Title of Paper: **Affective Labouring in Catherine L. Pirkis’ *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke: Lady Detective***

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Abstract:

This essay explores Catherine L. Pirkis’ contribution to the male-defined genre of detective fiction. Edgar Allan Poe’s "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), Charles Dickens’ *Bleak House* (1853), and of course Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories (1887) are most common in discussions of this genre. By comparison, works written by women that depict a female detective have been overlooked. W. S Hayward’s *Revelations of a Lady Detective* and Andrew Forrester’s *The Female Detective* (both published in 1864) were two of the first novels featuring a female detective, despite being written by men. Although these novels are significant in that they were the first to challenge gender roles in this genre, I will focus on *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke: Lady Detective* by Catherine L. Pirkis, published in the height of the New Woman movement, in 1893. This work is significant not only because Pirkis contributes to the predominantly ‘masculine’ genre of the detective story, but because she does so in a way that is proleptic; she portrays Loveday as a strong, independent woman with a paid profession, years before women detectives officially joined the police force. This article will examine Loveday’s affective labours, and illustrate how her knowledge enables her to solve crimes successfully.

Keywords: New Woman; the woman question; detective fiction; affective labour; *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke: Lady Detective*; Catherine L Pirkis; Grant Allen; Karl Pearson; Sherlock Holmes; Sarah Grand

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This essay explores Catherine L. Pirkis' contribution to the male-defined genre of detective fiction. Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* (1853), and of course Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories (1887) are most common in discussions of this genre. By comparison, works written by women that depict a female detective have been overlooked. W. S Hayward's *Revelations of a Lady Detective* and Andrew Forrester's *The Female Detective* (both published in 1864) were two of the first novels featuring a female detective, despite being written by men. Although these novels are significant in that they were the first to challenge gender roles in this genre, I will focus on *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke: Lady Detective* by Catherine L. Pirkis, published in the height of the New Woman movement, in 1893. This work is significant not only because Pirkis contributes to the predominantly 'masculine' genre of the detective story, but because she does so in a way that is proleptic; she portrays Loveday as a strong, independent woman with a paid profession, years before women detectives officially joined the police force. This article will examine Loveday's affective labours, and illustrate how her knowledge enables her to solve crimes successfully.

In the late nineteenth century, women began to rebel against the constrictions brought upon them by Victorian society. Challenging femininity, motherhood, as well as womanhood, these women strove for social and financial independence, founding what became known as the New Woman Movement. The fiction produced during this period also mirrored these social changes, often depicting women who took an active role in their futures by attempting to escape the oppression of marriage through self-development (mostly in the arts). Despite these strides, the works often concluded bleakly, having their heroines suffer depression due to their failure to attain recognition and independence. According to Ann Heilmann, the protagonists of New Woman fiction, responded to [marital and reproductive] pressures in different ways: some begin by complying with social norms, marry and have children, and then start to rebel; others rebel by rejecting motherhood altogether, or by developing alternative models of mothering which place them in conflict with society. (Heilmann 144)

Similarly, Lyn Pykett asserts that New Woman heroines are usually artists, painters and musicians who break down or give in under pressures of the various circumstances which conspire against them, and end up as lonely spinsters, or happily-or more unusually, unhappily-married wives and mothers, whose aesthetic ambitions have declined (if they survive in any form at all) into the weary labour of the hack writer or journalist. ("Representations of the Female Artist" 136)
Heilmann and Pykett certainly outline the narratives of many New Woman works. In Mona Caird’s *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), Hadria Fullerton struggles with balancing the demands of her family, with her aspirations in becoming a successful composer; she eventually succumbs to social obligations, and abandons her music. Similarly, in Mary Cholmondeley’s *Red Pottage* (1899), Hester Gresley fails in publishing her novel and subsequently falls into depression. Other authors save their protagonists from suffering such bleak endings. Beth McClure in Sarah Grand’s *The Beth Book* (1897), separates herself from her oppressive husband and pursues careers in writing and orating. Lastly, Ella Hepworth Dixon’s *The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894), Mary Erle financially supports herself by becoming a journalist. Although writers did include “the obstacles that would face a female genius and the obligations, jealousies and malice that would undermine her art” (Showalter xiv), their characters no longer represented women as being “the passive victims of ‘feminine’ affectivity” (“Representations of the Female Artist” 140); rather they embodied the strength and courage necessary to alter Victorian tradition and attain autonomy.

