Extracts from Clare Clarke, *British Detective Fiction, 1891-1901: The Successors to Sherlock Holmes.* Palgrave Macmillan, London, United Kingdom, 2020.

It was not in novels, but in short stories published in weekly or monthly magazines or newspapers catering to this newly literate mass readership that most Victorian fictional detectives were born, conferring immense popularity on the publications in which they appeared. Following the publication of the first Sherlock Holmes short story in July 1891, the magazine's already impressive sales figures soon boomed at well over 500,000 copies per issue (Brake and Demoor 604). After Holmes disappeared over the Reichenbach Falls, apparently never to return, the *Strand* and other newspapers and magazines became desperate to retain or capture the readers who had become addicted to Doyle's serialised detective fiction. As John Sutherland has noted, as a reaction to the success of Sherlock Holmes stories for the *Strand*, "by the mid-1890s, it has been estimated that of the 800 weekly papers in Britain, 240 were carrying some variety of detective story" (181). As a clerk at a W. H. Smith's bookstall explained, when he was interviewed by *The Speaker* in 1893 about the public's reading habits: "He would not undertake to phrophesy the success of any book outside the limits of detective fiction. Any detective story, whatever its merits might be, he could sell from morning to night" ("A Literary Causerie" 383).

Holmes rivals, clones, parodies, and inversions began to fill up the pages of countless family magazines such as the *Windsor*, the *Ludgate*, *Pearson's*, and in the *Strand* itself, as well as provincial newspapers, for the rest of the century. A vast (and largely uncharted) treasure trove of detective stories was published in periodicals, newspapers, and magazines in the years 1893–1900. Many of these works have been unknown, undiscovered, or inaccessible, owing to the nature of their ephemeral modes of publication. Victorian newspapers and periodicals were until recently only available to those who had the time and wherewithal to visit the British Library's Colindale depository and to sift through catalogues, boxes, and microfiche in order to access frail copies of magazines and papers, whose pages were filled with multiple columns of tiny print. In the 1970s, many

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that genre. Here, I focus upon such stories—stories which were being written at a time of great upheaval and innovation for the detective genre, a time when no one was certain what the rules were but were desperate to capitalise upon the gap in the market left by the sudden demise of Sherlock Holmes. As a result, most of these stories exist on the borderline of genre—they overlap with the colonial adventure tale, the ghost story, gothic fiction, and the slum novel, among other things. They showcase various incarnations of the figure of the detective, working with varying degrees of success or failure. In the pages of this study, readers will be introduced to all sorts of fascinating late-Victorian detectives—professional, amateur, male, female, old, young. There's a gypsy pawn shop worker, a forensic scientist, a New Woman detective, a British aristocrat, a ghost-hunter, and an East-End criminal who has carved out a role as one of London's top private detectives, amongst others. In some cases, the detectives work with the police, in others they are intellectual amateurs intrigued by unsolved puzzles, in others again they are criminals themselves, out to defraud their trusting clients. They feature a variety of crimes that still resonate today—from robbery and murder to blackmail, bigamy, sexual assault, stolen identity, and terrorist attack.

If we are truly to understand the diversity of the detective story at the *fin-de-siècle*, we cannot study only those already-canonised stories which shore up dominant yet limited and prescriptive views of the genre at that time, as cosy and conservative, obsessed with masculine and scientific authority and formal resolution. Rather, if we explore the types of stories that enjoyed widespread circulation or great popularity, but which did not

conform to later-decided rules of the genre and hence disappeared into the dustbin of history, we attain greater insight into the flexibility and permeability of what the post-Sherlock *fin-de-siècle* detective narrative could be and do.

Clarke on L.T. [Elizabeth Thomasina] Meade: (p.17) "While the *Strand* had many regular contributors who stepped in to supply detective fiction after Holmes's "death" (notably all men), Meade went on to become the magazine's most published author of crime stories in the late-Victorian and early Edwardian period, with six series published between 1893 and 1903: two series of "Stories from the Diary of a Doctor," running from July 1893 to December 1895; "The Adventures of a Man of Science," running from July 1896 to February 1897; "The Brotherhood of the Seven Kings," running from January to October 1898; "Stories of the Sanctuary Club," running from July to December 1899; and "The Sorceress of the Strand," featuring master-criminal Madame Sara, running from October 1902 to March 1903.[2] This patronage by the *Strand* was rivalled only by Doyle himself."

