

FEMINIST HARD-BOILED DETECTIVE FICTION AS POLITICAL PROTEST IN THE
TRADITION OF WOMEN PROLETARIAN WRITERS OF THE 1930S

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Laura Ng

B.A., Morehead State University, 1995

M.A., Morehead State University, 1997

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Abstract

Contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective fiction has been studied as an adaptation of the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective genre. Writers such as Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton, and Marcia Muller create compelling feminist protagonists to fill the role of detective. The successes and failures of these feminist detectives have then been measured against the standards created in the classic genre by Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and James M. Cain.

The classic hard-boiled masculine genre came of age in the 1930s and 1940s at the same time as proletarian literature. The two genres share many characteristics including reliance upon first person narrative, the tough guy voice, an awareness of political and social hierarchies, and the utilization of realism. While women writers such as Josephine Herbst and Catherine Brody were drawn to the political cause of the proletarian, they were separated from the working class by their socioeconomic ties and from the literary proletarian hero by its masculine conception. Consequently, their fiction often included the middle-class woman intellectual struggling to help the oppressed worker. In these works, gender, class, politics, and social order are intertwined. The characters explore these concepts and what avenues of rebellion and power were open to women at the time.

The struggles explored in the writing of women proletarian writers from the 1930s have much in common with the issues examined in contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective fiction. Both genres show women characters with an awareness of the power of language to include and exclude, the importance of physical presentation and performance, the prestige of being associated with specific social classes, the power found in ties to communities and family, a problematic relationship with violence, and the power of revealing and interpreting

information. It is clear that feminist hard-boiled detective fiction is then a genre of political protest in the tradition of women proletarian writers of the 1930s.

Chapter One: Feminist Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction and Women's Proletarian Writings

Every type of fiction has its own degree and special kind of relevance to the nature and composition of society, which it both reflects and affects.

David Madden, 1968

Feminist hard-boiled detective novels are skillfully crafted works that allow their authors to further their political agendas, protest social hierarchies, and promote social change by utilizing literary tools similar to those used by women proletarian writers of the 1930s and 1940s. Hard-boiled detective fiction strikes a chord with American society through characters, settings, and corruption, which correspond to American lifestyles, fears, and desires. Detective fiction has always been a complex and dynamic genre, with its direct commentary on criminal corruption, social injustice, and political practices. Hard-boiled detective fiction is a genre of awareness. Contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective fiction writers have readily adapted the masculine hard-boiled detective fiction genre's tradition of social examination and incorporated more political protest and demands for social change.

The most striking difference between the masculine hard-boiled detective fiction of the 1930s and 1940s and similar fiction being written by women today is the way in which women authors are now using the genre to further the political and literary goals of the feminist movement. Feminism and the traditional hard-boiled genre, the long-time home of the American tough guy, may seem to be an ill-fitting match. The crime-plagued 1940s world inhabited by traditional tough guys, as created by Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and James M. Cain, seems inhospitable to and incompatible with the political reform of the contemporary feminist hard-boiled detectives, as fashioned by Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton, and Marcia Muller. Indeed, critics such as Kathleen Gregory Klein have long upheld the idea that the feminist hard-boiled

detective is incapable of surviving as anything other than a drag character in the genre as she inherited it.

But is it accurate to assume that the feminist hard-boiled detective writers are dealing with generic conventions strictly from traditional masculine hard-boiled detective fiction? Actually, feminist hard-boiled detective writers do use the conventions of the traditional male-dominated hard-boiled detective genre, but they also incorporate tools and techniques of protest and subversion, both generic and political, which are found in women's proletarian writing of the 1930s and 1940s. With the tools of the proletarian genre, the feminist writers can turn the traditionally masculine-dominated genre into works of political protest. This is the kind of subversion discussed by Cathy Moses in *Dissenting Fictions*. Moses theorizes how communities which were traditionally marginalized can use the same genre forms mainstream society does for their own radical political ends. Feminist hard-boiled detective authors and women proletarian writers from the 1930s are examples of communities who use classic genres for radical ends.

Proletarian literature and tough guy novels, such as hard-boiled detective fiction, are literary siblings with an intertwining development that crosses genre boundaries, as attested to by Benjamin Appel: "Back in the Thirties, the Tough Guy novel and the Proletarian novel were both à la mode. And although styles have long changed, the best of the tough guy novels will endure because the vice was genuine and not simply a device. In fact, some of the best of the tough guy novels were also among the best of the proletarian novels" (13). Both genres have distinct political designs, even if at times these designs may appear to be at cross-purposes.

Culture plays a powerful role in the creation of the 1930s women proletarian novels and contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective fiction works. Regrettably, this study will not look at these cultural aspects, which may foster the similarities between proletarian literature of the

1930s and contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective fiction. Such an examination would be substantial. Devoting adequate coverage to the subject would require more space than this project allows.

Within the 1930s proletarian movement, there was a small core of women authors who were writing to promote proletarian ideas, as well as their own brand of feminism. Writers such as Josephine Herbst and Catherine Brody fashioned strong women characters who showed political power as it could unfold on the home front and in the workplace. They give voice to the oppressed workers.

Herbst and Brody laid the path that feminist hard-boiled detective writers would use to transcend the limits of the genre and allow their characters to become powerful proponents of social change. Like Herbst and Brody, Paretsky, Grafton, and Muller question mainstream social conventions in their fiction by exploring word choice, physical performance, socioeconomic class, community, violence, and revelation.

How does mastery of different styles of socialized language and social/professional speech patterns provide both a measurement of professional competency for protagonists and opportunities for transgression? Chapter one examines how the hard-boiled detective must work to show language proficiency to claim the role of detective and suggest social and political change. In the hard-boiled genre, language becomes a series of codes designed to keep the ignorant at bay, while allowing those familiar with the code to share knowledge and display their authority. The protagonist has a history of mastering police/legal language and criminal street terms to display skill and power. The traditional masculine hard-boiled detective must demonstrate that he knows the right code to use in a given situation. When working with police officers, he uses the jargon of the field, showing the police that he understands the process they

follow and that he is knowledgeable in their field. When dealing with criminals, the masculine hard-boiled detective uses the slang of the street to communicate his awareness of what is happening. Thus, those who interact with him understand that he has mastery of several language “codes.” He gains respect and limited acceptance because of such mastery.

Women proletarian writers of the 1930s were also aware of the power that political party jargon holds. Language forms the basis of solidarity for proletarians. The need to master the messages of the party was especially great for women proletarian writers. To be recognized as knowledgeable, powerful, and devoted to the causes, women proletarian writers of the 1930s had to be able to render their party’s message in a manner that communicated their understanding of working class issues and the proletarian stance on those issues.

Feminist hard-boiled detectives like Paretsky’s Warshawski, Grafton’s Millhone, and Muller’s McCone understand the power of mastering code, but their use of code is complicated by the feminist hard-boiled detectives’ desire to distance themselves from organizations that may attempt to remove them from their positions of authority. If these feminist hard-boiled detectives fail to display their knowledge and use the proper code, then they will be discredited and removed from the positions of power that being the detective provides them. These linguistically savvy characters must find a way to use social expectations surrounding modes of conversation to manipulate others into confessing hidden information.

Traditional masculine hard-boiled detective fiction is the realm of the “tough guy.” As Sheldon Norman Grebstein points out, the hard-boiled detective criteria includes a demand that the detective be able to withstand the physical rigors of the role and still finish the case (23). Because of this expectation, there is an apparent stereotype when considering who should physically fill the role of hard-boiled detective. Chapter two explores if and how if the feminist

hard-boiled detectives meet these gender-specific expectations connected to the gender of the protagonist.

In their study, *The Images of Occupational Prestige*, Anthony Coxon and Charles L. Jones determine that stereotypes are comfortable and provide individuals with an easy way of labeling performance, physical presentation, social expectations, and role fulfillment. Chandler, Hammett, and Cain were aware of this social reliance upon stereotypes when they created their hard-boiled heroes. Herbst and Brody were also aware of the power of stereotypes. Brody's Molly of *Nobody Starves* is aware that she does not look like the popular social conception of a shop girl (5). The disparity between appearance and ability often hampered the characters in women's proletarian literature.

The feminist hard-boiled detective authors, like the women proletarian writers of the 1930s, know that looking the part is important when their characters are dealing with clients and suspects. Can feminist hard-boiled detective authors take steps to confront stereotypical expectations of appearance where women proletarian writers created characters that felt stymied by these expectations? The feminist hard-boiled detective finds herself in the predicament of having to battle the tough stereotype to prove that she can successfully fulfill the job requirements. Consequently, there is a strong awareness of physical presentation in the novels. In dealing with dress, social expectation, and the ability to complete a case, the feminist hard-boiled detective attempts to take an aggressive stance on a tough criterion that could easily leave her disempowered.

Money, the desire for it, the lack of it, and the greed associated with it, has always played a strong role in hard-boiled detective novels. How does the feminist hard-boiled detective use her socioeconomic status to her best advantage politically and professionally? Chapter three

examines the relationship between profession, socioeconomic affiliations, and threats to authority that come from affluence. The traditional masculine hard-boiled detective is also recognized by his treatment of money. In the hard-boiled detective genre, the protagonists are underpaid, yet still work for the betterment of society. Detectives, like other public servants, are seen as inherently noble for giving up the income they could earn in other professions, to serve society. This idea of the noble self-sacrifice of the public servant glamorizes their impoverished state and lends these individuals an aura of being free from the corruption that money and the desire for money leads to in society.

Proletarians also took up the issue of money and the lack of it. Instead of glamorizing their impoverished state and remaining separated from socioeconomic classes, they embraced the working class and showed poverty to be oppressive. While the hard-boiled detective avoided direct connection with the lower and upper class, the proletarian protagonist is directly tied to the blue-collar class. Women proletarian writers, such as Herbst and Brody, used their protagonists to show the corruption in the work environment and in the home environment. The ties they made between the workplace, the economy, and the home, showed how political choices were reflected in the microcosm of everyday life. Feminist hard-boiled detective writers try to use the same sense of community established by women proletarian writers of the 1930s. Paretsky, Grafton, and Muller all have created detectives with distinct ties to their community, economic class, and political beliefs. Do these strong socioeconomic and political affiliations keep the feminist hard-boiled detectives from creating an order that addresses inequality among classes and resolving cases in ways that can be accepted by the reader? Or, will these detectives be seen as too biased to construct a viable resolution to cases?

The image of the lone hard-boiled detective traveling through the world of crime untainted is a hallmark of the genre. Chandler's Marlowe, Hammett's Spade and Continental Op, and Cain's Huff are examples of the virtues and failures of adhering to the ideas of rugged individualism. Their status as outsiders was thought to give them enough distance from crime and the temptations of society to see situations objectively. In spite of this, the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective was not a social outsider. He was a member of mainstream society. He did place himself outside the criminal world and social realm of those cultural systems that remained on the fringes of the mainstream.

Women's proletarian literature of the 1930s discards the lone protagonist in favor of more group-focused interaction. Women proletarian writers understood the power that a group could provide for an individual and their cause. Their stories are not about lone individuals, but about individuals and their connections to larger groups. This idea of unity is one that is taken up by feminism. The result is a struggle for the feminist hard-boiled detective writers to have their characters avoid isolation and utilize the power of a community without being open to allegations of corruption, which can come from group connections.

Can Paretsky's Warshawski, Grafton's Millhone, and Muller's McCone maintain strong ties to their communities, which help provide them a sense of identity and mold their political perspectives, and still be seen as authority figures worthy of reestablishing the violated order? Unlike women proletarian writers, authors of feminist hard-boiled detective works understand the inherent danger in associating too closely with a group. Feminist hard-boiled detectives must work to remain close to those in their families and communities, yet preserve their ability to see when those community members could be trying to manipulate them. What emerges in feminist

hard-boiled detective fiction is a compelling desire for community and purpose weighed against the awareness of the possibility that the community is trying to manipulate authority.

Chapter five explores the issue of violence as an integral part of hard-boiled detective fiction and what that means for the authority of feminist hard-boiled detectives. Violence is seen as one of the more problematic components of feminist hard-boiled detective fiction. In his work, “The Tough Hemmingway and His Hard-Boiled Children” Sheldon Norman Grebstein first criterion for being a tough guy is the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective’s ability to show his “toughness” and masculinity and validate his right to be a detective by his ability to withstand physical abuse and continue to do the job (23). Chandler’s Marlowe, Hammett’s Spade, and Cain’s Huff must prove that they can deal with physical abuse inflicted upon them during the course of a case to maintain their power as hard-boiled detectives.

In society, women have traditionally been barred from using socially sanctioned violence as a tool. Theorists, such as Jean Bethke Elshtain in *Women and War* and Vanessa Friedman in “Over His Dead Body: Female Murders, Female Rage, and Western Culture,” explain how socially- sanctioned male violence (actions by soldiers and police officers, for example) grants men power and immunity from any negative connotations associated with those violent actions while violent women are seen as deviant. This double standard holds true for traditional masculine hard-boiled detective fiction. Violent women, often represented in the femme fatale, are criminals who need to be controlled and contained by mainstream authorities.

Women’s proletarian writers of the 1930s were also aware of the monster-deviant images associated with women who used violence. These women writers were equally aware of how violence is used as a tool used by mainstream society to silence fringe political causes. In works such as Herbst’s *Rope of Gold* and Brody’s *Nobody Starves*, mainstream violence is shown to be

a devastating, suppressive tool used to keep workers from advancing to economic security and humane treatment. Herbst and Brody dramatized the politics of violence while avoiding the creation of the violent monster woman.

How can feminist hard-boiled detective writers use violence in a socially and politically aware manner reminiscent of 1930s women proletarian writers? Works like Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* and Lois McNay's *Foucault and Feminism*, examine the socially sanctioned uses and limitations of actions and body parts and underscore how society attempts to control the individual's body and actions. These theories also point out that those individuals who dare to act outside these narrow social boundaries can create powerful transgressions. Can Feminist hard-boiled detective authors use the actions of their detectives as political protests and attempts to control the image of a violent woman? Feminist hard-boiled detective writers must show the same keen awareness that 1930's women proletarian writers possessed when they used the power of interpretation to further a cause.

Chapter six examines the feminist hard-boiled detective's ability to control the power inherent in interpreting and sharing information with large groups. The final revelation of hidden events and motivations for criminal acts has long been the centerpiece of the hard-boiled detective genre. The process of revelation is one society values as part of the maintenance of the mainstream and as an important part of induction into the mainstream for those on the fringe. Michel Foucault briefly explores revelation and confession in *History of Sexuality*, where he examines the role of confession and use of knowledge in society (6). Similarly, Christine Evans points out in "*On the Valuation of Detective Fiction: A Study in the Ethics of Consolation*" that the restoration of lost information and order in the mystery genre are two outcomes that the reader depends on for an artificial sense of consolation and safety (163).

Revelation is a much more complex act than merely telling the hidden story. The hard-boiled detective authors in general, as well as women proletarian writers of the 1930s, are aware of the power that is connected to the interpretation of the facts uncovered. For the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective like Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe, controlling that interpretation meant keeping their plans a secret from outsiders, including the police. Proletarian authors like Josephine Herbst and Catherine Brody were equally aware of the power of revelation and interpretation, but from the side of those who were usually oppressed by it.

The feminist hard-boiled detective author builds on the same foundation of information manipulation used by women proletarian writers. While these women crusaders are aware of the need to bring crimes and injustice to the attention of mainstream society, they are also aware of the fact that letting the police and other mainstream organizations know what they are doing too early can cause them to lose control over the case and the interpretation of the information they have uncovered. Conversely, the feminist hard-boiled detectives may withhold information about their individual clients to protect them from mainstream systems or shield their privacy. When dealing with the demands of clients and authority, the feminist hard-boiled detective often employs misdirection.

John Kucich's *The Power of Lies: Transgression in Victorian Fiction* reveals that society sees misrepresenting situations as a passive feminine activity. For the feminist hard-boiled detective to be seen as less than truthful by the police or other mainstream justice organizations creates the risk of feminizing her into a form of passivity, causing her to be removed from the active, powerful role of detective, and allowing the mainstream to control the interpretation of information. Lying can make the feminist hard-boiled detective ineffectual. Conversely, being

dishonest may help the feminist hard-boiled detective retain her role as detective. Can these characters successfully use lies to keep the same authority that lying threatens to destroy?

Since both masculine hard-boiled detective fiction and American women's proletarian literature of the 1930s and 1940s came of age at the same time and share several significant genre traits, it is only logical that feminist hard-boiled detective fiction writers should utilize tools from both for political protest. From the traditional masculine hard-boiled detectives of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and James M. Cain, feminist hard-boiled detective fiction writers inherited a world of socially defined power and clear passage for redefining the social order into a more desirable political view. Still relying upon realism and first-person narrative, feminist hard-boiled detective writers, such as Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton and Marcia Muller endeavor to create heroines that both rebel against and utilize the genre characteristics established by their masculine forerunners. Their rebellion, seen in the way they construct their relationships, conduct their investigations, and interpret the world around them, has strong similarities to the works of women proletarian writers like Josephine Herbst and Catherine Brody. The strong political views of both feminist hard-boiled fiction and women's proletarian writing show women characters struggling to find agency and authority in a society that is not yet ready to acknowledge the changing balance of gender-related power.

Chapter Two: The Code of Words

We have too many high sounding words and not enough facts that correspond with them.