Despite New Woman fiction’s ingenuity, there was negative criticism of not only the works, but the novelists themselves. Opponents were “eager to mobilize New Woman stereotypes to discredit the women’s movement (Eliza Lynn Linton and Grant Allen)” (Heilmann 6). Believing that the New Woman “represented a threat not only to the social order, but also to the natural order,” critics attempted to hinder their efforts by deeming them as “non-female and unfeminine”, because of their resistance to “traditional womanly roles” (Pykett, *The "Improper" Feminine* 140). Others took a more drastic approach, and likened the New Woman to a “hysteric, whose degenerate emotionalism was both a symptom and cause of social change” (Pykett, *The "Improper" Feminine* 141). Furthermore, in an effort to dissuade people from buying their works and contributing to the movement, critics described New Woman writing as “unwomanly and perverse” (Showalter x).

Sarah Grand first coined the term “New Woman” in her essay “The New Aspect of the Woman Question” in March 1894. She uses the term to describe the woman who spent years considering her position and who finally “solved the problem and proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman’s-Sphere, and prescribed the remedy” (Grand 271). What she was referring to was the Victorian ideology of separate spheres, where women occupied and belonged to the private sphere (the home), while men, dominated the public sphere (everything else). Furthermore, Grand also tackles the subject of education by asserting that men have in fact “deprived [women] of all proper education” (Grand 272), as a way to suppress and control them. Grand’s claims didn’t go unnoticed; instead they sparked a controversy that fuelled many in publicly responding to her ideals, and attacking the figure of the New Woman.

In May 1894, Ouida published “The New Woman,” criticizing Grand’s ideas and claiming them to be “pompous and solemn assertion(s)” (Ouida 154). She maintains that
the error of the New Woman (as of many old ones) lies in speaking of women as the victims of men, and entirely ignoring the frequency with which men are the victims of women. In nine cases out of ten the first to corrupt the youth is the woman. In nine cases out of ten also she becomes corrupt herself because she likes it. (Ouida 157)

She goes on to illustrate the many ways women and men have equal opportunities, and have no reason to want independence. While Ouida openly disagreed with New Woman ideas, others like Grant Allen and Karl Pearson appeared to be part of the New Woman movement, yet they both believed that women’s most important role was childbearing. Heilmann asserts, “Grant Allen mobilized feminist arguments, drawing analogies between enforced marital sex and rape, only to impose another male cliché by invoking women’s social function as breeders for the state” (Heilmann 87-8). In “Plain Words on the Woman Question” (1889), Allen insists that bearing children is a woman’s duty. He asserts, “if the community is to increase [...], then all adults must marry and produce more than four children apiece” (Allen 211). And while he claims he is sympathetic to the New Woman, “her emancipation must not be of a sort that interferes in any way with this prime natural necessity” (Allen 213). He even goes so far as to state that “while women are crying for emancipation, they really want to be left in slavery” (Allen 214), completely opposing the movement’s goals and interests. Similarly, in the 1894 essay “Women and Labour,” Karl Pearson claims that “the race must degenerate” (Pearson 569) if women don’t focus on childbearing, even though “during the years of child-bearing and child-rearing, the women in any but the most primitive stages of civilization must be dependent upon the owner of property for subsistence” (Pearson 563). Although Allen and Pearson both claimed to be proponents of the New Woman movement, their principles proved otherwise.