(p.18) Meade's first detective series, "Stories from the Diary of a Doctor" written with "was in consultation with Metropolitan Police Surgeon Edgar Beaumont (under the pen name Clifford Halifax, M.D.)" **(p.20)** and in content can be seen "an early indication of Meade's staple plot points and characters, as well as her market acuity, her ability to produce precisely those genres which were in demand by periodical editors—in her own terms, her ability to give a literary editor "what his public want[s]." Indeed, the series was so successful that it was published in volume form by George Newnes and a second series featuring Halifax was commissioned and published by the *Strand* beginning January 1895.[7] In July 1896 there followed another medical mystery series, *The Adventures of a Man of Science*, again co-written with Edgar Beaumont, as Clifford Halifax. This series of stories featured another amateur scientist, Paul Gilchrist, "a man whose life study has been science in its most interesting forms" with a "small laboratory in Bloomsbury [that] has been the source of more than one interesting experiment" (Meade, "Ought He?" 169).

Clarke on Heron: (133) "As E. and H. Heron (one of only a few occasions on which they used this pseudonym), Kate O'Brien Prichard and her son Hesketh-Prichard co-authored twelve stories featuring Flaxman Low, "the Sherlock Holmes of the ghost world," which were first published as "Real Ghost Stories" in *Pearson's Magazine* in 1898 and 1899 and published in volume form by Pearson in 1899 as *Ghosts: Being the Experiences of Flaxman Low*. Doubtless in part a response to the contemporary interest in ghosts and spiritualism exemplified by the formation of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882, Low was one of a number of "occult detectives" who appeared in late-Victorian and Edwardian magazines after the death of Sherlock Holmes; the investigation of supernatural crimes being one way by which **(134)** writers of popular periodical detective fiction drew upon and simultaneously 'inverted' the Holmes adventures.

While Sherlock Holmes emphatically disavowed the supernatural— "The world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply"—Flaxman Low is open to its place in the world of modern crime-fighting. He is introduced by the Prichards as "the first student in this field of inquiry;" his aim being "the elucidation of so-called supernatural problems on the lines of

natural law" (Crofton 29; Prichard and Prichard, "Spaniards" 60). The tales exist on the border between detective fiction and the ghost or gothic story and Low is clearly the offspring of the Holmesian materialist detective and a scientist of the occult, like Bram Stoker's vampire-slayer Van Helsing or Sheridan Le Fanu's Dr Hesselius (Doyle "Sussex Vampire").1 Low's adventures combine the investigations of murders and haunted houses with the Holmesian reading of clues, application of data, examination of chains of evidence, and employment of esoteric knowledge."

Extracts from Arlene Young, "" Petticoated police": Propriety and the Lady Detective in Victorian Fiction." *Clues* 26.3 (2008): 15-28.

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Early in the development of the detective fiction genre, the woman detective/investigator played a fairly prominent role. As early as the 1860s (twenty years after the first appearance of Poe's master sleuth Auguste Dupin and more than twenty years before the appearance of his most celebrated successor, Sherlock Holmes) there were two fictional women police detectives: Mrs. Paschal (*Revelations of a Lady Detective*, attributed to W. S. Hayward, 1864)[1] and Mrs. Gladden (*The Female Detective*, by Andrew Forrester, 1864). Professional women investigators also appear in the 1890s, in the wake of Holmes, whose exploits reinvigorate interest in detective fiction in nineteenth-century culture. Critics of these works are divided, seeing the women detectives variously as literary and cultural nonstarters: as female figures abandoned by their creators, finished off "not at Reichenbach Falls but at the matrimonial altar" (Slung xx); as more "neuter than female" (Klein 29); as guarantors of the "extension of 'police' discipline into the realm of the private and domestic" (Kayman 129); as subjects of "a fantasy of female empowerment completely at odds with actuality" (Kestner 13); or, more