Abigail Adams, 1774

The phrase “What is the password?” is designed to protect the treasured secrets of childhood organizations, web pages, and network security and to underscore society’s emphasis on separating those who are qualified, knowledgeable, trusted members of the group from interlopers whose presence may only undermine the established rules and codes used to create boundaries and order. The wrong utterance, the bleak hesitation of an unsure phrase, or the simple inability to keep up with the code denies the unwanted and unworthy, membership in the club. As we mature, the terminology of our fields becomes the secret code of professionalism, replacing simplistic passwords, preserving the simplistic principles of inclusion and exclusion. Lois McNay reveals that dialogues and verbal power structures are a vital part of mainstream society’s governing system that affects an individual’s ability to create a psychologically specific gender, race, socioeconomic class, and ethical identity (80-82). Society depends upon the socialized use of language. Terminology and catch phrases fill our conversations and create the sound of power, while hiding the fury of ignorance. The fascination with the restrictive aspects of language is also deeply embedded in literature. Codes provide the reader with a false sense of security. Like all codes, these can be “cracked,” stolen by outsiders and imposters to manipulate. The expectation that the mastery of socialized language codes equals knowledge and competency is the same in literature as in conversations. These communications, with their inclusion and exclusion, are a focal point for the tough guy voice, which provides the backbone for the masculine hard-boiled detective and proletarian genres. For the feminist hard-boiled detective to

be taken seriously as a descendent of the masculine hard-boiled detective genre and the proletarian genres, she must show the same verbal acumen.

The power of the tough guy is found in his voice. David Madden describes this voice:

. . . as terse and idiomatic as the news headlines, radio bulletins, and newsreels which reported the events of the Thirties: the St. Valentine's Day Massacre; labor strife; speakeasy raids; lynchings; the shooting of Legs Diamond; the Lindbergh kidnapping; . . . —events described in Henry Morton Robinson's *Fantastic Interim* (Harcourt Brace, 1943) and, in relation to literary and other popular culture elements, in Leo Gurko's *Angry Decade* (Dodd, Mead, 1947).
(*Tough Guy* xix)

The tough guy voice was raised to high art by Chandler, Hammett, and Cain, in the hard-boiled detective fiction genre. The tough guy voice is one of unvarnished fact. The style of the tough guy voice is usually first person, rich in slang and jargon, and marked with objectivity and detachment. It is a style that reflects a jaded yet inventive outlook on life that is filled with metaphors and comparisons. Chandler's comparisons provide an excellent illustration of this: "But their faces were as threadbare as a bookkeeper's office coat" (*Farewell* 225). The tough guy's voice uses more common images when making comparisons, often referring to people and places associated with the working class and aspects of a harder existence. When Chandler's Philip Marlowe meets Mrs. Jessie Florin in *Farewell, My Lovely*, he compares her easy consumption of bourbon to swallowing aspirin (222). The effortless linking of alcohol and an everyday painkiller creates an association that is at once disturbing and blunt. This is a voice whose assertions the reader can trust, the voice of newsreels and fact. Society's unvarnished truth is still filled with code. The deceptively plain tough guy voice is thick with codes to help gain empathy from the audience.

The voice is one of gritty realism and meant to reflect the seedy social class the detective must search through to find the criminal, as well as the blue-collar world the detective is traditionally associated with in values and socioeconomic status. Verbal function is as important as the physical act, especially where performance theory is concerned. Carl Freedman and Christopher Kendrick posit in “Forms of Labor in Dashiell Hammett’s *Red Harvest*,” that the language of Hammett’s Continental Op shows his ability to negotiate different levels of labor and political conflict while attempting to solve the crime and complete his job (209). The careful negotiation of verbal economies and the use of words from the criminal classes establish the elaborate code the masculine hard-boiled detective employs. Hammett’s Continental Op’s ability to manipulate others into action or inaction through conversations shows the character’s mastery over multiple verbal codes. In Hammett’s short story, “The Tenth Claw,” Continental Op works with Detective O’Gar to solve the murder of Charles Gantvoort’s father. Detective O’Gar questions Gantvoort about the death of his father, with Op acting as witness (*Continental Op* 8-14). Throughout the questioning, O’Gar is firmly in control of the conversation. Gantvoort is limited to merely responding to questions and confirming what O’Gar already knew. Op is reduced to silence because he was not informed by O’Gar of what role he is to play. After the questioning, O’Gar shows Op new evidence. This change in the conversation allows Op to enter into the conversation immediately by asking about “fingerprints” and joining the search for missing suspects by assuring O’Gar he will send off “. . . a batch of telegrams to the Agency’s branches, having the names of the list taken care of. I’ll try to have the three clippings traced, too” (14). With his inquiries into fingerprints, he shows O’Gar that he understands the science of evidence and the direct connection between individual and proof. Op then places himself in a position of authority, equal to if not greater than O’Gar’s, by taking over aspects of

the case, such as the search for missing suspects. He creates the verbal impression that he is more powerful than O'Gar with his comment about branches and telegrams. While O'Gar is centered in one city, it is Op who has a greater sphere of influence and more resources. Therefore, Op's offer of help with locating the suspects may seem to be a courtesy, but is designed to display his power. Continental Op's strategies work well because he knows how to employ the correct phrases, thereby establishing his credibility with authorities and criminals alike. His mastery of several codes establishes his credibility with the reader, and the use of blunt comparisons gives the dialog a feel of truth and authority.

Proletarian writers saw the power of socialized language and worked to incorporate their views on politics into their version of truth. Both Walter Rideout's *The Radical Novel in the United States, 1900-1954: Some Interrelations of Literature and Society* and Barbara Foley's *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S. Fiction, 1939-1941* document the importance of using what proletarian writers saw as the language of the worker as that language unfolded in the debates within *New Masses*. One of the writers Foley sees as aptly displaying the importance of language is Josephine Herbst. In *Rope of Gold*, Herbst disrupts the narrative with fictional newspaper columns that tell of the struggle of the proletarian movement. The short sentences of the newspaper articles provide a clear contrast between the political struggles of the working class and the struggles of the protagonists, Jonathan and Victoria, as they balance familial demands with their drive to make America better for the working class. These moments when Herbst uses mock newsprint clarify the themes of the text and place them in the context of the reality of that time. Consequently, both proletarian literature and hard-boiled detective fiction adopted the tough guy style for its realism and connection to the working class. This reliance upon the tough guy voice forced women writers of the 1930s to either adopt the

masculine rhetoric of the radical novel, as created by proletarian leaders like Mike Gold, or to focus on the female body and the traditionally domestic spheres (Rabinowitz 182). Feminist hard-boiled detective authors find themselves faced with a similar situation to these women proletarian writers. These feminist detective writers must correctly and successfully use the tough guy voice, as well as other technical languages, while keeping their protagonists' gender identities and political views at the forefront of the texts.

Feminist hard-boiled detectives, like masculine hard-boiled detectives, are required to understand and use terminology with the professionals and laymen alike. Jargon adds an edge to the tough voice that inspires confidence, adds to the tough persona, and manipulates those the detective interacts with during the course of the investigation. Writers such as Paretzky, Grafton, and Muller craft the voices of their characters, not only to reflect, but also to show the feminist hard-boiled detectives' competency in verbal economies. Paretzky's V. I. Warshawski, Grafton's Millhone, and Muller's McCone use their verbal sparring skills to manipulate police officers, gain access to information, and create their social identities. They use the code handed down from their masculine hard-boiled predecessors combined with the protest strategies used by their proletarian mothers to subvert coded systems to fit their needs.

2.1 Cop Talk and Legalese

The scientific language of criminal investigation transforms the mundane crime scene and victim into objects of study and investigation removed from the streets. Crime and victim then belong to the world of clinical, manageable science. Terminology creates a meeting ground for hard-boiled detective fiction, proletarian literature, and society. While the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective did not fit in well with the police department, he did have a common speech pattern, understanding the terms and using them to glean information from

authorities. In *Farewell, My Lovely*, Chandler's Marlowe is questioned by Detective-Lieutenant Nulty. Marlowe uses slang, police jargon, and logical observation to win over Detective-Lieutenant Nulty's momentary trust. Nulty accuses Marlowe of "riding him." Marlowe responds, "I'm not trying to ride anybody" (*Farewell* 12). Marlowe's correct use of the slang term assures Nulty that Marlowe understands not only what Nulty was implying, that Marlowe was lying to him, but that he and Marlowe share a common vernacular based on street exposure. When Nulty looks through police records for a suspect, he allows Marlowe to bring up the possibility of checking parole records (*Farewell* 12). By talking about the parole records, Marlowe establishes his familiarity with the proper procedure and governing rules that are a part of Nulty's professional world. Finally, Marlowe uses his observations to establish a common ground with Nulty by theorizing whether or not Moose Malloy shot and killed Mr. Montgomery: ". . . but I got the idea somebody got scared and shot at Malloy and then Malloy took the gun away from whoever did it. . . . Consider the kind of clothes he was wearing. He didn't go there to kill anybody; not dressed like that. He went there to look for this girl named Velma that had been his girl before he was pinched for the bank job" (*Farewell* 13). Combined with Marlowe's repeated observation that the police would eventually bring Malloy in for questioning, Marlowe creates a bond of professional trust with Nulty (*Farewell* 13). This professional respect leads to Nulty charging Marlowe with finding the missing Velma. In a few short pages, Marlowe's display of expertise as a detective allows the police detective to see him as a valuable tool, rather than an obstacle to solving the mystery.

Many proletarian writers approach the use of language from a different angle. They use the jargon of disciplinary offices as a way to understand the "enemy," and use this knowledge to their own ends. This is especially true for women. The literary proletarian movement of the

1930s is marked by a sharp divide between a demand for a literary aesthetic and a need for functionality in the literature (Foley 54-56). This debate over use and function of language would ultimately play out in the pages of *New Masses* (Foley 87). Barbara Foley explains that writers such as Grace Lumpkin and Clara Weatherwax were urged by leaders of the Left to “not sound too much like women—or at least the wrong kinds of women” (223). In consequence, Lumpkin and Weatherwax created carefully crafted works that promoted the party agenda, exposed the plight of the worker, and revealed the powerful presence of women in the text as well as in the political movement. Lumpkin, Weatherwax, and Herbst utilize Leftist party jargon as well as society’s jargon to bring their work to the reader. Herbst’s *Rope of Gold* uses party terminology several ways. Herbst’s Jonathan Chance makes a speech to poor farmers that is filled with calls for action, “Last year we demanded a moratorium of debts ... This year we demand cancellation. . . . next year we shall demand confiscation” (9). Jonathan, the young and eager political reformer, is the most obvious platform for political expression in Herbst’s work. Victoria is a more subtle tool for Herbst’s agenda. It is through Victoria’s eyes the reader sees unfold the stories of individuals in need. Victoria’s sympathetic perspective shows children in need and questions the power of a society that allows children to suffer.

Warshawski’s use of jargon with police officers gives her a competency with them that allows her to decipher the literal codes that mark their language. Her connection to the police as a cop’s daughter allows her access to the slang and interior of the police world. She can use what she knows to interact with police officers on equal ground. In *Bitter Medicine*, Warshawski talks with Detective Rawlings about police action against a pro-life group picketing a free clinic that performs abortions: “‘So what happens now?’ I said bitterly. ‘A few disorderly conducts, several disturbing the peace—low bail—no prosecution’ ” (103). Warshawski’s

ability to accurately list the charges against the crowd, and her realistic view of how much weight those charges will hold when brought to hearings, shows Officer Rawlings that she understands how the system works. She shares his insider knowledge of the limited effectiveness these charges will have against the protesters. Similarly, Warshawski's degree in law allows her access to court terms. She can use her legal background to decipher official court and police documents. In *Bitter Medicine*, Warshawski monitors a court case against Dieter Monkfish and translates the main points for the reader:

I could not hear what passed between Dick [the defense lawyer] and the judge, or the judge, the policeman, and Monkfish, but the upshot was Monkfish was released on his own recognizance, given a court date in October, and enjoined from disturbing the peace. If he complied, all charges would be dropped. (114)

Warshawski watches the formal display of justice and translates the proceedings into manageable information that can be directly applied to her purpose of solving a possible malpractice case. While Warshawski shares this insider knowledge with the reader, she often does not reveal to the police, or other agencies of public authority, how much she understands. Warshawski holds more social authority in her role as detective than Herbst's Mrs. Winter does as a mother. Both characters realize that knowing the code is only part of the power struggle. Warshawski has power outside of the home, in the immediate business world of crime and justice. Mrs. Winter's power is limited to her family and her ability to oversee her children. These women know that the codes they have deciphered are designed to safeguard access to and dissemination of knowledge.

Michel Foucault explains that discourse and power have a dynamic and often overwhelming relationship. For Foucault, discourse and power are deeply intertwined (*Power* 131-132). While exclusion and repression play a part in this analysis, Foucault does see

repression as a part of social power relationships. Foucault theorizes that power goes beyond repression and instead produces “form of knowledge” (*Power* 119). The sharing of knowledge is another primary power function of linguistic code. The construction of knowledge or truth invokes social power structures, membership, and displays of knowledge that can certainly create understanding, as Foucault suggests (*Power* 119). As Lois McNay explores in *Foucault and Feminism*, Foucault did not take gender roles into adequate consideration (9-10). When the gender differences are introduced, power constraints and limitations become more apparent. McNay points out that women have different uses for power than men (169). By selecting how much of their knowledge to reveal to the authorities, Warshawski and Mrs. Winter guard their power. They can then use their “hidden” knowledge for their own ends, which may run counter to the demands of the police and the lodge. Instead, they choose to use their power to support their own belief systems, political and familial.

Paretsky’s Warshawski has the traditional hard-boiled detective’s quasi-antagonistic relationship with the police, which is further complicated by her gender. Warshawski’s interaction with police officials is marked by the hostile use of coded terminology to define roles and gain access to information. While Warshawski does achieve some success in gaining information from the police and support for her role as detective, her power as a feminist hard-boiled detective is under attack from the police, who attempt to reduce her to the less powerful and privileged roles of victim or grieving woman. Officer Bobby Mallory, an old friend of Warshawski’s father from his days as a police officer, often tries to keep the inquisitive Warshawski out of “police business.” He does this in two different ways. First, he tries to remove Warshawski from the role of detective and place her in a less-powerful position of observer or associate of the victim. Second, he refuses to share information with her. In

Deadlock, he tries to keep information from Warshawski concerning the death of her ex-hockey player cousin Boom-Boom Warshawski, by associating her with the role of grieving family victim: “He looked at me sternly. ‘Do you really need to know that [the exact manner of Boom-Boom’s death], Vicki? I know you think you’re tough, but you’ll be happier remembering Boom-Boom the way he was on ice” (Paretsky, *Deadlock* 4). Mallory’s use of “Vicki” is a signal to Warshawski that he sees her more as the daughter of an old friend than as a professional on the case. This unprofessional categorization is underscored by his refusal to share exact details and by his questioning of her “toughness.” As Butler explains in *Gender Trouble*, part of the establishment of gender roles comes through ritualized, contextual interactions, both physical and verbal (331). Through his use of her first name, Mallory is refusing Warshawski access to the ritualized interaction of police officer and detective. His verbal intercourse forces Warshawski into the role of grieving woman. Warshawski’s investigation into Boom-Boom’s life before he was killed places her back into the role of detective. Naming and knowledge define Warshawski’s relationship with the police, community, and her family. Warshawski struggles to have her authority as a feminist detective recognized and, to some extent, validated by the police through her insistent use of her last name and her precise use of terminology.

Because of Warshawski’s profession, she has more success with using code in business areas outside the home than her proletarian foremothers. Similarly, Josephine Herbst shows the limit of a woman’s power outside of her home in *Nothing is Sacred*. Herbst’s Mrs. Winter attends a lodge meeting called to decide the fate of her embezzling son-in-law, Harry, whom she has saved from arrest by mortgaging her home. As the meeting progresses, Mrs. Winter is largely ignored. The all male lodge board decides to spare Harry the jail sentence on the condition that Mrs. Winter’s family repays the lodge members the money Harry stole (30). The

counsel then decides in what order individuals must be repaid: “The lodge members were all for having the outstanding debts to the merchants of the town, most of whom were brothers, paid up first before the payments on the debt to Mrs. Winter should begin” (69). Mrs. Winter does openly protest, but she knows from the terms used that her low priority means she will likely not be repaid at all (69-70). Her argument is based on her husband’s advanced age and inability to provide for her as he did when he was younger. While the lodge’s response seems sympathetic, she understands it is mostly for appearance. The sympathy is a hollow code, which does not bind the lodge members to action on her behalf. Harry does convince the men to reimburse her for a small portion of her loss, but it is a token gesture. In both cases, Warshawski and Mrs. Winter understand more than they indicate to others. They realize that the roles dictated by the masculine authority figures of Bobby Mallory and the lodge council do not leave room for direct action by Warshawski and Mrs. Winter. These strong women characters do not allow this verbal slighting to keep them from acting and bringing about the outcomes they desire. Warshawski reestablishes her role as a detective investigating her cousin’s death through her continued questioning of the people associated with Boom-Boom. Mrs. Winter keeps her role as matriarch of the family by attempting to control how her son-in-law spends his money. Both Mrs. Winter and Warshawski use code and selective information dissemination to try to establish the order they prefer instead of what is required by male-centered governing organizations.

Grafton’s Millhone uses cop talk to decode as well. In *B Is For Burglar*, Millhone often decodes numerical phrases in police dialogues: “Miss Millhone, this is Patrolman Benedict of the Santa Teresa Police Department. We’ve been called on a 594 at 2097 Via Madrina, apartment 1 and a Mrs. Tillie Ahlberg is asking for you . . . I [Millhone] raised up on one elbow . . . ‘594?’ . . . ‘Malicious mischief?’” (322). Millhone’s quick decoding of 594 establishes her

familiarity with police procedure gained from her background as a police officer and her experience as a detective. The ability to understand the codes affords her some respect among police officers. It allows her to construct her role of detective as a competent professional who is familiar with the terminology.