When discussing the New Woman movement and its fiction, critics have focused on novelists such as Mona Caird, Sarah Grand, and George Egerton, to name a few. Despite the importance of their novels, their heroines are women who attempt to break boundaries by labouring in the arts, and often fail in doing so, due to social obligations. Pirkis’ Loveday Brooke differs from the traditional New Woman heroine in that she is unmarried and thus unbound by marital and familial demands. Moreover, she is a professional detective that is paid for the work she does in her agency. In essence, her character’s success as a detective demonstrates the possibility of independence through one’s career, and essentially through labour. By focusing on the new kinds of labour women are doing as new opportunities develop, an additional way to read New Woman works is possible. This essay will define the term affective labour and use it as a lens to analyse the labours Loveday performs in her profession.

In Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, Raymond Williams initially defines labour as a verb having to do with “ploughing or working the land, but [is] also extended to other kinds of manual work” especially if it requires “any kind of difficult effort” (Williams 176). He then furthers his
definition by explaining that under capitalism, labour came to mean “that element of production which in combination with capital and materials produced commodities” (Williams 177). Work, on the other hand, refers to anything having to do with “paid employment” specifically as “‘steady’ or timed work, or working for a wage or salary” (Williams 335). Under capitalism, the definition of labour and/or work, is a strenuous physical activity performed to produce commodities, in return for capital. If works are examined according to this definition of labour, fictional female characters are portrayed as not doing anything of “value,” nor having an active role in their futures. However, by using an entirely separate term, that is affective labour, to demarcate the labours of females during this era, it becomes clear that these women are taking an active role in their futures, and simultaneously challenging the constraints Victorian society has placed upon them.

The idea of affective, or immaterial labour has been defined and discussed by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in numerous works. According to Hardt and Negri in Multitude, with industrialization came “what has been traditionally called ‘women’s work’” (Hardt and Negri 110); this has been previously described as “caring labour, kin work, nurturing and maternal activities” (Hardt 97). In Hardt’s essay “Affective Labour,” affective/immaterial labour is defined as a “labour [...] that produces an immaterial good, such as service, knowledge, or communication” (Hardt 94). Moreover this labour deals with “tasks that involve ‘problem-solving [and] problem- identifying’” (Hardt 94). Thus affective labour also encompasses activities of the mind: that is planning, or strategizing for one’s future. Otherwise coined by feminist writers as “labour in the bodily mode” (Hardt 96), or even emotional labour, affective labour can also involve “producing affects, relationships and forms of communication and cooperation among children, in the family, and in the community” (Hardt and Negri 110).

A further definition of affective labour is offered by Maurizio Lazzarato in “Immaterial Labour.” He concludes “the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions [as well as] tastes” (Lazzarato 133) as immaterial labour. Activities such as singing, painting, and writing, are all affective not only because they use the emotional faculties of the mind, but furthermore because they create art by exercising skills: “intellectual skills, as regards the cultural-informational content; manual skills for the ability to combine creativity, imagination, and technical and manual labour; and entrepreneurial skills in the management of social relations and the structuring of that social cooperation of which they are part” (Lazzarato 137). In essence, the unconventional labours women perform in order to achieve their goals, labours that generally go unpaid and do not produce commodities, will now be defined as affective labour. By drawing attention to women’s labours that have previously been discredited, such as labours of the arts, as well as mental, emotional, and domestic labours, the ways in which women achieved financial independence and autonomy become apparent.

As the nineteenth century comes to a close, and the New Woman movement gains recognition, circumstances change; the division among the
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private and public spheres disintegrates, and the level of education offered to women improves, allowing them more opportunities. *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke: Lady Detective* is significant in that Loveday’s profession as a detective signifies the new achievements that arose because of the New Woman movement. Originally published as separate stories in London’s *Ludgate Monthly* in 1893, it was only in 1894 that “Hutchinson & Company published all seven stories in a collection entitled *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective*, with ink-and-wash drawings by the unaccountably popular illustrator Bernard Higham” (Sims 105). Each of the stories focuses on a different crime Loveday is assigned to solve, often times because the local police are unable to do so. Her career as a detective is important not only because she is in a profession where women have yet to be accepted, but because her ability to solve crimes successfully gains her recognition in her field.