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positively, as early versions of the New Woman (Thomas 184; Willis 3). There is some truth to these interpretations, and the wide divergence of the views that they encompass suggests one of the artistic flaws in representations of female detectives, especially in the earlier nineteenth century, and that is inconsistent characterization. Artistic flaws, however, are often cultural wellsprings. In this case, the fictional Victorian lady detective incorporates often conflicting elements of nineteenth-century class and gender politics that illuminate some of the issues that governed how, when, and why nineteenth-century ladies, real or fictional, could enter the workforce, especially in relatively new fields of endeavor such as policing, and how—or perhaps more to the point, if—components of work could be balanced with conventionally defined expectations of respectability and femininity.

Thus, whereas a woman might have distinct aptitudes for detective work—such as an ability to infiltrate domestic environments without suspicion—exploiting those aptitudes would stretch the bounds of propriety.

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. It is not, however, this version of the lady detective—the young woman who, in the course of her investigations, falls "gently into [... the] arms" of the Scotland Yard professional (870)—who presents a cultural challenge; it is, rather, the less alluring but more self-sufficient lady detective who finesses gender, class, and propriety in the successful pursuit of an unconventional career. This essay will accordingly analyze the unromantic but accomplished lady investigators in *Revelations of a Lady Detective* and Catherine Louise Pirkis's *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective* (1894) to reconsider and re-

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evaluate the controversial fictional female detective, contrasting her as she first appears with her later incarnation in Victorian literature.

To see these fictional lady detectives as some kind of icon of the Victorian middle-class woman worker may seem quixotic, given that critics generally point to the entirely imaginary nature of such characters. Women, they note, were not employed in any capacity by the police until the 1880s, and then only as guards for female prisoners (Cadogan and Craig 16; Slung xviii; Kestner 5). It was not until the 1920s, moreover, that women were employed as police detectives (Lock 342). As Chris Willis points out, however, the Victorian lady detective may not have been "entirely a figment of fiction-writers' imaginations"(3). Willis cites four articles published in *Tit-bits* between 1889 and 1891 that acknowledge that women were employed by private detective agencies "on certain delicate missions" ("Queer Feminine Occupations" 146), a euphemism implying that these women were used primarily in divorce cases and similar domestic scandals. The limited scope of the female detective's work and even the dubious authority of the claims in the articles is underscored by Willis's assessment of one of these articles as "portraying detection as an interesting (if rather eccentric) profession for an educated woman" and as perhaps owing "a fair amount to journalistic licence" (3). A more authoritative discussion of the topic, "Women as Detectives," appears in *Queen: The Lady's Newspaper and Court Chronicle*, a year before the first of the *Tit-bit* articles. "Women as Detectives" is a credible account of the employment of women as investigators, appearing as it does in a prestigious weekly newspaper. The author is anonymous, as

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The ambiguities inherent in this assessment of the lady detectives, the doubts about the compatibility of detective work with personal integrity, also color the representations of their fictional counterparts, at times producing problems in characterization. The fictional lady detective as she first appears in 1864, in Haywood's *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, is poorly differentiated both socially and culturally; her later incarnation in the 1890s, while more clearly defined, is nevertheless socially marginalized. One character in *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke* labels lady detectives in the same way that Jane Eyre does governesses, as "a race apart" (Pirkis 93). Unlike the long-suffering governess, however, the female detective uses her dubious social status to her professional advantage—that is, to advance her detections. Unlike the governess, accordingly, the lady detective is a problematic figure not because of her potential to be a sexually disruptive presence in the Victorian home (Poovey 127) but because she exploits her femininity and apparent respectability to earn a living.