Millhone's knowledge of police procedure and the power associated with the codes allows her to manipulate police officers. Her relationship with higher-ranked police officials is, like Paretsky's Warshawski, hostile. On the surface, this interaction may appear traditional and in keeping with Millhone's hard-boiled predecessors, but she has other obstacles to overcome. Millhone was once a police officer and left the ranks of the police department to become a detective. She understands how the authority structure works, but has chosen to work counter to it for her own ends. Her continued use of the knowledge is a kind of treason. Millhone has first-hand experience with the power, codes, and structure of the police department, yet she voluntarily chose to leave behind the privilege of the position because it was not meeting her personal goal to make a difference (Grafton, *B* 285). Now, Millhone uses the knowledge she gained as a police officer to further her own agendas and those of her clients, not the agenda of the police department. She knows when the police are tying up evidence or being less than forthcoming with necessary information. Her experience allows her to predict how long it will take the police to gather their information and react. This expertise enables her to manipulate police officers and the system. Millhone's manipulations are not always to the benefit of the police department. Often, she works against them for her professional and personal goals. Millhone's counter-intelligence game can be seen as a betrayal of the training and trust the authorities placed in her.

This strategy of infiltrating and undermining is one whose roots can easily be traced back to women proletariat writers such as Josephine Herbst and *Rope of Gold*. In this work, Victoria sees the working of large corporations as well as the proletarian party. She uses her understanding of political systems and the power of the press to gain access to Cuban workers and publicize their stories when she travels to Cuba. Victoria immediately understands the political and personal plights of the workers and uses this understanding to create a sympathetic news article for publication in the United States. Women with an understanding of larger systems, whether they are factory systems or social/political organizations, who use that information to maneuver the organizations into granting them what they desire are common characters in women's proletarian literature of the 1930s. Millhone, like Victoria, uses official structures to legitimize her own claims to authority, reveal injustice, and take steps to correct that injustice.

Grafton's Millhone also undermines the police by using police methods to lie to them. She knows what the limits are and how to get around those limits with words. Although she lacks Warshawski's formal legal background, she does know how to interpret the law to give herself some leeway. In *C Is For Corpse*, Millhone's client is killed in what appears to be an auto accident. Millhone decides to use a California manslaughter law to keep investigating the case: 'a killing is murder or manslaughter if the party dies within three years and a day after the stroke is received or the cause of death is administered' (Grafton, *C* 627). Through her interpretation of this law, even though her client was killed, she still has the right in her client's name, to track down the other individuals involved in the accident, and keep a potential murderer from going free. Millhone maintains her professional attachment to the case while satisfying her sense of moral right and wrong. Millhone's ability to construct the law in such a way as to

authorize her claim to the case shows her mastery over the legal codes, granting her authority in professional criminal investigation circles.

Millhone's morality works on a sliding scale. Her use of the code includes misrepresenting it when she feels she needs to do so. Lieutenant Con Dolan threatens to arrest and question Millhone after he correctly guesses that she was present at the crime scene of a Los Vegas murder. To protect her right to keep investigating the case without police interference, Millhone lies and goes on the offensive:

I could feel my temper flare. 'You want to read me my rights, Lieutenant Dolan? You want to hand me a certification of notification of my Constitutional rights? Because I'll read it and sign it if you like. And then I'll call my attorney, and when he gets down here, we can chat. How is that?' (Grafton, *B* 198)

Millhone is aware that Dolan has legitimate grounds for complaint with her presence at the murder scene and that her presence violates an earlier agreement they had concerning the case. If Millhone gets in the way, Dolan will stop sharing information with her. Millhone quickly goes on the offensive, padding her lie with legal phrases, invoking an attorney, the Miranda Act, and offering to sign legal documents. Dolan could easily allow her to do all of this and then verify her alibi as false. Millhone's insistence on following regulations, to document her actions, gives her threat an air of authority and truth. She obviously understands the steps she must take and their consequences. Her offer to legally commit herself causes Dolan to doubt that she is lying. Here, Millhone is blatantly manipulating the system through a threatening use of language.

Marcia Muller's Sharon McCone interacts more with attorneys than with the police. She is adept at taking apart legal phrases and deciphering the terminology-filled world of police reports and contracts that often come up in her cases. The ability to decipher the terms and codes

of the establishment comes from her connection to the All Souls Legal Cooperative and her roots in the rebellious 1960s political ideals. The connection to 1960s political activism overtly links McCone, and Muller's writing strategies, to earlier proletarian women writers like Herbst and Brody. Muller, Herbst, and Brody deal with crucial issues such as what a woman's role is (and should be) in a political movement, an issue that deeply worried women proletariat writers (Foley 217-220). Muller takes this concern to its obvious conclusion and has her character, McCone, ponder the questions of what it means to "sell out" political beliefs in contemporary society as compared to her views in the 1960s. McCone wonders if her political goals are outdated in a world of growing technological advancements, globalization, anti-immigration movements, and political feminist backlash. In effect, Muller is continuing the political struggles of feminists that began in the works of Herbst and Brody.

Often themes in Muller's work are mirrored in smaller plot points as well as in the main plot. In *There is Nothing to be Afraid Of*, McCone has an ongoing territorial battle with Gilbert Thayer, a new lawyer at All Souls. Thayer repeatedly pushes his partners at All Souls to become more current and corporate. McCone holds tightly to the grassroots philosophy that helped create the coop. The two battle over everything from the future direction of the coop to parking space: "According to the note you left me yesterday, the driveway is for the convenience of the attorneys—but it's really for the residents. I believe it's written into the house rules" (94). McCone's ability to read legal text often allows her to block Thayer's power pushes. The conflict between these two characters is a scaled down version of the individual versus large corporate America. McCone's use of language allows her temporarily to outmaneuver the corporations and to establish herself as a powerful professional detective.

2.2 Women of the Orders

The women characters in hard-boiled detective fiction, both the detectives and their female acquaintances, are created by the authors to fit the women's social expectations of providing support for each other. They are empathetic to the struggles each faces and take steps to accommodate each other as far as they can without irrevocably compromising their own causes or roles in society. This mutual support is common in the relationships between women in the 1930s proletarian novels by women. In *Nothing is Sacred*, Herbst focuses on the relationship between Mrs. Winter and her daughters. They may compete and not reveal all the intimate details of their lives with each other, but when circumstances become dire, they draw together and present a united front. They cooperate to create a safe space where Mrs. Winter can share her concerns about the illegal exploits of Harry with her daughter Hazel. In *Nobody Starves* by Brody, the relationship between the women in Molly's biological family and factory girls creates the support network that Molly needs to survive and make a life for her family. The letters between Molly and her family and the conversations between Molly and her friends create safe venues of information sharing and decoding that allow them to discuss ideas and possible avenues of action. Molly's ability to use code and share information with her friends allows her to provide for herself. Her husband, Bill, is unable to control Molly and the power she gains by sharing information. In an attempt to contain her, he kills her. Characters such as Mrs. Winter, Bill, and Molly show how Herbst and Brody were well aware of the power that women could obtain through the sharing of information outside of mainstream society's regulating systems. This is a powerful tool feminist hard-boiled detective writers continue to use on political and personal fronts to create strong bonds and boundaries for their characters.

The abovementioned conflicts Warshawski, Millhone, and McCone engaged in were all with masculine authority figures. Since detective fiction strives to reflect current reality on some level, it is not surprising to find these women detectives interacting with women police officers and other women in positions of authority. The feminist hard-boiled detectives use language to show that they treat women professionally. Overall, the feminist hard-boiled detectives do not tend to “toughen” their voices with harsh metaphors or comparisons when dealing with other women characters in professional law enforcement capacities. Warshawski, Millhone, and McCone strive to create a professional and sympathetic sisterhood. This sisterhood does not preclude conflict between women, but the conflict does not necessarily stem from the threat to the feminist hard-boiled detective of being removed from the case by large authority structures. The treatment of women professionals as equals to their male counterparts is a decisive change from the earlier tough guy detectives like Hammett, Chandler, and Cain because the women in their novels held more traditional social roles of that time. In the early works of masculine hard-boiled detective fiction, women were wives or secretaries, instead of police officers and heads of charity organizations. There is a bond of understanding created between female characters when they work to establish authority in a field previously conceptualized as masculine. This bond is strong, but it is not without disagreements.

Warshawski seems to interact well with other professional women, including police officers. *Blood Shot* opens with Warshawski participating in a charity basketball game with old high school classmates, including Nancy Cleghorn and Caroline Djiak, leaders of the South Chicago Reawakening Project (SCRAP). These are women who share Warshawski’s political belief systems and ambitions to help her community. Their political beliefs and drive to change the living conditions of their world create a ready-made sisterhood. Warshawski’s best friend,

Lotty, is a doctor at a free clinic. The detective's admiration and respect for Lotty and her accomplishments are evident as she seeks Lotty's approval for her actions. In *Bitter Medicine*, Warshawski turns to Lotty for permission to investigate Dr. Tregiere in a possible malpractice suit: "She [Lotty] fished in her handbag for a card for him, [Dr. Tregiere] then put a reassuring hand on my shoulder. 'You'll be okay, Vic. You're fundamentally sound. Trust yourself'" (78). Many of the charity organizations Warshawski supports are directed by prominent women in the community. Overall, Warshawski's friendship with Lotty creates "safe areas" where they can discuss personal, political, and professional concerns, without provoking scrutiny from mainstream society. These "safe areas" are linguistic creations, where the codes can be discussed and created without fear of reprisal from the police, medical institutions, or the church. Even the safest of linguistic spaces cannot keep Warshawski from running into conflict with women in positions of authority and power when she threatens the prosperity of organizations they lead.

Part of the threat Warshawski presents, in this case, stems from her role as detective. While she is a woman who champions women's causes, both personal and political, she is a detective, a function that has in the past maintained the order of a masculine, mainstream society. Warshawski, like Millhone and McCone, is a figure that can either protect a person or political group against mainstream society or uphold the edicts of mainstream society. While Warshawski does support the South Chicago Reawakening Project (SCRAP) by participating in the charity basketball game and donating money, her investigation in *Blood Shot* causes some political backlash against the organization. When Caroline confronts Warshawski about the investigation, which creates a threat to Caroline's home life and work, her interaction with Warshawski is on a business level rather than as a favor to a friend. Caroline tells Warshawski,

“Vic, I hired you. I can fire you” (92). Caroline does not try to persuade Warshawski to stop investigating based on demands of friendship; rather, she turns to the powerful relationship created by the contract between client and detective. The linguistic safe space that allowed for conflicting thoughts and free voicing of opinion is replaced with a strong business rhetoric that demands Warshawski fall into line with the client’s good will. Caroline utilizes a professional social code to avoid the fluid code of friendship and equality that could allow Warshawski to protest. Using this sudden social linguistic shift, Caroline attempts to remove Warshawski from power through the social expectation that the client has the power in the business relationship.

While Warshawski faces code barriers with her clients, it is Millhone who interacts most effectively with other female professionals. Her relationship with women police officers is one of empathy. Millhone’s past experience as a police officer gives her an understanding of the struggle that women face when trying to gain respect in a traditionally masculine dominated field. Her conflicts with women in authority spring more from socioeconomic concerns rather than from her role as detective. When questioning Nola Frakes, a suspect in Millhone’s murder case and the wife of a prominent doctor, Millhone underscores the socioeconomic difference with description: “I sat down in one of the chrome-and-leather chairs, hoping I wouldn’t get lodged in the straps. She [Nola] sat down on the edge of a white linen love seat, resting one hand gracefully on the surface of the glass coffee table in an attitude that suggested serenity, except she was leaving little pads of perspiration at her fingertips” (Grafton, *C* 710). Millhone registers her dislike of Nola and the class she represents through her description of her own awkwardness sitting in the expensive furniture. Her focus on Nola’s easy posture shows that Nola is comfortable with the lush surroundings and knows how to present the image of gracious, economically comfortable living. Millhone’s emphasis on the sweat at Nola’s fingertips is a way

for Millhone to make Nola more human, more like her. Nola may live in luxury, but she sweats just like Millhone and every other person on the planet, regardless of their income. Millhone's language allows her to disagree with Nola and affirm her own identity and purpose.

Muller's McCone establishes boundaries between the personal and the professional in her verbal dealings with professional women, keeping McCone's personal and professional power intact. In *A Wild and Lonely Place*, her old friend, agent Adah Joslyn, finds herself under an extreme pressure to catch a bomber or lose her job. McCone is consulting on the case. Joslyn grows increasingly frustrated with McCone's lack of cooperation with the task force. While McCone is withholding information in fear of alerting the bomber, her lack of cooperation does exacerbate an already tense situation. In the end, Joslyn is removed from the task force over a disagreement with the taskforce leader. Although the bomber is stopped in the end, Joslyn is forced to review her priorities and determine which is more important, providing the information her department requires or stopping a terrorist. At first the conflict between McCone and Joslyn would seem to be about a lack of information sharing. Like Warshawski's Officer Mallory, Joslyn attempts to use a forced rhetoric of sisterhood to make the detective subordinate to a greater purpose. Joslyn questions McCone's willingness to share information: "Can't or won't" and goes on to remind McCone that she is only associated with the taskforce whereas Joslyn is a major power figure (37). Joslyn's words are designed to limit McCone's power and place her in a position where Joslyn can control how McCone should act.

Relationship and power structures rise and fall through the use of language in women's 1930s proletarian writing and contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective fiction. Writers of these works use language to establish the professional credibility of characters, as well as to define personal relationships. Herbst and Brody are just as aware as Paretsky, Grafton, and

Muller that professional dialogues have long been seen as masculine and unapproachable by women. These writers understand that the women's sphere can be injected into traditionally masculine domains to create a new order.

2.3 Vital Questions: Witness and Suspect

In *B Is For Burglar*, Grafton's Millhone approaches Julia about helping her find some information on a missing woman. Julia then tells Millhone, "I'm going to start reading Mickey Spillane just to keep in shape. I don't know a lot of rude words, you know" (395). Julia is bringing up the stereotype that detectives are often strong men with crude vocabularies, a far cry from her status as an elderly retired lady who gets excited by her weekly game of bridge. This comparison demonstrates how different the feminist hard-boiled detective is from the masculine detective who set the expectations for the genre. Witnesses, clients, and bystanders have an expectation that detectives are tough talking, and sometimes vulgar, conversationalists. This expectation of lurid detail and blunt fact comes from the use of the tough guy voice and a dependency upon an element of realism found in the hard-boiled detective genre, and in the 1930s proletarian literature.

Proletarian writers such as Herbst, Brody and Albert Halper used the objective connotation of the tough voice to reveal the wretched conditions of the factory workers and the poor they saw as being exploited by corporations. In their case the unvarnished language creates a vivid picture of the struggles filling the lives of factory workers and oppressed individuals all across America. The proletarian genre and masculine hard-boiled detective genre's use of the tough guy voice reflects a harsh reality that is jarring, and depending upon the reader's social class, vulgar.

Hammett, Chandler, and Cain create excellent detectives who provide unvarnished factual accounts of crimes such as murder and robbery; they do not tend to stray into vulgarity for vulgarity's sake. The association of the hard-boiled detective with vulgarity springs from their interactions with individuals of questionable occupations and low social status. Their use of the tough guy voice lends connotations of objectivity and authority to their observations (Madden xx). As David Madden explains, the tough guy voice “. . . can dispense with all language that does not enable him [the hard-boiled detective] to govern the immediate moment” (xviii).

The feminist hard-boiled detective has tapped into the power of the alleged objectivity and vulgarity of the tough guy tone. Instead of focusing on the idea of objectivity, these feminist daughters use the jarring and vulgar aspects of the code to upset suspects. The goal of upsetting suspects is to remove them from their familiar verbal roles and force them to interact with the detective on a verbal level they have not mastered.

The revelation of hidden information, via interrogation or confession, is the core of every mystery. In *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault cites confession as a powerful tool in society (59-60). The individual confesses transgressions to a priest or other social authority figure and is assimilated into the mainstream. Here, Foucault assumes that the transgressor in question has a driving need to be reintroduced into the mainstream. With criminals, and suspected criminals, in hard-boiled detective fiction, that is not always the case. Feminist hard-boiled detectives must prepare themselves to do linguistic battle with suspects to gain the necessary information to solve the mystery.

When the feminist hard-boiled detective denies the suspects their familiar conversational roles, they increase the chance that the suspects will become agitated and inadvertently reveal

information that will aid the detective. Suspects, like the detective, are verbally performing their social roles. They are saying what they think they should say, according to their social class and connection to the crime. Warshawski, Millhone, and McCone realize that while the suspect is allowed to keep creating his or her role with a familiar language pattern, the chances that the suspects will accidentally reveal helpful information are very faint. The detectives employ harsh language, slang, and the occasional vulgarity to disrupt the verbal pattern the suspects are using. The feminist hard-boiled detective forces the suspects to abandon their usual model of identity creation and relate in a new way, causing them to reveal information.

One of Warshawski's most notable linguistic battles with a suspect appears in *Deadlock*. Warshawski questions Boom-Boom's girlfriend, Paige. Warshawski suspects that Paige knows more about the events surrounding Boom-Boom's death than she is revealing. Warshawski has uncovered Paige's affair with Boom-Boom's boss, Mr. Grafalk. Warshawski breaks down Paige's claims of innocence by repeatedly asking her "How long have you been Grafalk's mistress?" and interjecting "Oh, Bullshit" (233-340). When Paige uses her upper-class status as an excuse to avoid answering Warshawski's accusation, by deeming them tacky, classless, and vulgar, Warshawski then explains that her past is too poor to understand Paige's fear of being penniless (341). Warshawski utilizes blunt terminology, mild swearing, and her blue-collar past to refuse Paige access to well-mannered denials of involvement. Paige's hesitation and upper-class conversational tactics to avoid discussing personal matters when her lover has just died are useless against Warshawski's impolite conversation and demands that Paige account for events. Warshawski's techniques draw Paige out of her well-bred conversational mode, causing Paige to provide the information Warshawski was looking for concerning Boom-Boom's final days. Warshawski is drawing upon the lower-class associations of the detective to force Paige into a

field of conversation she has little experience in dealing with. Warshawski is constructing herself as a hard-boiled detective and, in doing so, is constructing Paige as a criminal.