While scholarship on female detectives in the late nineteenth century is limited, many critics view *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke: Lady Detective* as the first set of stories written by a female author that portrayed a professional female detective. Critics have also debated whether or not Loveday represents the odd woman, or the New Woman. According to Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, Loveday Brooke is “the only one of the 1890s lady detectives who was unmarried and unspoken for, and of whom there is never any indication that she would consider marriage” (Miller 48). Joseph A. Kestner also comments on Brooke’s status, comparing her to one of Gissing’s characters in *The Odd Women*, rather than a figure representative of the New Woman: Brooke is “unmarried, self-sufficient, engaged in a profession, without any attachments which might hinder or delay her work. [...] She is completely self-defining and self-determining” (Kester 72). Conversely, Therie Hendrey-Seabrook claims that Brooke “demonstrates the levels of independence, both intellectual and practical, that might possibly be achieved by the New Woman” (Hendrey-Seabrook 77). Nevertheless, these scholars applaud Pirkis’ ability to create a character similar to that of Sherlock Holmes, encompassing the intelligence typically associated with professional men of that time.

Other scholars insist that Pirkis’ protagonist doesn’t challenge Victorian conventions as much as the heroines of other New Woman novels. Carla T. Kungl explains that Brooke may be a professional detective, yet she uses “traditional womanly traits to succeed” (Kungl 61); thus, Pirkis isn’t pushing “culturally-prescribed professional boundaries” (Kungl 60). However, contrary to Kungl’s assertion, Loveday’s knowledge of the domestic sphere is exactly what allows her to transcend boundaries and essentially what differentiates her from previous male fictional detectives; her position in a male-dominated field more than qualifies as New Woman material. Moreover, due to her position in a male dominated field, Loveday is able to use her gender to her advantage when solving cases; she transforms herself in various roles and goes undetected without ever raising suspicion or doubt.

Pirkis created Loveday years before women could actually work in the police force, and even years before they were to be paid for their labour.
According to Miller, while some women were “employed as wardens in women’s prisons” (Miller 52) in 1883, “their official recognition [in the police force was] in 1918” (Kungl 47). Initially “women police began solely as volunteers, having been brought in by private organizations wishing to see their presence in their town;” however, in 1915, “two women stationed at Grantham were sworn in as members of the police force, [...] paid out of police funds, and worked under the orders of the Chief Constable” (Kungl 48). According to Kungl, policewomen “as can be seen by their level of education, were recruited largely from the middle- and upper-classes [...].” (Kungl 51). Interestingly enough, Ledger asserts that “the New Woman [is] a product of the middle and upper classes” (Ledger 16); thus, despite Kungl rejecting the idea that detectives possess the New Woman attitudes, their class, level of education, as well as independence, proves otherwise.

Loveday’s profession endangers her femininity, despite embodying the image of the New Woman. Often required to travel to places at night, she unapologetically enters the public sphere alone. According to Sims, by being “socially mobile, moving constantly between train and cab, [...] village and city” (Sims 103), her reputation is compromised. In the past, women who overcame the constrictions of the private sphere to labour for money in the public sphere were deemed as prostitutes. Because Loveday is paid for her labour, albeit a small compensation, and travels “alone at night unaccompanied by a man” (Sims 103), she resembles a prostitute. Miller expands on this idea by asserting, The female criminal’s connection to labor in late-Victorian criminal theory not only links her to the sex worker, but also, conversely, establishes her as unsexed or masculinised because of her participation in the male sphere of work outside her home. (Miller 56)

Thus, despite being successful as a detective, her social status and femininity are questioned because she has chosen to labour outside of the private, domestic sphere. Loveday’s refusal to be oppressed by Victorian social and cultural standards certainly contributes to the importance of this work.