[Young analyses Hayward and Forrester lady detectives **…24]**

Although the lady detective has clearly evolved in the years between 1861 and 1894, there remain numerous parallels between Mrs. Paschal and Loveday Brooke, especially in the kinds of cases they undertake. Most of Loveday's cases involve theft, in one instance of a blank cheque that was cashed for £6000, but more usually of costly necklaces. She is twice engaged to track down missing persons, in one episode a maid and in the other a wealthy and nubile young woman. One case involves the murder of the elderly lodgekeeper of a country estate. Loveday's cases tend to be more convoluted than her predecessor's, however. The investigation of a missing necklace, for example, unravels a tale of impersonation and elopement rather than of theft. Although Loveday does on occasion investigate a case without recourse to disguise or impersonation, she, like Mrs. Paschal, is generally relegated to undercover work in which she gains access to domestic sanctuaries and so to private information. And like Mrs. Paschal, Loveday is one of a contingent of lady investigators and is much prized by her employer, Ebenezer Dyer, as "one of the shrewdest and most clear-headed of my female detectives" (Pirkis 2). But although Loveday has been forced to work for reasons similar to those of her impoverished widowed predecessor—because "by a jerk of Fortune's wheel" (the nature of which is left unspecified) she "had been thrown upon the world penniless and all but friendless"—her entry into her line of work is at once more mundane and more professional (2). Mrs. Paschal responded to an offer "made [...] through a peculiar channel" (Hayward 3); Loveday, by contrast, chooses her work—a choice albeit limited by her lack of marketable skills—and rises through the ranks:

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Loveday's experiences thus encompass some of the forbidden nature of an unorthodox line of work—she "defied convention" and has been "cut her off sharply from her former associates and her position in society." Like many of her contemporary fictional colleagues, she is not a member of an official body, not a police detective, but an employee of a detective agency. She is no female Holmes, however; there is nothing of the bohemian about her, nor does she solve crimes by unconventional means in defiance of police methods. Although she admits to perceiving things that "a great many other people [... do] not," she works with rather than against the police and solves crimes "step by step in her usual methodical manner" (11). She is, moreover, the perfect subordinate, achieving higher status and pay by working diligently and consequently bringing distinction to her employer as well as to herself.

Loveday accordingly lacks the cachet and flair of most fictional detectives of her era and so it is not surprising that she completely outclasses Mrs. Paschal in terms of respectability. She is younger—"a little over thirty"—but otherwise much less assertive and, except for her Christian name, much

less flamboyant than her predecessor. For one thing, she does not tell her own story, which is presented as experiences rather than as revelations, and the narrator is anything but poetic about her appearance, describing her as "altogether nondescript" and her "invariably black" dress as "Quaker-like in its neat primness" (2). Dyer, like Colonel Warner, values his female detective for her shrewdness, but couches her particular talent in what can only be called exuberantly mundane terms: "[S]he has so much common sense that it amounts to genius—positively to genius" (3). Dyer does not rely on Loveday to throw men off guard with the sight of her petticoat; he understands the special potential of a female detective to be quite other than her ability to divert men with feminine wiles. In some situations, he acknowledges, "women detectives are more satisfactory than men, for they are less likely to attract attention" (31). At the same time, he is sensitive to the fact that sceptics might question Loveday's suitability for detective work because she is "[t]oo much of a lady"(3). She is, after all, not just a *female* detective—the term used for Mrs. Paschal everywhere but in the title of her *Revelations*; Loveday is a *lady* detective, and her rather more austere professionalism is reflected in the cover image on the single-volume edition of her experiences as it appeared in 1894 (previously serialized in the *Ludgate Monthly*). The dark red-cloth cover is entirely plain except for the title, embossed in gold letters, and the image of a simple white business card placed obliquely across the front, which reads "Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective—Lynch Court, Fleet Street."

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Although Loveday's professional status would thus seem more firmly grounded than Mrs. Paschal's, the commission of her investigations is remarkably similar. Like Mrs. Paschal, she gathers information by gaining the confidence, or sometimes the indifference, of her prey. She adopts sim-

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ilar roles, although the range of careers available to women by the end of the century allows Loveday greater scope. She accordingly poses as a nursery governess, a housekeeper's studious niece, a lodger, an amanuensis, and a house decorator. Loveday may seem to command a higher and more secure class position than Mrs. Paschal, but the characterization of lady detectives as a race apart is telling; like governesses, their class position is precarious, but for the lady detective this is an advantage rather than a personal and professional limitation. The female—or lady—detective's ability to pass as a member of the servant class provides her with access to secrets of the personal and domestic lives of her quarry; it also makes her virtually invisible, seemingly too inconsequential to be suspect or threatening. At the same time, her real identity—and higher class position—provides her with the confidence and authority to carry out her covert investigations, as well as the power to bring the guilty to justice.