Vulgar language is a tool Grafton's Millhone uses as well. She uses expletives and bodily references to show her tough side and manipulate confessions. When questioning society matron Nola Frakes about her alleged affair with murder victim Bobby Callahan, Millhone resorts to using vulgar slang to startle Frakes out of polite denials:

So the kid had an *affair* with you Nola. That's what. You got your tit in a wringer and the kid was helping you out. The *kid* was murdered because of you, ass eyes. Now, shall we quit bullshitting each other and get down to the business on this or shall I call Lieutenant Dolan down at Homicide and let him have a chat with you? (C 712)

Previously, Nola's denials hinged upon her polite claims that women of her social class did not have affairs with young men of Bobby's age. Millhone's slang and threatening vulgar language push Nola out of her pattern of polite social conversation, in which she could construct herself to be a genteel lady of the upper class, and force her to answer the blunt facts presented to her. Millhone has the linguistic power here. She is constructing Nola's role in this interchange. Millhone's blunt language allows her to construct her role as an authority figure. She uses the code to get what she wants, and she breaks the code to create a tough unpredictability that defies traditional linguistic rituals, removing the suspect from familiar areas where they have linguistic expertise and placing them on new ground where the detective can then be the judge and power figure.

When Muller's McCone gets verbally tough with witnesses and suspects, she does not resort to the linguistic shock efforts of Warshawski and Millhone. She relies on a more traditional presentation of facts. The scenarios McCone uses are powerful motivators for the suspects because of the factual power they wield. Each idea she presents can be verified. In

Wolf in Shadows, McCone convinces kidnapper Ana Navarro to tell where her victim is being kept by showing Navarro the evidence linking her to the crime and how that evidence is inaccurate, showing only Navarro as the perpetrator, not the individuals for whom she works (*Wolf* 320-322). McCone's method does not involve as much emotional conflict as Warshawski and Millhone's methods, as it focuses heavily on McCone's ability to present factual scenarios that can be verified.

2.4 In the Tradition: Reader as Witness

Feminist hard-boiled detectives must successfully use language to convince the reader that they are competent in the role of detective. Like the police officers, with whom hard-boiled detectives of the masculine and feminine persuasion deal, the reader expects the hard-boiled detective to use investigative technology. In effect the reader is the ultimate witness to the feminist hard-boiled detective's competency, validity, and power. The realism comes, in part, from the plausibility of the crimes, the connection of the events in the works to current social and political realities, and the credibility of the feminist hard-boiled detective's actions in solving the case. Because the tough guy voice in hard-boiled detective fiction is first person, the detective must also provide details of the work that add an aura of authenticity and realism to the text that is validated by the reader.

Paretsky's Warshawski creates this credibility by referring to classic detectives such as Sam Spade and Sherlock Holmes, and her to contemporary sisters like Grafton's Millhone. These allusions are generally associated with her 'failure' at some task. With these meta-references, Paretsky creates an awareness of the genre tradition she is participating in and the expectations of the reader. On the one hand, the reader has specific expectations from the hard-boiled genre established in the works of Hammett, Chandler, and Cain. The reader expects the

detectives to uncover the hidden discourse behind the mystery, reestablish a social order to the text, and neatly present the information to the authorities. Paretsky's reference to Marlowe's success compared to Warshawski's setbacks underscores the difference in the two worlds the detectives inhabit, socially and politically. Chandler's Marlowe does not have to prove continually his worthiness to hold the position of detective. His right to question authority figures and criminals is not questioned. In Warshawski's world, every conversation is a struggle to establish her role and explore the world around her. Paretsky's references make the reader, and Warshawski, question how well she fills her literary predecessor's shoes.

Paretsky tends to have Warshawski sing popular songs, show tunes, and make reference to folk stories like B'rer Rabbit. This wide array of allusions shows Warshawski's extensive education. The song and folk story references are a code Warshawski shares directly with the reader. In *Deadlock*, when Warshawski begins to sing, "Things go better with Coca-Cola," the reader understands that the song represents the connection between the sabotage of the ship *Lucella* and shipping mogul Niels Grafalk's financial problems she has recently uncovered (224). While other characters not privy to Warshawski's thought processes, case knowledge, or reasoning skills may find her singing out of place, the reader understands the song to be a marker of newfound understanding. Warshawski is singing a code to the reader and creating an exclusive connection between herself and the reader that marks both feminist hard-boiled detective and audience as privileged with select information.

Grafton's Millhone takes a more business-like approach in establishing her credibility with the reader. Each of Grafton's novels opens with a police report, outlining her identity and verifying that the following events are factual. Grafton's novels end with an epilogue where Millhone accounts for any loose ends and closes with "respectfully submitted" and then her

name. This documentation adds an air of business-like legality to the works. Reinforcing this impression is Millhone's constant references to the date, time, and events taking place, giving the text a documentary feel. Millhone's focus on completing paperwork, logging her hours, submitting her bills, and working on more than one case at a time reinforces the paperwork intensive aspects of being a detective. The focus on business and filing add realistic details to the text, which make Millhone's claim to be a professional detective more realistic for the reader. The process Millhone details becomes the code shared between reader and feminist hard-boiled detective. Linguistically, the tough-guy first person narration is being used by Grafton's Millhone to mark boundaries of power and knowledge with the reader.

Muller's McCone is extremely concerned with the liberal motivations behind her business drive and the survival of that political freethinking spirit in an increasingly corporate society. A 1960s political activist, McCone is often forced to measure her radical rules against the changing political structure of the United States and within the changing business world. Would staying with All Souls as it grows more corporate in nature be selling out? Is it wrong to want to be comfortable financially? How should she plan for her retirement? McCone compares her past with the present in a symbolic fashion. She will meditate on the changed representation of an event such as a meeting at the All Souls Cooperative: "But those were only surface changes [parking lot changes for the All Souls Cooperative]. Others went much deeper, and the fact that I was currently sweating over attending a meeting of the partners told me just how deep. The partners: my friends" (Muller, *Wolf* 24). McCone shows through these comparisons how the codes have changed through the years. The meetings were times of gathering and discussing how to work against the establishment for the betterment of the individual client. Now, instead of fighting the establishment, the partners and the meetings have become markers of the

establishment. *All Souls* is less rebellious and more mainstream in its endeavors. McCone meditates on the shifting meaning of codes, the instability of the linguistic systems society constructs to identify roles and safeguard access to knowledge. The unresolved questions of identity and roles connected to her use of codes bothers McCone. If the sign has a new signifier, what is she saying? When did her message change and what is that message now? McCone's quandary shows the reader the evolution of language and underscores the idea that codes can change or be changed, allowing previously denied individuals access to authoritative roles, information, and power.

2.5 Language Mastery and Genre Mastery

While the masculine hard-boiled detective predecessors, Hammett, Chandler, and Cain,--and society--mark off boundaries, roles, and power with linguistic fences, feminist hard-boiled detective writers employ tools of boundary crossing gleaned from their proletarian ancestors, Herbst, Brody, and Halper, that help them usurp and subvert linguistic labor economies and turn the verbal power to their own ends. The traditional hard-boiled detective writers did need to show mastery of the code, but did not need to code switch or subvert the order as Proletarian writers. So the feminist hard-boiled detective authors take the mastery position of the father and subvert it to her own needs through strategies found in the proletarian literature.

Through this struggle Paretsky's Warshawski, Grafton's Millhone, and Muller's McCone not only prove their verbal mastery of jargon and manipulate suspects into confessing, but they create credibility as detectives and authority figures with the reader. The linguistic codes reflect and harbor what Paretsky, Grafton, and Muller choose to include and ignore in awareness of the hard-boiled genre they are participating in, and also harken back to the techniques used by female proletarian novelists in the politically charged proletarian genre of the 1930s.

Chapter Three: Call a Spade a Spade: Physical Performance in Feminist Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction

Appearances are a glimpse of the unseen.

Anaxagoras, 462 B.C.

“Everybody bats you over the head and chokes you and smacks your jaw and fills you with morphine, but you just keep right on hitting between tackle and end until they are all worn out. What makes you so wonderful?” Anne Riordan asks Philip Marlowe at the end of *Farewell, My Lovely* (Chandler 246). While Marlowe does not respond to her query, the answer is apparent; it is part of his job and Chandler’s genre. Chandler’s Marlowe is merely participating in the physical demands that lie at the core of the hard-boiled detective fiction genre. Interacting with criminals and traversing recent crime scenes place hard-boiled detectives in areas where the threat of physical violence is almost palpable for the reader. Even in the Information Age, it is physicality that is seen as the hallmark of and requirement for the hard-boiled genre. Life on the street is more than an intellectual exercise to be precisely analyzed by a Sherlock Holmes type of detective. Holmes’s sophisticated thought, while logically fascinating, is removed from the emotional harshness of violence. Being hard-boiled requires physical intimacy with violence, deception, and all the ugly qualities that drive individuals to commit crimes.

The violence and the physical demands of the hard-boiled genre are tied to the genre’s reliance on realism in the text. This same type of reliance on realism and connection to violence is found in proletarian literature as well. Barbara Foley points out that during the early 1920s and 1930s, the proletarian focus on realism had practical as well as stylistic motivations: “At times this preference for a straightforward and easily communicated realism entailed an explicit repudiation of literary experimentalism in all forms” (55). Foley is quick to acknowledge Mike Gold’s support of realism as a new kind of literary movement (250). For proletarian writers, the

immediate connection to the reader was essential for the genre's survival. Proletarians had to demonstrate that they understood the obstacles facing the working class for whom they claimed to speak politically. Too much literary experimentation would create a gap between the writers, who saw themselves as crafting the literature and philosophy of the movement, and the workers, who were living the dramas. While the literary merits of proletarian novels such as Mary Heaton Vorse's *Strike!* may be open to debate, their subject--the Gastonia strike in North Carolina--made it an immediate and moving political commentary. On the hard-boiled detective fiction side, Raymond Chandler's *Farewell, My Lovely* is a riveting mystery, as well as an examination of the darker side of human nature. The art of realism allowed proletarian writers, as well as hard-boiled writers, to connect to the existence of the reader and make immediate political and social commentary.

The physical demands on the detectives of the hard-boiled genre embody the potential political power of realism. This realism is a tool that feminist hard-boiled detective writers seek to utilize. Contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective fiction writers find themselves creating protagonists in a time just as ripe with the threat of physical violence as the time their literary forefathers wrote about in grand detail. Paretsky, Grafton, and Muller incorporate in their writing the use of physical threats and demands similar to those found in classical masculine hard-boiled works. But these feminist writers use violence with the same keen sense of political protest and social awareness as 1930s women proletarian writers. The feminist hard-boiled detective must face questions of competency and gender roles as well as the demands of physicality of the hard-boiled genre. Feminist hard-boiled detectives meet the physical demands of the job, present themselves in a manner that shows mastery of the trade, and deal with the

negative stereotypes attached to being the weaker sex in a criminal world, where weakness is associated with failure and death.

3.1 Creating the Tough Guy

Detectives come in two types: intellectual and hard-boiled. With the strong blue-collar association of the hard-boiled detective comes the misconception that intelligence is a trait that the physically adept hard-boiled detective lacks. The origin of this myth goes back at least as far as Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*, where Philip Marlowe describes himself to General Sternwood: "There's very little to tell. I'm thirty-three years old, went to college once and can still speak English if there's any demand for it. There isn't much in my trade" (Chandler 10). The hard-boiled detective relies on this misconception of ignorance fostered by appearance to outsmart criminals and solve cases. Philip Marlowe may be a strong man with an impressive physique, but his ability to figure out the solutions to mysteries goes beyond simple luck and natural cunning, to reveal the aptly applied education of a thinking man. The hard-boiled detective relies on both stereotyping and successful manipulation of appearance as a tool.

The hard-boiled detective genre makes the physicality of the detective primary to the point that it borders on the stereotypical. The image of the hard-boiled detective roaming from fight to fight, instead of logically putting together clues, coalesces in a quintessential "tough guy" who exists on a steady diet of bar fights and beatings, without any higher reflection or social contribution. The stereotype threatens the effectiveness of all hard-boiled detectives, and the hard-boiled genre in general, by diminishing the political effectiveness and immediacy of the genre, leaving in its place a shallowness in which the hard-boiled detective mechanically repeats patterns with little if any redemptive value. Stereotypes are effectively used in the hard-boiled and proletarian genres by the authors, and in turn by the protagonists. Writers such as Chandler,

Brody, Herbst, Paretsky, Grafton, and Muller are aware of the power of stereotypical images and what one can gain from occasionally using them. Stereotypes allow for easy categorization, an idea best explained by Anthony Coxon and Charles L. Jones in their study, *The Images of Occupational Prestige*. They see stereotyping as "... being one of the cognitive processes that go to make up the 'implicit theories' that people hold about the external world" (Coxon and Jones 3). They then deal with "identification rules" that use the reasoning that if people look as if they are fulfilling a specific role or job, then they can be expected to have specific traits. This quick categorization allows the determination of "friend or foe" to be decided quickly (Coxon and Jones 3). The ability to uphold the expectations of appearance or present an incongruous appearance can grant power or powerlessness to the protagonist.

3.2 Gender Myths and Genre Demands

Whether through the wait of surveillance or the final confrontation between criminal and detective, the physical demands of the hard-boiled detective's role create an awareness of the body, for the reader, that brings gender myths to the surface of the text. For the feminist hard-boiled protagonists, appropriate body presentation and social role performance are crucial parts of being recognized by others as successfully fulfilling the role of hard-boiled detective. Paretsky's Warshawski, Grafton's Millhone, and Muller's McCone must present themselves in a manner appropriate to the hard-boiled detective's role, to the expectations of other characters they encounter, and to the expectations of the reader. The physical expectations raise several key questions concerning female physical competency in fulfilling the role, a woman's ability to create the body image needed to be seen as a detective, and issues of body ownership.

In traditional masculine hard-boiled detective fiction, police procedural works, and conventional spy thrillers, the masculine detective/protagonist is presented as being able to

successfully meet any physical demands the job may require. Indeed, the image of Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe--rumpled, broad-shouldered, and slightly battered--is burned into America's social collective memory from Humphrey Bogart's film portrayals. But Chandler's works do not describe Marlowe as Bogart-esque. The reader is left with the impression that Marlowe is a large man capable of upholding his side in a physical confrontation. In *Farewell, My Lovely*, Marlowe describes himself as being "Six feet of iron man. One hundred ninety pounds ... Hard muscles with no glass jaw ... You've been sapped down twice, had your throat choked and been beaten half silly on the jaw with a gun barrel. You've been shot full of hop and kept under it until you're as crazy as two waltzing mice. And what does all that amount to? Routine" (Chandler 143). Chandler's focus on Marlowe's hardness and size works to reassure the reader that when in physical confrontations or chasing down suspects, Marlowe is fit enough, or basically "man enough," to complete the job. Marlowe's listing of the abuse he has suffered in the course of investigations underscores the toughness of the character and of the occupation. Through his quick thought and bruised body comes the image of the tough guy. These are the bruises the contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective must bear to show that she can successfully fill the hard-boiled role.

The women of Marlowe's time, on the other hand, are presented in his novels as polarized extremes in the masculine tough guy hard-boiled detective novel. They do not pave an easy path for feminist hard-boiled detectives; on the contrary, these foremothers are presented as either nonsexual or hypersexual. These women are represented by the hardworking secretaries, the decrepit hard-worn lower-class drudges who populate lower class social neighborhoods where criminals dwell, and the sultry femmes fatales of noir genre fame. Hammett gives excellent examples of girl next door and temptress in his classic work *The Maltese Falcon*.

Hammett's Effie Perrin is Sam Spade's "office wife." Spade sees her as "... a lanky sunburned girl whose tan dress of thin woolen stuff clung to her with an effect of dampness. Her eyes were brown and playful in a shiny boyish face" (Hammett 1). While Perrin does wear a "clinging dress," Spade mentions her garb to stress Perrin's angular frame and androgyny, which is reiterated in her comfortable, but not really sexually charged, relationship with Spade. She is safe for him, firmly ensconced in the caregiver role, with little power and input into Spade's life and deductions, except in her occasional role of sounding board, when Spade needs an extra ear. Chandler's Mrs. Jesse Florin from *Farewell, My Lovely*, falls into the lower-class woman category. When examining women as ornaments, the hard-worn worker may seem to be out of place. Marlowe describes Florin: "She had weedy hair of that vague color which is neither brown nor blonde, that hasn't enough life in it to be ginger, and isn't clean enough to be gray. Her body was thick in a shapeless outing flannel bathrobe many moons past color and design" (12). Like Effie Perrin, Jesse Florin is nonsexual and has little power. In fact, Florin's power comes from her almost grotesque lack of sexuality and basic cleanliness. Perrin and Florin are useful and sought after only when they fulfill the role the masculine hard-boiled detective requires them to play. The objectification of Perrin and Florin allows the masculine protagonists to control them and their influence upon the case.