In the first story of the collection, “The Black Bag Left on a Door-Step,” Pirkis tells the reader Loveday is “a little over thirty years of age” (Pirkis 4), and proceeds to give a short but telling description of her appearance. She was not tall, she was not short; she was not dark, she was not fair; she was neither handsome nor ugly. Her features were altogether nondescript; her one noticeable trait was a habit she had, when absorbed in thought, of dropping her eyelids over her eyes till only a line of eyeball showed, and she appeared to be looking out at the world through a slit, instead of through a window. (Pirkis 4)

Pirkis depicts Loveday’s appearance as being “nondescript.” However, it is this plainness that aids Loveday in her job as a detective, allowing her to be able to transform herself in whatever character she sees fit. Pirkis continues by explaining how Loveday came to be a detective:
Some five or six years previously, by a jerk of Fortune's wheel, Loveday had been thrown upon the world penniless and all but friendless. Marketable accomplishments she had found she had none, so she had forthwith defied convention, and had chosen for herself a career that had cut her off sharply from her former associates and her position in society. For five or six years she drudged away patiently in the lower walks of her profession; then chance, or, to speak more precisely, an intricate criminal case, threw her in the way of the experienced head of the flourishing detective agency in Lynch Court. He quickly enough found out the stuff she was made of, and threw her in the way of better-class work—work, indeed, that brought increase of pay and of reputation alike to him and to Loveday. (Pirkis 4)

While Pirkis' description is again ambiguous, several inferences can be made regarding Loveday's background. Since Loveday is left “penniless” by “a jerk of Fortune’s wheel,” it can be assumed that she previously had money and many friends; this indicates that she came from a middle or upper class background. Subsequently, it is stated that she didn't have any “marketable accomplishments,” hinting that Loveday was either unable to marry for financial security, or chose not to do so in an effort to focus on her career. According to Hendrey-Seabrook, “the use of the term accomplishment here, rather than the more employment-related skill, is an indicator of a leisured lifestyle where women learned only to present themselves as marriageable and decorative commodities” (Hendrey-Seabrook 80). Despite losing her money and status, she decides to work in the agency at an entry-level position. Although Pirkis uses the word “profession” to describe Loveday's work, a word that according to the Oxford Dictionary denotes “a paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification,” the strategic thinking, reasoning, and mental labour she engages in can be determined as being primarily affective. By analysing the affective labours Loveday performs in each of the stories of the collection, it will become clear she is as competent, if not more so, than the fictional detectives of the past.

Gaining a more solid position in the agency, and in turn a good “reputation” (Pirkis 4), infers that Loveday has gained success as a detective due to her skills. In fact, Ebenezer Dyer, the head of the agency, praises her professional ability:

—“Too much of a lady, do you say?” he would say to anyone who chanced to call in question those qualifications. “I don’t care twopence-halfpenny whether she is or is not a lady. I only know she is the most sensible and practical woman I ever met. In the first place, she has the faculty—so rare among women—of carrying out orders to the very letter: in the second place, she has a clear, shrewd brain, unhampered by any hard-and-fast theories; thirdly, and most important item of all, she has so much common sense that it amounts to genius—positively to genius, sir.” (Pirkis 5)
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Loveday is portrayed as having virtues, such as intelligence and shrewdness, that in the past weren’t valued in women. Moreover, unlike Holmes, she is able to solve cases successfully without the help of any male figure (she often disregards the opinions and leads of other officers), depending solely on herself.

In addition to Loveday’s “chain of reasoning” (Pirkis 25), and deductive thinking, she also is very strategic in planning her introduction to those suspected of a crime. In “A Princess’s Vengeance,” she prefers not to be introduced to the household initially:

—“Don’t introduce me at all at first,” answered Loveday. “Get me into some quiet corner, where I can see without being seen. Later on in the afternoon, when I have had time to look round a little, I’ll tell you whether it will be necessary to introduce me or not.” (Pirkis 107)

After critically surveying the scene, and the behaviour of those present, Loveday decides to be introduced to the group.

—“That is a most interesting group,” she said; “now, if you like, you may introduce me to your mother.”

—“Oh, with pleasure- under what name?” he asked.

