the Victorian Age. My favorite chapter is the one about her wardrobe. It begins with a great question: “What should Queen Victoria wear?” (55). There’s also a nice chapter on the queen’s dogs.


A study of attitudes towards sexuality at the end of the nineteenth century. This work is very much of its time, with a final chapter comparing and contrasting reactions to the syphilis epidemic of the 1890s with reactions to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and ‘90s.


This should need no introduction. (It’s the book we discussed in our library session!) But just in case: its aim is to “break up the stereotypes which have shaped our thinking about the Victorians for the last hundred years” (ix). It also seems to be a pretty big influence on the creator of the Showtime series Penny Dreadful. (I’ve never seen it myself. Is it any good?)


One in a series of books by the foremost modern historian of London. This one tells a story of “stunning progress,” with the city “shaking free from mass poverty and pursuing pleasure not order” (478).