In contrast to Perrin and Florin is Brigid O'Shaughnessy, femme fatale and sexual creature of Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*. Hammett describes her as "... tall and pliantly slender, without angularity anywhere. Her body was erect and high-breasted, her legs long, her hands and feet narrow. She wore two shades of blue that had been selected because of her eyes. The hair curling from under her blue hat was darkly red, her full lips more brightly red. White teeth glistened in the crescent her timid smile made" (2). O'Shaughnessy is sultry, sexual, and

sensual. It is her sexuality that puts her in her current dire straits. In the black and white world of the masculine hard-boiled detective, femme fatale O'Shaughnessy is defined by her sexuality and its association with criminal behavior. Her sexuality gives her a limited power over Spade, because she can make him respond to her. She has constructed her appearance to be sensual and provocative. O'Shaughnessy is not the chaste "nice girl" of society who meekly follows the rules and roles created for her by others. Perrin's role is created by Spade. She is the "office wife," with her sexuality firmly subdued, presenting no distractions to Spade. O'Shaughnessy's power, while visceral for Spade, is ultimately weaker than his ability to determine the truth. Her feminine power is potentially destructive and played against the overarching order of that time's mainstream society, which favored the less troublesome Perrins and Florins of the world.

Second-wave feminism of the 1960s brought a tide of reexamination of women's gender and social conceptions--and misconceptions--attached to the female body for society in general, and women in particular. When the woman detective began gaining attention in the genre, a sex kitten with gun became the new icon. This expectation is embodied by characters such as G. G. Fickling's Honey West from *This Girl for Hire* (1957), who dresses in a provocative manner and seems more concerned with lovers than law. The femme fatale suddenly becomes the oversexed law bunny. While she appears to be a powerful feminine figure succeeding in a function traditionally carried out by men, her flashy sexuality works as a cover to keep the question of her competency relegated to the bedroom. West is still the object, with her pouting appearance that keeps her from being taken seriously and relegates her power to an aesthetic category. She then becomes a fantasy, whose function is to please rather than protect. With characters like O'Shaughnessy, Perrin, Florin, and West populating the detective genre, modern feminist hard-boiled detectives did not have a readily available role model to ease the transition from Perrin-

like sidekick to central hard-boiled detective protagonist. Florin, Perrin, and O'Shaughnessy had appearances that worked to either mask their agendas or mark them as tools, existing to enable the masculine detective to efficiently finish the job.

With a lack of empowering female role models in classic masculine hard-boiled detective fiction, the feminist hard-boiled detective writers follow female proletarian authors. Women proletarian writers, such as Herbst and Brody, were aware that the gap between women's capabilities and the roles society granted them had little to do with competency and more to do with physical presentation. The gap between what is considered a feminine appearance and the appearance expectations connected to traditionally masculine professions has long been an issue for women. This gap is an institutional discrimination associated with issues of employment, and consequently is addressed in the women's Proletarian literature of the 1930s. In Brody's *Nobody Starves*, and Molly knows that obtaining a job in the relative working ease of a retail shop is beyond her grasp (7). The upper classes like to be surrounded by women who look good doing their jobs, and Molly knows she is not considered conventionally pretty by the current social standards of attractiveness. This reliance upon vanity to gain social mobility and economic opportunity is a sign of upper-class objectification, which seeks to remove the focus from the issues of labor, equality, and the financial needs of women, and emphasizes the view that society values the beautiful. Therefore, the fiction reinforces those ideas that physical appearance dictates what jobs and roles women could successfully maintain in mainstream society. Evidently, conventionally attractive girls have more options. Pretty girls in "nice" jobs also allowed mainstream society of the time to not take women workers very seriously. Vanity in a woman was thought to have less to do with making a living and more to do with meeting a husband who would then take care of and support his wife. Molly's plight in *Nobody Starves*

demonstrates how appearance can equal a paycheck, while marriage holds only the myth of financial security for the lower economic classes, a situation underlined by Chandler's hapless Mrs. Florin. These proletarian writers understood the power of image in social, political, and workplace settings. Feminist hard-boiled detective writers share this awareness of body presentation and role fulfillment with their proletarian mothers.

In the 1960s through the 1970s, objectification of the female body offered a way for women to make the transition from homebody to public persona. This transition of women from private to public helps enable feminist hard-boiled writers to make a similar transition in literature from office-bound secretary to empowered detective. The feminine homebody was defined by the role of wife and/or mother, both curiously nonsexual and more than a little idealized by society. Leaving the home for the working world, in positions other than nurse, maid, secretary, or waitress, was not an easy path. Even as the American proletarian movement called for workers and artists to go out into society and take a stand, women were finding themselves defined by their ability to have children while the proletarian movement's image of the active leader was masculine. As a result, women proletarian writers of the 1930s created text that eased the boundaries between the masculine political realm and the feminine domestic sphere (Rabinowitz 170).

3.3 Body Presentation

As members of society, we expect specific individuals to dress according to their occupations--a practice dating back to the sumptuary laws of England. Even then, societies were concerned with the idea that an individual could falsely represent social class and/or occupation with a costume. As a society, we expect Wall Street investors to dress in suits and garbage collectors to dress in coveralls. If the investor met his clients in a Hawaiian shirt, his credibility

would decrease because he did not project an image appropriate to his role. The feminist hard-boiled detective faces a stricter challenge. First, her clients generally expect a man to play the role of detective. From the start, her gender and the expectations of feminine dress place the feminist hard-boiled detective at a distinct disadvantage. Second, her clients expect someone dressed in an approachable manner, but closer to the clothes of a blue-collar worker. Clients expect detectives to present an appearance related to a business professional, to establish the commercial aspects of the relationship, and to appear ready to tackle the physical challenges of the job on short notice. The detectives usually wear durable clothes, designed for physical activity and made to last. Even when meeting clients in the office, the detectives generally do not wear dresses, but rather dress clothes. Dresses allow for more informality and stress the detectives' femininity. Dress clothes connote a more formal appearance, emphasizing a vocation rather than a gender. Pants and pantsuits allow the detectives to retain physically unrestricted movement, which communicates vitality; dresses and skirts often hamper one's stride. The same can be said for high-heeled shoes. So the feminist hard-boiled detective's appearance must be physical and vital enough to convince the client that gender is not an issue for the physical aspects of the role. If the feminist hard-boiled detective were to stress her femininity by wearing dresses and other apparel that underscores her feminine gender, the client may doubt the detective's ability or intention of performing the role of detective. With an emphasis on appearing vital and physical, the feminist hard-boiled detective uses her body to send the message that she is ready and able to fulfill the role of detective, both mentally and physically.

The feminist detective is just as torn between traditional roles (both social and genre-centric) and the new demands she must meet as she takes on new roles. She must prove herself able to meet the mental and physical demands of the detective genre, and to a certain extent be

able to maintain her sexuality in a way that does not leave her open to allegations of being ashamed of her gender or constructing herself to be another woman in drag. If the feminist hard-boiled detective were to stress an androgynous appearance or present an appearance that relies only on traits socially associated with the masculine gender, then her claims to the feminine and her ability to use her female gendered body to disrupt social hierarchies is placed into question. Essentially, she becomes marginalized from the communities she works to identify with and preserve. In this case, she becomes a parody—serving to underscore the idea that the only individuals who could perform the role of detective are men or women trying to pass as men. The feminist hard-boiled detective would then be seen as pandering to the social expectation of the role, rather than being a political advocate and retaining her chosen gender while being a successful detective.

Like the rest of her feminist sisters, the feminist hard-boiled detective faces the dilemma of learning to be taken seriously in the workplace in the curvaceous shadow of the femme fatale and Honey West. The catch-phrase “dressing for success,” which has now been reduced to a clichéd sales pitch by the clothing industry, is a key strategy for feminists entering any male dominated field or genre. With the threat of being pretty but ineffective hovering at the fringes of reader’s consciousness, the feminist hard-boiled detective writer has deliberately created a female detective who presents her body in ways that do not intentionally provoke confrontations or appear less than professional.

In *Bitter Medicine* Paretzky depicts Warshawski’s dress preparation for her trip to gangland Chicago: “At nine-thirty I dressed in dark clothes that were easy to move in. Instead of running shoes, I put on the heavy rubber-soled oxfords I wear for industrial surveillance. I couldn’t run in them, but if I had to kick someone at close quarters, I wanted it to count” (51).

Warshawski's clothing choice is important on several levels. She is determining the practical value of each item: while sneakers or running shoes would allow her to flee faster in case of conflict, the oxford shoes provide more security in instances of physical confrontation. A subtler choice is found in her description of her clothes. Warshawski will have unrestricted body movement if she finds herself in a fight. These practical choices show Warshawski's awareness of the potential roles she could be playing as a victim fleeing a scene or as a fighter engaging in conflict. Her garment choices also display her awareness of the violent reality of the neighborhood in question. Warshawski's choice reflects her need to camouflage. She is coming to the confrontation looking neither threatening nor scared. She presents a calm front designed to show that she is not going to be intimidated by the gang members, nor will she go out of her way to violently assert physical dominance over them. The statement the clothing makes calls into question social conceptions of hero and victim.

While Warshawski's dedication to her job may be deemed admirable, her decision to go to a place with a reputation for violence against women, where she will undoubtedly be outnumbered and viewed as an extension of law enforcement, limits reader sympathy for Warshawski and raises the issue of rape. Logically, the criminal should be held responsible for the acts committed against the victim. But as Anne Brown documents in *Women Who Kill*, often the victim is blamed, especially in cases where women are the victims (13). Warshawski's strategic dressing is designed to avoid placing her in the shadow of blame or implicating her in the idea that she is too stupid or naive to realize what could happen to her. Warshawski's clothing deliberation juxtaposes her with the sex-kittenish heroines of the past: Warshawski is not dressing in a sexually provocative manner, is not "asking" for any violent violation of her

person. Instead, she is knowingly being as proactive and responsible as she can be while fulfilling the requirements of her job.

Warshawski's choice of dress for her nocturnal outing may strike a familiar chord with the reader. Few readers today would be unfamiliar with the idea of dressing for a role, or the potential dangers that can occur during the night. Readers are comfortable with the ideas of dressing for conflict, knowing the best areas of town, and what to do when certain questionable areas cannot be avoided. Familiar with these situations, readers may also feel the anxiety that Warshawski is experiencing.

Grafton's Millhone gives a description of her physical appearance in each book. In *G Is For Gumshoe*, Grafton emphasizes the simplicity of Millhone's appearance:

I am a private investigator, licensed by the State of California, (now) thirty-three years old, 118 pounds of female in a five foot six-inch frame. My hair is dark, thick, and straight. I'd been accustomed to wearing it short, but I'd been letting it grow out just to see what it would look like. My usual practice is to crop my own mop every six weeks or so with a pair of nail scissors. This I do because I'm too cheap to pay twenty-eight bucks in a beauty salon. I have hazel eyes, a nose that's been busted twice, but still manages to function pretty well, I think. If I were asked to rate my looks on a scale of one to ten, I wouldn't. I have to say, however, that I seldom wear makeup, so whatever I look like first thing in the morning at least remains consistent as the day wears on. (2-3)

She does not use cosmetics or many accessories. This rejection of items traditionally associated with femininity provides an interesting paradox in the text. On the one hand, Millhone is trying to liberate herself from the feminine items that could be seen as shifting the focus of her character to her appearance in a way that suggests vanity and a concern with social expectations. On the other hand, her dismissal of these feminine items and expectations does place the focus upon her appearance in a way she seeks to manipulate to her benefit. Millhone has tough guy written all over her physically, and her toughness comes out in the comment about her nose. There are many ways a nose can be broken, but Millhone's occupation and matter-of-fact

delivery of the information that her nose was broken fits with the “tough guy” traits of the hard-boiled detective. Millhone is not upset with the fact her nose was broken and does not comment, at least not much, on how it influences her self-image. Her lack of makeup and her refusal to patronize beauty parlors show her to be an individual not overly vain and give her masculine association. Her preference for leaving behind the more classic and delicate hallmarks of traditional feminine beauty, combined with her broken nose, indicates that she is comfortable with the physical demands of the job. She is not worried about breaking a nail or getting her hair mussed up. Millhone’s description sets her apart from characters such as Chandler’s O’Shaughnessy, who typically use their looks in more feminine stereotypical ways to tempt males into adhering to their wishes. Her separation from those femme fatales and her blunt language patterns help her to construct herself as a tough guy. She underscores how much more she has in common with previous tough guy masculine hard-boiled detectives like Marlowe. The reader trusts Millhone’s self-assessment to be accurate due in part to the lack of vanity in the description and the matter-of-fact delivery style, which is also found in the mock reports Grafton creates for Millhone.

Millhone’s abandonment of traditional feminine accoutrements does not mean that she is ashamed of her gender. Her background as a police officer marks her as someone whose personal health is more important to her than her looks. Millhone’s academy days left her with a penchant for jogging and keeping her body fit to deal with the physical confrontations inherent in her line of employment. Her preference for jeans and other comfortable modes of dress highlights her practicality in choosing clothes appropriate to her role as detective. Wearing a business suit for surveillance is not a practical choice. She is no less a woman because of her

dress choices. She is still very attractive and active sexually, interacting with men on romantic and emotional levels.

Millhone is aware of the misconceptions that can arise from appearance. She has a supply of uniforms that she uses as disguises for surveillance and to gain access to otherwise prohibited areas:

I had this outfit done up for me some years ago by an ex-con who learned to sew.... The slacks were blue gray and unflattering, with a pale stripe along the seam. The matching pale blue shirt had a circle of Velcro sewn on the sleeve, which usually sported a patch that read 'Southern California Services.' The shoes, left over from my days on the police force, were black and made my feet look like they'd be hard to lift. Once I added a clipboard and a self-important key ring, I could pass myself off as just about anything. (Grafton, *P* 37)

This clever manipulation of her appearance reveals her understanding of how the “reality” of appearance is taken for granted by most individuals and it underscores her knowledge that her professional appearance feeds the public perception of her ability to successfully complete her jobs as a detective and as a woman. Her “all-purpose” little black dress is another one of those uniforms. In *G Is For Gumshoe*, Millhone packs her black dress in a wad in her suitcase so she can wear it to a convalescent home as she searches for Agnes Grey. She is inordinately proud that the dress does not wrinkle and gives her several covers: detective, insurance agent, lawyer (Grafton, *G* 36). Millhone sees the dress as an indestructible uniform of femininity, which appeals to her self-identity as a survivor. The dress’s versatility also pleases her because it will not limit the roles she can play. The ability of the dress to represent many professions while presenting Millhone as feminine works in conjunction with the idea that her femininity does not keep her from performing roles. Uniforms provide Millhone with a type of armor and prop, useful when confronting uncomfortable situations and playing different roles.

Expected modes of dress and preconceptions about detectives permeate Muller's *There is Nothing to be Afraid of* when McCone's interacts with characters from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. McCone finds that her dress and gender are very different from what a Vietnamese family expects of a private investigator's looks and actions. The family expects a more traditional masculine, hard-boiled detective. In turn, the family is more Americanized than McCone expects them to be. During their introduction, McCone feels the weight of the family's expectations, and her lack in their eyes. This perception drives her to be more professional. She needs to solve her case to prove the competency of all women.

McCone's self-conception is often threatened by the idea of appropriate dress. The relaxed and casual dress of her youth in contrast to the dress of the new lawyers at the All Souls Coop visually marks for McCone the difference between her social and political standing and the affiliations of the new partners. When new partners enter the firm sporting the same suits McCone sees as the uniform of mainstream society, they raise her distrust. When she talks with the new generation of lawyers, she learns that their "infiltrate and attack" philosophy conflicts with her idea of attacking mainstream society from the fringes. In staunchly clinging to her roots, she is (perhaps justly) accused of taking this route to salve her white female guilt. Accoutrements, such as her gun and notepad, which accompany the role of detective for McCone, also help her to define herself as an individual with little or no separation between the public role she plays and how she defines her personal conception of self.

Feminist hard-boiled detective writers create characters that project confidence in the images they choose to show those around them. These feminist detectives are depicted as working hard to show clients, police, and others that they are capable of fulfilling the physically demanding role of woman detective. Paretzky's V.I. Warshawski is a pretty woman who is

confident in her bodily presentation. Like a good thespian, she culls her wardrobe to create whatever image she seeks to present. A thinking individual, she plans for contingencies and makes sure she is prepared, whether that means wearing sneakers or a gun. Like any sexually active, aware adult, her character is written as having a bit of vanity regarding how she appears to other characters in whom she has a personal interest.

Sue Grafton's works explore the dilemma of playing a role that demands Millhone be a "tough guy" and be seen as a woman. Grafton's Millhone seems to fall into the "if a detective, then not a sexual woman" fallacy. While Millhone gleefully describes herself as "boyish," she is also highly attractive and sexual. She seems to be fully aware of her appearance, its value, and her own sexuality in a comfortable way that comes with age and experience. In *J Is For Judgment*, the reader sees little insecurity when Millhone uses a swimsuit as a "cover" for a beach stakeout: "I had donned a faded black bikini, boldly exposing a body riddled with old bullet holes and criss-crossed with assorted pale scars from the assorted injuries that had been inflicted on me over the years" (Grafton 18). Millhone may focus on the marks her trade has left on her, but she still proudly displays her body in the public arena. She does not cover her body and is not ashamed of its imperfections caused by her brushes with violence. Instead, she wears her scars as proudly as she does the swimsuit, confident in her sexuality. This acceptance of the marks her profession has left upon her body is very similar to Marlowe's acceptance of what he must endure to be a tough guy and a hard-boiled detective in *Farewell, My Lovely*. The profession leaves marks upon their bodies regardless of gender.

Although Muller's McCone is more concerned with what sort of professional, political, and economical statement she makes with her image, she is also aware of herself as a responsible, sexually aware, adult woman. McCone has never been at a real loss for

companionship. She does not dress to provoke sexual response in the tradition of the femme fatale, nor does she avoid issues of sexuality in the tradition of Hammett's Perrin. The considerable efforts of the hard-boiled feminist detective to balance the demands of appearance, role, and sexuality are linked to her struggle to maintain credibility when she does not meet the popular conception of acceptable mainstream attractiveness.