The professional female detective is a fascinating anomaly in Victorian popular literature. She does not gain the obsessive following of Holmes, nor does she inspire significant imitation. She does, however, fuse some of the most pressing issues regarding women in the 1860s and 1890s with one of the most inventive forms of popular literature of the period. She first

appears when social commentators are pondering issues of women's redundancy and subjection, and she resurfaces when the New Woman seems poised to take on the world and any job that writers are prepared to assign to her. The character that results from this fusion is not in the end particularly coherent. Even in her incarnation as Loveday Brooke, she is an amalgam of too many contradictions; a lady, after all, would not demean herself in many of the ways that Loveday does in her undercover roles. The female detective does have a place, however, in the consideration of women in the venues of work and of fiction in that she allows writers to explore and experiment with ways of imagining what in the Victorian period was another anomaly—the middle-class working woman.

The inconsistencies in characterization that mark the fictional lady detective in many ways reflect the uncertainty of the middle-class woman's place in the nineteenth-century workforce: Like the lady detective, the middle-class woman who wanted to work generally had to undermine her social status. The roles the lady detective assumes suggest the limited kinds of options open to most women—amanuensis, decorator, or low-level positions in the postal service. To the end of the century, there remained "much difference of opinion" not just about the duties of a detective but indeed about the extent to which any paid employment for ladies was "consistent or in conflict with a refined mind and social status" ("Women as Detectives"). And well might the lady detective give pause to a culture as conservative as that of Victorian England. The lady detective as represented by Mrs. Paschal and Loveday Brooke takes the concept of the working woman to its extremes, for she is defined solely by her job, existing entirely

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this period: The Victorian professional lady detective is never seen in her own home; she has no family or relations. In her way, she is as wily as Fouché, masking, with an inconspicuous persona and an unobtrusive manner of conducting her investigations, a radical version of female independence.

Keywords: feminism; middle class; respectability; Victorian fiction; women's employment

NOTES

1. Although there is some disagreement about the dating and authorship of *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, most critics accept 1864 over 1861 as the date of the first edition, and the British Library attributes *Revelations* (or rather, the 1884 *Experiences of a Lady Detective* edition) to Hayward. See Cadogan and Craig 15; Klein 30n2; Kestner 6; Slung xvi.

2. The 1870 edition is subtitled "A Tale of Female Life and Adventure."

3. Mrs. Paschal anticipates Holmes's penchant for using street urchins as informants. She "invariably employed a boy to discover minute and petty details," such as her employee Jack Doyle, a young orphan who was stealing to survive until Mrs. Paschal offered him an opportunity to "lead an honest life" by spying for her (101–03). Like the Baker Street Irregulars, Jack is invaluable as a spy with his street smarts and ability to be virtually invisible within the context of bustling London thoroughfares.

4. The significance of the distinction between acting in the line of duty versus acting as mimetic representation for the purposes of entertainment is more readily accepted when the agent is male rather than female, even if he is not a regular employee of the state. Readers uncritically applaud and admire Holmes and Lord Peter Wimsey, for example, when they use subterfuge, misrepresentation, or role playing to insinuate themselves into the hearts and minds of the rogues they trap and expose. Mrs. Paschal, by contrast, has to explain and justify her acting.

5. Mrs. Gladden is cast in much the same mold as Mrs. Paschal—a mature woman who is employed as a detective by the police department and who gains access to the personal lives and information of her quarry by posing as a domestic servant, milliner, or dressmaker (34, 41).

6. There are fictional lady detectives ca. 1890 who predate Loveday, but they lack her credentials, either as a professional woman or as a fictional character. Miriam Lea in Leonard Merrick's *Mr. Bazalgette's Agent* (1888) is not regularly employed and therefore is not fully professional. Mrs. Cox in George Sims's "The Mysterious Crossing-Sweeper" (1890) is underdeveloped as a character and is as much the source of mystery in her story (she is the crossing-sweeper) as she is a contributor to its solution.