—“Under my own,” she answered, “and please be very distinct in pronouncing it, raise your voice slightly so that every one of those persons may heart it. And then, please add my profession, and say I am here at your request to investigate the circumstances connected with Mdlle. Cunier’s disappearance.” (Pirkis 113)

While this may appear to be a curious introduction, Loveday’s insistence on being introduced under her own name and profession has a distinct purpose, one she explains at the end of the story:

—“My motive for so doing was simply, as it were, to raise the sudden cry, ‘The enemy is upon you,’ and to set every one of those five persons guarding their weak point- that is, if they had one. I’ll draw your attention to what followed. Mr. Cassimi remained nonchalant and impassive; your mother and Lady Gwynne exchanged glances, and they both simultaneously threw a nervous look at Lady Gwynne’s hat lying on the chair.” (Pirkis 124-5)

It is clear that Loveday wanted to observe and analyse the initial reactions of the people in the room. The way his “mother and Lady Gwynne exchanged glances,” and subsequently nervously looked at “Lady Gwynne’s hat lying on the chair,” attracted her attention, and brought her closer to solving the crime. The mental labouring necessary to strategically plan an introduction in order to obtain the desired effect of the people is one of the many affective labours Loveday performs while solving cases.

In the “The Murder at Troyte’s Hill,” the reader learns how Loveday approaches a new case. She says “I start on my work without theory of any sort- in fact, I may say, with my mind a perfect blank” (Pirkis 37); this proves that Loveday treats every case without bias. A story that illustrates Loveday’s approach is “The Redhill Sisterhood.” As Inspector Gunning familiarizes Loveday
with the case, he lets his preconceived notions show when he deems Sister Monica guilty for the crime, solely based on her appearance:

—“[...] By-the-way, I have heard of a man’s face being enough to hang him, but until I saw Sister Monica’s, I never saw a woman’s face that could perform the same kind office for her. Of all the lowest criminal types of faces I have ever seen, I think hers is about the lowest and most repulsive.” (Pirkis 71)

Loveday, however, refuses to let Sister Monica’s “coarse-featured and generally repellent face” (Pirkis 74) persuade her into believing her to be the suspect.

While her approach may be similar to that of Holmes, Loveday’s display of sympathy towards her suspects, especially to women, is distinctive. At the end when she solves the case, Dyer asks her to explain how she knew Gunning’s hypothesis was wrong.

—“[...] In the final place, I would like to know what it was that diverted your suspicions from the unfortunate Sisters?”
—“The way in which they handled the children,” answered Loveday promptly. “I have seen female criminals of all kinds handling children, and I have noticed that although they may occasionally – even this is rare – treat them with a certain rough sort of kindness, of tenderness they are utterly incapable. Now Sister Monica, I must admit, is not pleasant to look at; at the same time, there was something absolutely beautiful in the way in which she lifted the little cripple out of the cart, put his tiny thin hand round her neck, and carried him into the house.” (Pirkis 96)

According to Miller, “Brooke’s removal of suspicion from Sister Monica is typical of the stories’ general defence of women who are regularly marginalized because of appearance, class, occupation, or nationality” (Miller 57). Furthermore, one of the central radical qualities of Pirkis’ series of stories is her refusal, unlike contemporaries, to blame crime on ‘the usual suspects:’ the ugly, unattractive, the poor, and the foreign are all exonerated by Loveday Brooke” (Miller 57). Loveday’s knowledge of criminals’ tendencies and patterns, in addition to her elimination of any preconceived notions before looking at a new case, certainly aid her in her profession. Moreover, her deductive reasoning, analysis of clues, and sometimes even her familiarity with the domestic, private sphere, allow her to solve this case, as well as others, successfully.