The female hard-boiled detective novelist focuses attention on the body, allowing both the detective and the reader to explore conceptions of the body and how it influences the ability to perform specific roles. This focus allows the reader to bond with the detective concerning issues of workplace behavior, the dilemma of sexuality in this day and age, and social values of appearance. In *Volatile Bodies* Elizabeth Grosz explains that items frequently carried on the person, from the police officer's weapons to wedding bands, become part of an individual's self-image (80). Detectives do not have great job benefits; feminist hard-boiled detectives are driven by the need to give back to their communities on their own terms. The mental image the detective builds in the mind is primary to the success of the character. If the detective is too focused on her sexuality, then her performance as a detective suffers. Her self-image includes items that ensure her success, show her mastery of the tools of her trade, and provide her with a way to differentiate herself from the stereotype and the victim.

In *Burn Marks*, Paretsky fills the text with subtle clues that Warshawski's image of herself as a detective comes complete with accessories. Warshawski mingles tools of her trade with her personal effects and often keeps her weapon on her body where she can quickly gain access to it, and simply feel its presence. On one level, the gun is a physical reminder of her job. But it is more. Warshawski's focus on her gun, her precise placement of it, and her habit of keeping it on her body turns the weapon into a part of her self-image. Paretsky illustrates this

point with the constant and sometimes casual placement of Warshawski's gun on her person. Warshawski wears a shoulder holster for her gun; has at times used an old police belt to hold her gun, handcuffs and flashlight; and often keeps her sidearm in her jeans pocket (221-238). When she does not have her tools with her, their absence creates a feeling of loss or of being unprepared. The gun helps her carry out her role and is a reminder of the physical dangers she successfully confronts in the process of fulfilling that role.

Grafton's Millhone commonly carries a gun and also has a fixation about knowing where it is. Its absence can be troubling for her: "I missed my beloved handbag, my jacket, and my gun" (*P* 147). Millhone lists the gun along with all the other items that grant her cover and comfort. Her handbag allows her to carry useful tools necessary for both her professional and personal life. Her jacket protects her from the elements and provides protection from being recognized. Her gun provides emotional security and aids her in any conflicts that may arise when she is on the job. Her idea of herself as effective in confrontations is enhanced through her perception of herself with her gun. The gun is also a prop reinforcing the role of hard-boiled detective both for Millhone and her clients. The gun completes the image. The presence and placement of the gun is important for Millhone to fully live in her role of hard-boiled feminist detective.

In Muller's books, McCone's use of weapons and choice of professional look emphasizes the contrast between her radical grassroots politics and the changing reality of her professional existence. The idealism that started her on this path in the 1960s is represented by her comfortable clothing and simple tools. She does use a gun, but does not use a computer. For McCone, older instruments connected to the role of hard-boiled detective (weapons, notebooks, and the like), lend validity to her self-image. The idea of the lone hard-boiled detective fighting

for the underdog against the overwhelming oppression of society is the platform for McCone's self-conception as a detective. Technological advancements and electronic databases have evolved to make the job of detective easier and less physically demanding. McCone is not proficient with these new tools, because to her they are the tools of the oppressing, never-blinking eye of mainstream society. To compensate for her lack of technological proficiency, she hires a computer expert to deal with the Internet and advances in the digital world. The hiring of a subordinate, her indirect use of technology, and the money associated with these new additions make her wonder if she has deviated from that role of social watchdog, defender of the people, and political rebel.

3.4 Body Image and Professional Image

Chandler's Philip Marlowe and Hammett's Continental Op create the markers of physical competency that are connected to the role of detective, which contemporary hard-boiled feminist detective writers find themselves utilizing and subverting. Paretsky's Warshawski is both professional and practical; Grafton's Millhone is deceptive, effective, and sexual; and Muller's McCone is political and skilled. These feminist detectives do not simply prove themselves proficient at the physical demands of the job. They share an awareness of the political power of appearance and perception with proletarian writers such as Herbst and Brody. Paretsky, Grafton, and Muller are masters at manipulating expectations connected to appearance, having their characters play roles, deceive others, and evaluate the influence of their images on those around them. These characters' abilities to blend multiple aspects of their roles show their complex evolution as hard-boiled detectives, feminists, and children of the literary traditions of the masculine hard-boiled detective genre and proletariat literature. As Rabinowitz discusses in *Labor and Desire: Women's Revolutionary Fiction in Depression America*, works of the 1930s

women proletarian writers showed how intermingled gender, politics, and society are (65). The complexity of the relationship between gender, genre, class, and politics is also found in feminist hard-boiled detective writers' use of the generic expectations of appearance and how they manipulate those expectations to allow for gender concerns and feminist politics.

Chapter Four: The Color of Money

So brave and so determined to work for so little money.

Anne Riordan from Chandler's *Farewell, My Lovely*, 1969

4.1 The Power of the Blue Collar

For women proletarian writers of the 1930s and contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective authors, clothing and physical performance blur the boundaries between gender, profession, and social expectation. This tradition of boundary crossing also has roots in the classic masculine hard-boiled detective genre, in which socioeconomic class and establishing a desirable class association for the detectives are central themes. The traditional hard-boiled detective protagonist and the masculine hero of the radical proletarian novel were associated with the working class. This connection gave them a political edge that grounded their social observations and worked to set them apart from the corrupt middle and upper classes. Women proletarian writers faced the dilemma of establishing a character or voice. As Paula Rabinowitz discusses in *Labor and Desire*, women proletarian writers of the 1930s were separated from the labor force by a connection to the domestic realm and to the middle class. These ties to the home and to the affluent worked to keep women proletarian writers from easily taking up the masculine rhetoric of the proletarian genre (54). Feminist hard-boiled detective authors faced the same problems of accessing the rhetoric of their genre.

The labor and economic classification of the hard-boiled detective exists somewhere between white and blue collar. This uncertain categorization comes from the detective's white collar commerce of information brokering mixing with the blue-collar labor involved in gathering the information, both of which are trademarks of the hard-boiled detective's role. Knowledge is the merchandise of mystery. Uncovering and revealing hidden facts, trading

partially hidden truths for favors, and using revelations to establish a desired order or outcome are the hard-boiled detective's primary job.

The process of recovering the facts often entails rigorous trade-specific, physical labor, contains a threat of violence, and brings the detective into contact with the criminal world. This practice has the hard-boiled detective working with individuals from lower socioeconomic classes than his, creating a connection between the hard-boiled detective and the blue-collar working class. The mixture of white and blue collar places the hard-boiled detective in a nebulous socioeconomic classification. The perceived blue-collar connection of the hard-boiled detective is built into the very criteria of the genre.

Proletarian literature shares hard-boiled detective fiction's ties to the blue-collar. While socioeconomic class is very important for proletarian writers, who seek to strengthen the solidarity of the blue-collar class for political ends, they face different challenges from those encountered by the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective writer. The social awareness of the protagonists in proletarian literature of the early and mid-20th century is important, but with proletarian literature the economic status of the author is under scrutiny in a way that traditional masculine hard-boiled detective writers did not experience. In the battle to raise mainstream society's consciousness, proletarian writers questioned whether or not a writer with a privileged background could truly be sensitive to the needs of the workers. This dilemma of representation, voice, and unity plagued not only the writers of the proletarian publication the *New Masses*, but resurfaced in the 1970s to plague second-wave feminists.

4.2 Romance of Poverty

The hard-boiled detective genre is known for its tarnished protagonists trying to save the world. Hard-boiled detectives, both traditional masculine and contemporary feminist, have the unenviable job of interacting with all social classes without downplaying the difficulties faced by each social class. The traditional masculine hard-boiled detective uses his class ties and his background to separate himself from the social classes he interacts with to maintain his objectivity. In this process, his financial status works to give him the nobility that comes with sacrifice. The feminist hard-boiled detectives must be able to cross the socioeconomic gaps to appear to be a part of and separate from social classes, and to maintain the illusion of objectivity and solidarity as situations demand. The need to be a part of the social class with which they have political ties is a trait that feminist hard-boiled detectives share with their proletarian foremothers.

4.3 The Class of Tradition

The masculine hard-boiled detective may walk the mean streets, but is in no way limited educationally by ties to the working class. Kingsley Widmer describes the inherent nobleness and power of the hard-boiled detective's outsider stance as: "Such an outcast understates an heroic effort, however narrow, for resisting an essentially hostile and cheating world" (3). Standing on the outside allows the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective to see the corruption of the world around him without becoming tainted by it. His refusal of the lure of money that could be had with success or crime adds validity to his choices. The traditional masculine hard-boiled detective then gains moral superiority and establishes his masculinity through his choice of economic class, regardless of the monetary circumstances of his background.

Chandler's classic hard-boiled detective Philip Marlowe possesses a college education, as he elaborates to General Sternwood in *The Big Sleep*: "There's very little to tell. I'm thirty-three years old, went to college once and can still speak English if there's any demand for it. There isn't much in my trade" (10). By referring to his degree, Marlowe shows that he shares the attributes of General Sternwood's social class. Through these ties, Marlowe can be seen as an individual who can appreciate "culture" in the classic sense of art, artistic motivation, and creature comforts associated with affluence. But it is Marlowe's statement about not needing to fall back on what he learned in college that insults Sternwood's social set and suggests a dangerous fallacy about the nobility of the blue-collar class. One reading of Marlowe's statement "There isn't much [use for English] in my trade" could imply that the lower classes have little if any appreciation for the superficial classic aesthetic taught in college (10). These blue-collar souls are instead somehow more in tune with the gritty realities of life, be that crime or the struggle to survive. The blue-collar worker then becomes somewhat akin to the "noble savage" stereotype. The working classes, like uneducated natives, are free of artifice and, through their struggle to survive, have a clear vision of the basic principles of happiness. The oversimplification of the struggle faced by the working class is insulting.

Marlowe and the reader share an ongoing joke at the expense of affluent characters in the book. Chandler continues Marlowe's habit of appearing less educated than he is. In *Farewell, My Lovely*, Marlowe opens chapter seven with a meditation on a calendar featuring Rembrandt:

They had Rembrandt on the calendar that year, a rather smeary self-portrait due to an imperfectly registered color plate. It showed him holding a smeared palette with a dirty thumb and wearing a tam-o'-shanter which wasn't any too clean either. His other hand held a brush poised in the air, as if he might be going to do a little work after a while, if somebody made a down payment. His face was aging, saggy, full of the disgust of life and the thickening effects of liquor. (Chandler, *Faerwell* 33)

Marlowe's observations underscore his educated background through the identification of the subject of the calendar, his familiarity with the appropriate appearance of the piece, his quick recognition of the source of the imperfections, and his familiarity with the clothing presented. His life experience shows through in his ready diagnosis of Rembrandt as disgusted and fond of alcohol. In this internal dialogue, Marlowe creates a self-portrait, which shows him to be educated, weary, aware of the harshness of life, and the privileges of wealth. This eloquent examination reinforces the educated background Marlowe reveals to General Sternwood in *The Big Sleep*.

Chandler downplays Marlowe's strong education in favor of his cleverness as the focal point of his detective abilities. While Marlowe's education may be used to create a gap between himself and the blue-collar workers he deals with in cases, his cleverness bridges that gap. His shrewd ability to read motives, understand how blue-collar life plays out, and locate hidden clues comes from a mixture of academic knowledge and life experience, which garners Marlowe admiration from the blue-collar class as well as from the reader. Survival by wits in the face of adversity is a trait that he shares with his blue-collar counterparts.

Marlowe feels the economic limitations of his job, but his financial status is minimized in the face of the corruption he uncovers in the slums and parlors across America. When dealing with criminals and the inhabitants of less than desirable neighborhoods, Marlowe uses his economic status as a common ground. The poverty that surrounds him in the streets is a possible reality for him if he loses his edge as a detective. Those who are already impoverished see Marlowe as financially kindred, one of the "have-nots," and are apt to work with him. Marlowe's education and job represent a type of order and privilege in society that has not always been traditionally sympathetic to the plights of the lower socioeconomic classes. While

the upper classes may sympathize with the concerns and obstacles that face the blue-collar worker, that sympathy does not guarantee that those concerns will be addressed or even fully comprehended by the upper class. With this in mind, the blue-collar worker is aware that there is only so far Marlowe can be trusted to act as a part of their group. The mark of nobility, the idea of the self-sacrificing tarnished protector of law and justice on the streets, also situates him above monetary corruption from both classes. The blue-collar class does not have the monetary means by which to bribe Marlowe, and the affluent upper class will fail to bribe him because of his nobleness. Even when interacting with the more financially privileged in society, Marlowe uses his economic status to his benefit in the same manner as he does with the lower socioeconomic classes. The affluence and possible corruption that comes with having money are not threats to Marlowe because of inherent nobility of his chosen profession. His educational background gives him the training and cultural exposure necessary for appreciating the finer things in life, without the taint of “filthy lucre.” His self-chosen exile from the realm of financial plenty gives him the objective distance needed to see clearly people and situations involved in his cases. This distance allows Marlowe all the benefits of a well-trained intellect and the option to indulge in the illusion of being above the corrupting influence that comes with obtaining worldly goods.

Hammett’s Continental Op finds himself in a situation similar to Chandler’s Marlowe. Hammett’s Op works for a well-funded organization, the Continental Detective Agency. From his ability to move in the criminal world, the affluent world of the upper class, and the world of law enforcement, the reader can ascertain that Op is a well-educated man, much like Chandler’s Marlowe. Op shares with Marlowe an appreciation for the hallmarks of high culture and an awareness of art history. Op also has a strong knowledge of finances and inner business workings. Thus Op reaps the benefits of being able to appreciate the culturally privileged

aspects of society. Because Op's financial status remains mysterious, he does not have the ready bond with the blue-collar working classes available to Marlowe. Hammett allows Op to use the mystery surrounding him to his full advantage. Op can play the role of insider or outcast, depending on the situation, but ultimately remains disconnected from the incidents and powerful drives that cause people to break the law. The individuals he interacts with are left to gauge for themselves whether or not Op has any common bonds with them. Op's frequent travel to different cities to solve cases secures him the status of perpetual outsider and gives him the powerful, allegedly objective standpoint that is needed to uncover the facts and piece together events. His outsider status prevents him from being directly associated with any class or agencies other than law enforcement. This connection both helps and hinders Op as he tries to work across class boundaries. He does not have the chameleon ability that Chandler's Marlowe possesses.

Tough guy mystery writer James M. Cain presents the story from a different angle in his classic *Double Indemnity*. Cain's character Walter Huff is the model of a fallen detective who identifies too much with financial struggle and desires only to lose his objectivity and turn to crime. Cain's claims manager Barton Keyes, the jaded insurance inspector, provides the "good guy" pattern that up-and-coming insurance agent Huff is supposed to emulate. Huff, however, wants no part of Keyes' cynicism and distrusting nature. The poverty and solitude of the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective do not appeal to Huff.

Keyes is not the prototype of the hard-boiled detective that he appears to be at first glance. The alleged humility and honor of the public servant do not appeal to Keyes. For him detective work is a way of preventing people from perpetrating fraud against the insurance agency. The conflict between Keyes and Huff is a personal battle with monetary stakes, not an

attempt to reestablish the violated order of society. Huff is engaged in a battle to outwit Keyes whom he resents.

Cain gives the reader the darker version of what could happen if Marlowe or Op were ever to stray from their objectivity. Keyes remains objective and is proven right in the end, but he does not enjoy the nobility, toughness, or power that Op and Marlowe possess. Instead, both Keyes and Huff are flawed, tainted, and weak.

In Marlowe's and Op's situations, economic status allows masculine hard-boiled detectives to manipulate individuals and situations to their benefit, while retaining their much-valued objectivity. While this combination bodes well for the classic masculine hard-boiled detective, proletarian writers and feminist hard-boiled detective fiction writers use class associations to make political statements and bring to light the plights of the working class through connections not usually investigated by the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective.

4.4 Proletarian Dilemma

While traditional masculine hard-boiled detective writers created characters that struggled to be seen as blue-collar and yet remain removed from such economic groups to preserve their objectivity, proletarian writers were trying to design protagonists that embraced the blue-collar worker. James F. Murphy's *The Proletarian Movement* and Barbara Foley's *Radical Representations* carefully track the evolution of the proletarian writers' social class. Both works look at the conception of proletarian literature as it progressed in the pages of prestigious publications, from the *Comrade* to the *New Masses*, through ideas expressed by such noted proletarians as John Reed, Michael Gold, Granville Hicks, Philip Rhav, A. B. Magil, and Walt Carmon. Foley reveals that proletarian literature was measured by any of four main criteria: authorship, audience, subject matter, and political perspective (87). The broad scope of

criteria allowed a variety of texts to serve proletarian purposes and is similar to the ever-evolving criteria used by feminists, gays, lesbians, and ethnic groups to create classifications for their literature. Under the broad umbrella of subject matter, the class of the author and the intended audience were unimportant as long as the subject of the work was proletarian in nature, discourse, and/or design. This focus on subject left the door open for writers of the disillusioned middle class to join the proletarian cause.

The difficulty inherent in the idea that the proletarian message could be produced and delivered by those not of a blue-collar origin allows the voice of the blue-collar worker to be appropriated by other classes. This loss of the blue-collar worker's voice threatened to alienate the very people the proletarian movement was trying to benefit. The danger was two fold. First, writers from the more affluent middle and upper classes could potentially corrupt the proletarian message to the ends of other social classes. Second, the disassociation of the proletarian voice from the worker could undermine the political movement and make blue-collar workers feel alienated from their party and goals. While middle-class writers were welcomed for their skills and efforts, some viewed their work with caution. Rabinowitz is quick to point out that the female intellectual of the 1930s was further disenfranchised because of gender and class (15). This quandary surrounding an author's identity and message would repeat itself in the rise of second-wave feminism and give feminist hard-boiled detective fiction an awareness of voice for the oppressed that was not prominent in masculine hard-boiled detective fiction.

Even more controversy came from the idea of melding art and agenda in a literary form. Proletarians battled with modernism and its separation from context. The need to make works of literature immediate and pressing for the reader and the working class instead made realism a natural partner for their endeavors. Haverly Swados' *The American Writers and the Great*

Depression offers a discussion on the value the Marxists placed on the experience of those who lived through the economic and employment hardships of the Depression (xxii). Part of the realism considered desirable and powerful was an appropriate rendition of class, leading critics such as Rahv and Magil to battle about the power of literature and propaganda. Art does not exclude political agendas and in some cases is all the more powerful because of such messages.

Albert Halper's *The Foundry* provides an example of message and art melding, as the workers of the foundry are treated to an experimental music concert that speaks of class and affluence. This work shows the blue-collar class enjoying the benefits of higher culture, by listening to orchestral music, and gleaning from it powerful messages that connect the music to their existence at the foundry and their desire for better lives. This message plays out in the text in the life of August Kafka, who struggles to make a living working in the factory and pursuing his studies of the violin. Halper's *Foundry* is a testament that blue-collar workers are just as sensitive to the power of the arts as the better-educated upper classes. While Halper's work powerfully chronicles the struggles of the foundry workers, it does not characterize the workers as noble because of their impoverished state. They are noble because they choose to struggle to gain a better life.

Herbst's *Rope of Gold* and *Nothing is Sacred* are testaments to the strength of the women of the blue-collar class. In *Rope of Gold*, Herbst's character Victoria is of modest economic means, but her husband, Jonathan, comes from an affluent family who have cut him off financially because of his political beliefs. Throughout the work, the reader sees Jonathan and Victoria struggle to overcome their own desperate monetary situation and help others. It is Victoria's dedication to her beliefs that stands out the most in this struggle. Jonathan falls into temptation time and time again, while Victoria possesses a drive to help others that leads her to

adopt a career as a writer and go to Cuba to help the workers. Victoria's dedication works to give her the same noble status as Marlowe and Op because she chooses to fight for a cause--to better the status of the oppressed--rather than to better her own financial status. Victoria's poverty and struggle are romanticized because she chooses to sacrifice her own needs for the needs of others, a common theme for women in literature in this era. While the idea of self-sacrifice provides the same dangers for Victoria as it does for Marlowe and Op, it is a different kind of danger: namely, martyrdom.

The comforts Victoria forfeits do romanticize her status, but they do not underplay the plight of the blue-collar worker. Herbst's work is a call to action for the blue-collar worker and those who are concerned with the survival of the blue-collar class. The issue of improvement is central to Herbst's text. Victoria's improvement is a social reform and not the reestablishment of mainstream order that can be found in hard-boiled texts. Unlike those who give up creature comforts and economic advantage to work with blue-collar workers, Herbst's Victoria is always a member of the class she tries to help. She is not leaving behind privilege, but working for the socioeconomic class of which she has always been a member.

Victoria's sacrifice is dangerous in that it reinforces a derogatory literary and social tradition that dictates that women will give up their desires to help others, be that their family or their social class. While Victoria is fighting for better conditions for the oppressed, she participates in a cycle of sacrifice which keeps her socially subservient to larger political goals, not necessarily her personal goals or goals to help women out of oppression.

In *Nothing is Sacred*, Herbst's matriarchal character, Mrs. Winter, is shown to be as noble as Victoria by her willingness to sacrifice to ensure her family a chance to survive. Mrs. Winter's working-class values are contrasted against the lazy, grasping values of her rising

middle-class daughters. Mrs. Winter's belief in and practice of self-reliance, her willingness to jeopardize her financial status, and her attempts to show that family is the core of existence give her a dignity that her daughters lack. Her willingness to put the needs of others ahead of her own to communicate the values of her class is seen as dignified by the reader, giving the blue-collar worker honor.

In these novels, women characters that reject the temptation of the rising self-indulgent middle class or choose to give what little they earn to other members of the family are shown in a positive light by the authors. Class and dignity are connected in primary ways that demand action for betterment of a group and yet promote the trap of self-sacrifice for the advocates. The women in these works are individuals, unlike Halper's August Kafka, who is a kind of Everyman for the factory worker. Halper's work represents the drive of a group; Herbst's characters tell of one soul making a difference. The women's tradition of sacrificing for the good of the family, coupled with the noble aspects of the masculine hard-boiled detective, together condemn the feminist hard-boiled detective to the trap of choosing poverty to gain role validation. These dilemmas would become concerns for 1960s feminism as it sought to establish itself across all aspects of American culture.

4.5 Feminism's Struggle with Voice and Class

Feminism, being a political, academic, and social movement, shares the dilemma of dissociation that women proletarian writers faced in the 1930s. Feminism must also account for women's voices from a multitude of different walks of life. As Robin Winks explains in her introductory essay "Class," "The identity politics of the late 1980s and early 1990s brought other differences among feminists to the fore: theorists argued that feminism now had a 'mainstream' that was markedly white, middle-class, Western, and heterosexual, and that feminist criticism

and theory had been participating in the marginalization of women of color, working-class women, Third World women, and lesbians” (259). The political movement designed to liberate women from oppression, regardless of economic class, had become the calling card for middle-class white women, excluding ethnic groups and lower social classes. Like the proletarians of the 1930s, feminists questioned how to reach a broad audience and give them voice without damaging the core of the political drive.

4.6 Hard-boiled Idealism

The feminist hard-boiled detectives, like their masculine forefathers, prove to be well educated. Paretsky’s V. I. Warshawski has a degree in law and worked as an underpaid public defender. Grafton’s Kinsey Millhone is a trained detective and continues her education with college courses. Muller’s Sharon McCone went to Berkeley and held the position of staff investigator for the All Souls Legal Coop before starting her own office. Like most self-employed individuals in America, these detectives are concerned with money, the growing interest in stock market investing, and their lack of a corporate insurance policy and retirement funds. The feminist detectives’ blue-collar backgrounds and the monetary sacrifices they make to help those in need grant them the nobility found in Herbst’s proletarian characters. The detectives also create the risk of making poverty appealing by cutting their ties to the upper class and creating the idea that the detectives are slumming.

The delicate politics of slumming and the need to remain true to the cause are evident in Paretsky’s *Hard Time*. Paretsky’s Warshawski is one of the most deliberately politically aware characters in feminist hard-boiled detective fiction, with Muller’s Sharon McCone in a close second place. Paretsky is a political advocate in her work. She routinely takes mainstream society to task for its flaws in caring for those less fortunate, the elderly, and the working class.

Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski has strong political beliefs that place her on the side of the individual and the small business owner. Warshawski has a distrust of large organizations, both religious and secular, that is reflected in her business dealings. For example, in *Killing Orders*, Warshawski sees the political bias in the Catholic Church: "Whether the Church was working for the poor, as in El Salvador, or supporting the government, as in Spain, it was still, in my book, up to its neck in politics" (29). Warshawski's political view does not necessitate that all large organizations are bad; rather, she feels that all large organizations possess political agendas that oppress and silence women, minorities, and the working class. Warshawski has a fear of replicating the same order and oppression she seeks to end, unlike Marlowe who sees the order he establishes as the desirable outcome and who uses his association with the blue-collar as a means of neutralizing the corruption he encounters.

The characters' failure to adhere to personal political convictions and remain outside of corrupt social systems is at the center of Paretsky's novel *Hard Time*. In this work Warshawski looks at the evolution of political conviction in herself and other characters, their failure or success at maintaining their convictions, the plight of oppressed workers, and her place in correcting the "wrongs" of society. Warshawski's examination of the gap separating the belief systems of younger women in Generation-X and older feminists, such as herself, provides a harsh view of younger feminists. When *Hard Time* opens, Warshawski is at a club with her assistant's young protégé, Emily Messenger. Messenger is a fan of a popular action movie series starring a character named Lacey Dowell. Lacey's movie persona is the ghost of a medieval girl who died defending her virginity, who comes back to stop the ghost of her tormentor from harming other women. While the female action figure in the movies appears to be an

empowering idea that would make a staunch feminist like Warshawski proud, she sees past the glitter to the trap underneath:

Despite the pseudofeminist gloss on the plot, Lacey always ended up dying again after defeating her age-long foe, while some brainless hero cuddled a vapid true love who had screamed herself breathless for ninety minutes ... but the real audience was Emily and her teenage friends who slavishly copied Lacey's hairstyle, her ankle boots with their crossed straps, and the high-necked black tank tops she wore off the set.
(Paretsky, *Hard 4*)

Warshawski's commentary centers on the fact that the female who saves the world has her power removed by death where true martyrs gain power from their deaths. The more traditional role of damsel in distress is promoted through the living "true love" who follows social order and has to be saved by someone else. In the end, consumer markets profit from the movies, even if Warshawski's feminist politics do not.

Warshawski's criticism of the movie series reveals one of the themes of *Hard Time*: the transformation of a potentially radical political image of a female warrior into a hollow money making tool. To a woman in her forties like Warshawski, the movie series is merely corrupting a form of feminism to make money and follow fashion. This pirating of politics is akin to the act of voice stealing expressed by feminists such as Valerie Johnson. Only instead of silencing a minority, here the mainstream is taking the power out of an image and making it into a hollow marketing gimmick. This rape of political power harkens back to proletarian fears of the 1930s, concerning writers who were not of the blue-collar class. Political movements trying to gain, or even maintain, ground always face the threat that their cause and voice will be appropriated and their message corrupted for the goals of larger mainstream institutions. In the case of *Hard Time*, a large entertainment corporation has taken advantage of the prison reform system designed to teach prisoners viable trades and turned it into a money scheme for creating cheap

merchandise by paying workers small wages, offering no benefits, and bribing prison officials. This misuse of the prison system corrupts an arrangement designed to rehabilitate; ignores the already poor working conditions in prisons, by focusing on the outside corporate corruptions; and keeps inmates from having any voice in the process of reform. Warshawski sees Generation-Xers' fashionable feminism as a political injustice to feminism and the working class that ignores the key issues of oppression and violence.

Warshawski's loyalty to her political views provides the reader with a clearly defined rubric with which the character can be judged. *Hard Time* introduces Alex, an old law school acquaintance of Warshawski, who provides Paretsky, through Warshawski's acerbic observations, with a model for those political activists who did not sell out per say, but followed political movements as a kind of fad. Warshawski tells Alex in the end: "You wanted to be a firebrand and take the message about racism and social justice to the proletariat, and I made you uncomfortable because I was that odd phenomenon in an upscale law school—a genuine blue-collar worker's genuine daughter" (488). What Warshawski is railing against is the political appropriation of a cause by an economic outsider who has no vested interest in furthering the political cause, merely exploiting it to make a profit. This use and then abandonment of causes harkens back to the fears of the proletarians concerning writers from a different class describing the trials of their world, and addresses the problem experienced by feminism when trying to work with minorities who feel that the middle-class white feminist is merely trying to steal their voice or downplay their political agendas. Warshawski can make this criticism by virtue of her blue-collar background. In college, Warshawski's blue-collar background made her an exception to the middle-class rule. Instead of seeing her presence as a victory, Alex felt threatened. Warshawski entered law school on her own merits and did not need the help of the

privileged middle-class. The middle class can also oppress those it is attempting to help by undercutting the accomplishments of the working class and taking credit for the life improvements of the blue-collar worker. Warshawski is the accomplished proletariat who is in full control of her political power and voice. She is an example of overcoming class oppression and continuing the battle to liberate other oppressed individuals from that class.

Warshawski's claim to that blue-collar voice is precarious. Even though she is the only child of a police officer and an Italian immigrant, her lifestyle and income opportunities allow her to leave her working-class origins behind. While her business is small, she does employ an assistant. She has a strong legal background and the opportunity to expand her pool of clients, as her assistant, Mary Louise Neely, points out: "You [Warshawski] gnash your teeth over how you are always hard up for money, but you've got the contacts and the skills to build a big agency. It's just there's something in you that doesn't want to go corporate" (Paretsky, *Hard* 147). Warshawski falls into the perilous trap of romanticizing poverty. While her financial means are not grand, she does drive a comfortable car and have enough income to retain a good lawyer, an assistant, and access to an expensive professional database. Warshawski could definitely rise to a higher economic class. She chooses not to. She takes cases that position her politically against large corporations and other organizations that provide the economic benefits for mainstream society. Warshawski's complaints are hollow on the one hand, because she chose this life, yet on the other hand they underscore her dedication to her background and political convictions, which give her the same noble--yet poor--aura that Chandler's Marlowe has. This martyr status is underscored in the text in frequent mocking references to Warshawski in religious tones, as expressed by her lawyer, Freeman, "As you wish, Donna Victoria of the

Rueful Countenance” (Paretsky, *Hard* 364). That characters mock her nobility reinforces to the reader the great lengths she goes to so she can maintain her blue-collar association.

Warshawski’s critical assessment of others’ political beliefs often leads to confrontation. In part, her way of defending her beliefs and the rights of the blue-collar workers she identifies with it can also be read as her fear of “selling out” as she grows older. In *Hard Time*, Murray Ryerson, a newspaper reporter and longtime friend of Warshawski, makes a move to expand his column into a television show for the entertainment corporation that recently purchased the newspaper. Warshawski, predictably, responds negatively to Murray’s drive. Her reaction accentuates the socioeconomic gap between them. For Warshawski, Alex was never on “her side” of the blue-collar battle, but Murray was someone she could count on to help her disseminate the truth and help the oppressed. He was a kind of partner. Warshawski sees Murray’s defection from political partner to corporate opponent as a personal danger she must avoid. The crux of the conflict lies in the fact that both Warshawski and Murray have valid arguments. Warshawski sees Murray’s association with the multi-conglomerate entertainment corporation, Global, biasing him and keeping him from discovering the truth. Murray sees himself adapting to the times and working to ensure his economic future, as he grows older.

The reader is inclined to agree with Warshawski, because it is from her point of view that the reader experiences the conflict. The reader follows her logic and reasoning and sees the same danger signs that spur her into action. This reader empathy does not mean that Murray’s criticism of Warshawski as having an “omnipotent self-righteousness” is any less valid than Warshawski’s criticism of him (Paretsky, *Hard* 269). Warshawski’s ideals *are* harsh and unbending. Murray justly finds Warshawski’s unwavering political and professional convictions alienating. Warshawski can be a crusader in the best and worst senses of the term. She is to be

commended for her proletarian and feminist zeal, but her narrow definition of political right and wrong makes her intolerant to the needs of others who are trying to survive as well.

Warshawski sees one road out of oppression: crusade against large organizations and using the system to help the oppressed. This constricted vision dictates whose rights she fights for--the blue-collar class, the elderly, and the immigrant population of Chicago--and how she views the motivations of those outside of that class, namely with distrust. She has taken pains to remain connected to her blue-collar background regardless of numerous opportunities to expand her business. The benefits she seeks to obtain for her clients have the potential to provide them with a lifestyle beyond blue-collar means. This shift in socioeconomic group threatens to place them into groups Warshawski distrusts. The political line that Warshawski creates is thin and dependent upon individuals remaining connected to an oppressed class Warshawski is trying to help. While her cause is just, her ties to her blue-collar roots and her political causes can create the same bias she sees in Murray, creating a potential conflict of interest for Warshawski as a detective.

Warshawski may be prejudiced against large organizations, but her bias against criminal acts keeps her from taking her preconceived notions about large organizations to an irrational level that would blind her to the events that unfold in a case. Even when those she identifies with politically or socially are involved in crime, Warshawski is able to distance herself from them enough to realize that they must be stopped. When her office is vandalized in *Hard Time*, her first thoughts about who could have done it focus on local criminal elements in her area: “Street vandals. Druggies who’d seen I was away and taken advantage” (206). She is able to achieve some detachment from her neighborhood and the social class she identifies with, but she

does not have the alleged objective authority that Hammett's Continental Op or Chandler's Marlowe possess.

Warshawski's proletarian drive comes out in less direct ways. In *Hard Time*, the prison industry comes under her scrutiny. While she goes undercover to find out what led to a prisoner's death, she finds herself working on the prison sewing line. Warshawski's description of the working conditions and pay echoes descriptions found in such proletarian works as Halper's *The Foundry* and Catherine Brody's *Nobody Starves*:

I thought it would be a cinch to run one of those [sewing] machines, and I Thought it would be a holiday after the misery of working in the prison kitchen, but after four days all I had to show were a permanent knot in my shoulders and neck, bruised and bleeding fingers from getting in the way of the needle, and three dollars and twenty-four cents in earnings, which would not be paid into my trust account until the end of the week.

We got paid by the piece: nine cents for T-shirts, which were the easiest to assemble, fifteen cents for shorts, thirty-three for the heavy denim jackets ... One thing about prison labor: there is no shop steward or Labor Department to take a grievance to. If the foreman is pissed off at you and wants to spit at you or slap you or destroy your output, there's not a lot you can do about it. (Paretsky, *Hard* 395-96)

The prison workroom is a place where workers are not physically safe from the machines or the management. Warshawski's price-per-piece listing creates a sharp realization that the labor industry and unions are responsible for helping the blue-collar class meet the cost of living and of what could happen if those organizations were removed. This description is also a point where feminist and proletarian politics meet. Coolis, the prison where Warshawski works, is an all-female detention facility. Women's working conditions have been a concern for women's political groups from the time of the Suffragists. Paretsky elegantly blends the proletarian and the feminist through Warshawski's investigations.