In “Missing,” Loveday’s display of sympathy for undervalued women (in this case a domestic worker), and competence in interviewing suspects is most apparent. When Irene Golding disappears, Lena, her maid, is questioned by the police unsuccessfully. Yet, Loveday is able to gain the maid’s trust, and obtain valuable information from her as well. While Lena initially responds to questions with short “sullen tone[d]” answers, Loveday manages to alter her attitude completely by being personable and respectful. As soon as Loveday explains that she is not accusing her of being responsible for Irene’s disappearance, Lena opens up to her easily, and gives her plenty of information regarding Irene:
Lena’s sullenness and stateliness had vanished together now, and once upon the topic of her nursling she was the warm-hearted, enthusiastic Italian woman once more. (Pirkis 199)

In the end, when the police ask how she managed to retrieve any information from Lena, Loveday asserts “Pardon me if I say that was because she had been most most most injudiciously handled” (Pirkis 211).

What allows Loveday to be an exceptional detective is that she utilizes her knowledge of domesticity to her advantage, in addition to having male attributed qualities such as rationality and reason. This is most evident in “Drawn Daggers,” when Mr Hawke asks her how she knew “Mary O’ Grady was playing the part of Miss Monroe” (Pirkis 150):

Not immediately. My suspicions were excited, certainly; and when I went up to her room, in company with Mrs. Hawke’s maid, those suspicions were confirmed. The orderliness of that room was something remarkable. Now, there is the orderliness of a lady in the arrangement of her room, and the orderliness of a maid, and the two things, believe me, are widely different. A lady, who has no maid, and who has the gift of orderliness, will put things away when done with, and so leave her room a picture of neatness. I don’t think, however, it would for a moment occur to her to pull things so as to be conveniently ready for her to use the next time she dresses in that room. This would be what a maid, accustomed to arrange a room for her mistress’s use, would do mechanically. Miss Monroe’s room was the neatness of a maid—not of a lady, and I was assured by Mrs. Hawke’s maid that it was a neatness accomplished by her own hands. (Pirkis 150)

Although her deductive reasoning resembles that of Holmes, her ability to use her upbringing and knowledge of the domestic sphere excels Holmes’ capabilities. Despite being very observant and knowledgeable in various subjects, Holmes’ knowledge of housework, and domesticity is poor. On the other hand, Loveday’s familiarity with the home as well as domestic servitude, allows her to conclude that the “orderliness of that room” was indicative of a woman who was a maid, and not of a woman belonging to the upper class. Thus, she is able to infer that Miss Monroe and Mary O’ Grady must have switched identities.

In addition to mental labour, Loveday engages in a particular kind of emotional labour, solving crimes by altering her appearance and personality. In “The Murder of Troyte’s Hill,” Loveday disguises herself as an amanuensis so that she can go undetected while investigating the Craven household. Similarly, in “The Redhill Sisterhood,” Loveday solves the crime by posing as a “nursery governess” (Pirkis 69). In “Drawn Daggers” Loveday “assume[s] the part of a lady house decorator” (Pirkis 137), and lastly, in “The Ghost of Fountain Lane,” Loveday poses as a lodger. Throughout these stories Loveday is like a chameleon, assuming the appearance and role of various domestic persons in order to solve crimes. Yet what makes Loveday different from her male counterparts is that she is also able to use her “nondescript” (Pirkis 4) appearance to her advantage. For
example, in “A Princess’s Vengeance,” Loveday sits in “a quiet corner” (Pirkis 107) and observes the people in the house without being detected. Thus, Mr Dyer’s assertion holds true: “women detectives are more satisfactory than men, for they are less likely to attract attention” (Pirkis 67).

In conclusion, in The Experiences of Loveday Brooke: Lady Detective, Pirkis explores a new woman figure who labours in a non-traditional way. Despite having a paid profession, Loveday “displays imaginative intelligence rooted in common sense” (Klein 71), in addition to mentally and emotionally labouring. While her deductive strategies and disguises resemble the strategies used by Holmes, she displays knowledge of the domestic sphere and has the ability to sympathize as well as work with women (suspects and domestic servants) to solve cases. Thus, due to her sympathetic nature, and knowledge of the inner workings of the home, Loveday is a stronger and more resourceful detective. While fictional detectives in the past have been portrayed as having reason and rationality (which enable them to solve crimes), Pirkis’ utilization of domesticity and female qualities allow her to contribute to the detective story in a profound way.

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