In contrast to Paretsky's overtly political activist detective, Sue Grafton creates a character that seems less aware of her political drives, but very conscious of her socioeconomic

class and her discomfort when confronted with others from more affluent classes. Grafton's *C Is For Corpse* is ripe with the power of economic contrast. From the beginning, Grafton's Kinsey Millhone is up front about her working-class standing and her economic situation. Where Chandler's Marlowe exudes confidence in his own background and understanding of class when confronted by General Sternwood and Mr. Marriott, Grafton's Millhone is hesitant and insecure. Her own world is far removed from the privileged existence of her client, Bobby Callahan. Early on in the text Millhone describes her home:

I live in what was once a single-car garage, converted now to a two hundred-dollar-a-month studio apartment maybe fifteen feet square, which serves as living room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, closet, and laundry room. All of my possessions are multipurpose and petite. I have a combination refrigerator, sink, and stovette, a doll-sized stacking washer/dryer unit, a sofa that becomes a bed (though I seldom bother to unfold it), and a desk that I sometimes use as a dining-room table. (531)

While later in the series Millhone's living space is redone by her landlord, Henry, her insistence upon multipurpose tools and rooms remains intact. She is a person who values the functional in people, things, and space. She is not accustomed to having a great deal of money to spend on specialty items and looks for things that will give her the most for her spending power. Being thrifty is a point of pride for Millhone; it makes her feel productive, useful, and in touch with the blue-collar class. There is some romanticism attached to Millhone's ability to survive in her chosen social class, which raises the question of why cannot everyone else in her socioeconomic class survive as she does? Once again, the backlash of romanticizing poverty comes to the fore.

Grafton uses Millhone's apartment to provide a sharp contrast to the home of her client, Bobby:

The ceiling in the entryway was two stories high, light filtering down through a series of windows that followed the line of the wide stone stairs curving up to the left. The floor was tile, a soft red, polished to a satiny sheen. There were runners of Persian carpeting in faded patterns. Tapestries hung from ornamental wrought-iron rods that looked like antique weaponry. The air temperature was perfect, cool and still, scented by a massive floral arrangement on a heavy side table to my right. I felt like I was in a museum.
(Grafton, *C* 539)

The display of opulence and wealth makes Millhone uncomfortable. More than any of the guests there, Millhone is aware of how far out of her socioeconomic class she is. The sheer expense of everything around her makes her self-conscious about her movements: “I was really hoping I wouldn’t disgrace myself by spilling a drink down my front or catching a heel in the rug” (Grafton, *C* 540). This sentiment is not Millhone’s usual cocky voice. As a general rule, Millhone exalts in her cleverness, problem-solving skills, and ability to move through professional and social situations confidently, creating the image she wishes to project. Her inability to be fully at ease and her bewilderment at her surroundings make her angry with herself: “Did these people eat like this every day? Bobby never batted an eye. I don’t know what I expected him to do. He couldn’t squeal with excitement every time a supper tray showed up, but I was impressed and I guess I wanted him to marvel, as I did, so I wouldn’t feel like such a rube” (Grafton, *C* 556). Millhone is distanced from her own class and Bobby’s class, here, to the point that she is almost incapable of successfully functioning in her role as private detective. Her blue-collar background has not prepared her for this encounter, and while Millhone is usually able to think on her feet, she is more concerned in this situation with the prospect of tripping over them.

What is truly disturbing about this meeting is the way it threatens to silence Millhone and limit her power to make conversation, or at least a wisecrack, at which she usually excels. When confronted with Bobby’s family, she finds no opening through which to enter the conversation

(Grafton, *C* 543). This silence forces Millhone to consider Bobby and his family and confront her own stereotypes about wealthy people: “My notion of women with money is that they drive to Beverly Hills to have their legs waxed, charge a bauble or two on Rodeo Drive, and then go to charity luncheons at \$1,500 a plate. I couldn’t picture Nola Fraker pawing through the bargain bin at our local Stretch N’ Sew” (Grafton, *C* 544). Millhone’s idea of rich behavior is that it is idleness, a concept far removed from her pragmatic attitude and multipurpose lifestyle. Millhone is showing the same class prejudice that the upper class often exhibits when dealing with the working class: she is relying on stereotypes and misconception. This image of the idle rich makes Millhone and the blue-collar class she represents more enticing and noble as exemplified by their work ethic, goals, and drive. To make sense in Millhone’s blue-collar world, one must work at a job or purpose--a subtle and powerful piece of propaganda on Grafton’s part.

Millhone attempts to mitigate some of her prejudice against the upper classes by engaging in a discussion about what their experience may be like:

I wondered what it must be like to live in a house like this where all of your needs were tended to, where someone else was responsible for grocery shopping and food preparations, cleaning, trash removal, landscape maintenance. What did it leave you free to do?

“What’s it like coming from money? I can’t even imagine it.” [Millhone asks Bobby.] ...

“My mother does a lot of fund raising for local charities and she’s on the board for the art museum and the historical society ... Anyway, they support a lot of causes so it’s not like they’re just self-indulgent, grinding the poor underfoot. My mother launched the Santa Teresa Girls’ Club just about single-handedly. The Rape Crisis Center too.” (Grafton, *C* 554)

The activities of charity and work are ones Millhone can latch onto as a way of beginning to understand the kind of life Bobby and his family lead. Bobby’s description, combined with his family’s dysfunction, allows Millhone to see them as people and to move past her awkward paralysis when confronted with the gap between their social classes. Humanizing Bobby and his

family also allows Millhone to reclaim her active role as detective, while using that gap to act as an observer, even if she is not totally without bias. As the investigation progresses, Millhone becomes aware that she is as much an enigma for Bobby's social class as it is for her. Through this realization Millhone gains an unsettling power of activity as she breaks through polite social customs to force out the hidden truth. She uses her social difference to bully the upper class suspects into giving her the answers she needs.

Millhone relies on her ability to see the individual rather than the class they represent. While large organizations are faceless concepts to her, and her political convictions do not take prominence in the work, Millhone does get her political agenda across in the way she humanizes and characterizes the people she interacts with during the case. The character of Bobby, more than the rest of his family, appears fairly well rounded for the reader at first, because he is the one Millhone has seen outside of his home and social class. As she proceeds further into the investigation, Millhone and the reader realize that the obstacles Bobby's stepfather, Frank, faces as a parent to his drug-addicted daughter are similar on all socioeconomic levels. These common threads allow Millhone to make statements on drug abuse, parenting, morality, and society as she traverses the social landscapes. Millhone only humanizes Bobby and his family. Her ideas about upper-class society in general remain as negative as they were in the beginning of the text, allowing Millhone to retain a distance from the class she is investigating and keep her suspicions about those with wealth. Her political loyalty to her own lifestyle and class remain intact.

Millhone's distance develops into a curious balancing act as Grafton's series progresses. She is not against economic gain and the trappings of affluence: "I wondered what it would be like to have a city street named after me. Kinsey Avenue. Kinsey Road. Not bad. I figured I could learn to live with the tribute if it came my way" (Grafton, *C* 566). Her curious and playful

attitude is in stark contrast to Paretsky's Warshawski, for whom all actions have (often immediate) political significance or consequences. For Millhone the forays into upper-class life are more like a child playing dress-up: her own form of reverse slumming. The accoutrements are fun to look at, but her blue-collar life is more immediate, real, and comforting to her.

Millhone, like Chandler's Marlowe, openly attacks the upper social classes, and both detectives share a healthy skepticism towards those who are more affluent. For Millhone, the upper classes are interesting to look at in an American Grottesque way, but real living occurs in her social class.

Millhone uses her quasi-outsider status to cement her objectivity. From the beginning of the series, until *J Is For Judgment*, Millhone is an orphan. Her only connections are to her few friends and her social class. This detachment allows her to play roles and easily slip in and out of social and professional settings. By no means is Millhone entirely detached though. She is prone to getting personally involved in her cases. Her sense of honor, her need to help others, and her drive to find the hidden facts inspire her work as a detective. Because of Millhone's choice of social class and ethics, the reader is encouraged to classify her as noble, once again falling into the trap of glamorizing poverty and women who sacrifice for the betterment of society.

Even after Millhone gains the familial connections she was deprived of as a child, she still manages to maintain professional distance, stemming in part from her suspicious nature. Millhone often describes herself as a liar. She lies to people and expects to be lied to in return. Her liar's game is one way she reminds herself that distance is necessary in her profession and that people are not really what they appear to be on the surface. Where Paretsky's Warshawski sees larger corporate connections and sinister abuse by large mainstream organizations, Grafton's Millhone sees individuals struggling to survive. Both characters provide valuable

insights into society's values and failings, while approaching situations from diametrically opposed points of view. Warshawski charges directly at the corrupt corporation and affluent upper class, while Millhone tries to see the individuals in the case before she makes her decisions.

Where Warshawski finds power and drive, to complete her job, in her connection with her blue-collar roots, Grafton's Millhone finds her blue-collar roots to be both a tool and an obstacle when dealing with the more affluent social classes. While Millhone lacks the cemented solidarity that Warshawski enjoys in her blue-collar connections, she is able to create distance and personal ties when they are needed, unlike Warshawski. Millhone's awareness is more personal, but no less political than Warshawski's drive. Grafton provides the reader with a subtler political message wrapped in Millhone's human concerns about her class and profession. Both characters provide valuable insights into the balancing act required of individuals with socioeconomic life ties, professionals struggling to complete a job, and people of political conviction.

Somewhere in the middle of the political paradigm created by Paretsky's Warshawski and Grafton's Millhone, is Muller's McCone. Throughout Muller's works, the reader is witness to McCone's growing success as an investigator and as a member of the All Souls Legal Coop. McCone's rise is not without problems. Her monetary success and the growth of her firm cause McCone to inspect her own political beliefs with the same stringent attention that Paretsky's Warshawski monitors the political leanings of others. Muller has created, through the evolution of the series, an ongoing struggle for her character to remain true to her political beliefs as well as her own desires for success in life.

McCone's All Souls Legal Coop began as a grass-roots partnership that was designed to help those who could not afford legal services to pursue legal actions and defend themselves from being oppressed by the system. McCone joined the group as their investigator to help the lawyers uncover evidence while remaining on a budget. Slowly throughout the series, All Souls grows into a larger firm. McCone notes the growth in many of the works, including *Pennies on a Dead Woman's Eyes*: "All Souls had aggressively added services to attract clients. Members, who paid fees on a sliding scale based on their incomes, could now call an 800 number for consultation with paralegal workers about minor problems. And we'd marketed the plan to major local employers; several now included it as part of their benefits package" (18). All of the changes have brought a growing sense of corporate organization to All Souls, something that the character of McCone feels uneasy about. The further the agency reaches, the more McCone grows to question the success. She wonders if the growth of her business signals an erosion of her political drive to help those who are in need and of her connections to her blue-collar roots. McCone worries that she will fall prey to the self-important ennui that plagues the idle rich, a danger Herbst's Mrs. Winter warned about.

Wolf in Shadows marks the climatic change of All Souls and McCone's relationship with it politically. Two new legal partners, Mike Tobias, who grew up in a crime and drug infested neighborhood, and Gloria Escobar, the daughter of struggling immigrants, join the firm. Mike and Gloria are both dedicated to helping oppressed minorities, but demand a more corporate feel for the agency, which runs counter to the informal atmosphere that had marked All Souls' offices. When their colleague Rae remarks upon the change of atmosphere the new partners bring, McCone replies: "They're crusaders, Rae. People with missions often don't see much to laugh at" (25).

Mike and Gloria are more than crusaders. They are the product of the political reforms McCone has been fighting for since she graduated from college. They are the underprivileged minorities that McCone has identified with from her own working-class roots and ties to the Native American community. Mike and Gloria have definite plans on how the legal and political battles should be waged, and they involve turning the strategies of the mainstream society against itself. They seek the corporate feel and look in order to be taken seriously by larger, mainstream organizations. In adopting these techniques, they show that they are aware of how the legal game works, and that they are more than willing to play it to win for their side. Mike and Gloria are examples of political reform, but they also bring to light challenges political movements face with new generations of reformers.

The founder of All Souls, Hank Zahn, comes from an affluent middle-class background that allowed him to attend school without having to work (Muller, *Wolf* 27). Pam is a product of private education. Larry traveled Europe before attending Yale. McCone wonders how these individuals developed any social conscience, coming from moneyed backgrounds where people did not necessarily care about the poor or oppressed (Muller, *Wolf* 27). Even though McCone is aware that Hank and the others take for granted the success Mike and Gloria struggled to achieve, she is also aware that they are the fading soldiers of the revolutionary 1960s. Hank et al. are the white voices that spoke out for those they saw as not having a voice, and now they run the risk of being condemned for their white ethnic origins and socioeconomic ties that allowed them to fight from the mainstream in the first place. Instead of representing voices of the oppressed, All Souls must be aware that they could be accused of co-opting those voices to serve their own purpose, a common fear harkening back to the proletarian movement and the rise of 1960s feminism.

McCone finds herself on the blue-collar side of these political battles. Her father was a Chief Petty Officer in the Navy and her mother raised five kids. While her neighborhood was not the crime zone Mike grew up in, she did not enjoy the economic privilege of Hank and the original partners. She worked hard in school and received a small scholarship, but also had to work nights to pay for her education. Mike and Gloria's drive and firsthand experience with severe oppression and poverty make McCone wonder where her political beliefs lie now that she is more successful:

Maybe, I thought now, I'd forgotten where I'd come from. Lost sight of who and what I really was. Maybe because I'd achieved more than I'd expected to—a certain professional reputation, a newly remodeled home of my own—maybe I'd lost my ability to relate to people like Gloria and Mike, people who deserved far more credit for their accomplishments than I for mine. (Muller, *Wolf* 28)

McCone is forced to wonder if her accomplishments mean as much because she did not struggle as hard as others. McCone has grown accustomed to her success and the pleasures that go with it. What plagues her most is whether she is still as driven or as dedicated now that she has achieved a level of comfort. McCone constantly tries to read the physical markers of her lifestyle against how she conceptualizes herself. She still feels like a reformer struggling against the system to help the working class, the poverty stricken, and immigrants. Because her life reflects more luxury than struggles, she wonders if she has lost her edge. This introspection is a new twist for politically active characters. While 1930s proletarian women writers and 1960s feminist advocates laid the groundwork for the political reform of McCone's world, McCone's introspection is a necessary step reflecting a need for the examination of goals and drives to ensure that they are still relevant to contemporary social struggles.

In *Wolf in the Shadows*, Mike and Gloria, two new partners, want to reorganize the Coop so that McCone takes an administrative role with 9 to 5 hours to meet with the partners in the

firm. The threat of being pushed into middle management forces McCone to decide whether or not she still is a reformer and if her methods are still the best way to bring about reform. Her political grassroots background and attack-from-the-outside philosophy seem antiquated and ineffective in comparison to Mike and Gloria's organized corporate approach to business. McCone must decide how to achieve the goals she values. She does have the option to take the administrative position and work on reform from a more conventional position, one similar to those found within larger mainstream firms, as Mike and Gloria advocate. When confronted by Gloria, McCone realizes that she is still connected to her working-class origins and still dreams of helping others in need, but in her own way: "And in essence you're asking me to give up my dream for yours ... [But your dream is] Better? More worthy because you've experienced hardship and discrimination?" (Muller, *Wolf* 81). In the politically sensitive arena of All Souls, the oppressed voice is the empowered voice. In essence, Gloria and McCone are battling for authority, predicated upon who has experienced greater hardship.

In her zest to prove her point, Gloria even overlooks the fact that McCone is part Native American and has experienced bigotry firsthand. Gloria clumsily accuses McCone: "You have an answer for everything don't you? And you've had it so easy. You cannot possibly understand" (Muller, *Wolf* 81). McCone's original bowing to Gloria's experience, during their conversation is a common occurrence, which critics such as George Yudice call "white guilt" (268). The mainstream, middle-class, white population is powerless to contradict the experiences of the oppressed. McCone does experience this guilt initially but rallies for two main reasons: one, she is not fully white and has experienced oppression; two, for McCone and the lawyers of All Souls, oppression is wrong, and being more oppressed does not give one the authority to silence another who has experienced oppression.

As McCone battles to balance her growing affluence with her ties to blue-collar roots and political beliefs, she cultivates connections to other women who serve as warning signs for becoming too focused on careers and causes. McCone's world is filled with women who are "crusaders" like Gloria and Adah Joslyn, a police officer and longtime friend. Both of these women represent the ideal of the driven individual who is dedicated to achieving their goals in spite of political opposition. Neither woman is held up as a role model after whom McCone can pattern herself to help navigate her own inner turmoil. Gloria neglects all other areas of her life to achieve success in her career and political goals. Adah fails to obtain a high-stress position on a crime task force when she ignores her own mental and physical health. Both Gloria and Adah provide tragic examples that McCone and Warshawski escape by trying to maintain a balance between their own well-being and their dedication to their political goals. The path of the social reformer is not easy, and many sellout or burnout along the way. Both Warshawski and McCone gain nobility from their endurance and choices to continue the social battle. McCone constantly faces the accusation that she takes up the social struggles of other classes only to silence them in the name of political fashions, like Paretzky's Alex from *Hard Time*. McCone is no longer a member of the socioeconomic class that she tries to help. This outsider status can turn her attempts at aid into hollow gestures designed to assuage social and political guilt, while she works to maintain her new lifestyle. Consequently, McCone is hyper-aware of her motivations and the picture she presents to others. She polices herself.

McCone cannot escape her growing level of professional fame and monetary success. Her growing reputation and the success of *All Souls* also force her to think about her political agendas and ethics. In *A Wild and Lonely Place*, McCone works to trap a criminal who poses a terrorist threat on an international scale. This case includes close collaboration with government

agencies and the larger RKI investigation corporation, whose CEO, Gage Renshaw, asks McCone to join his ranks. She refuses to associate with RKI on the grounds that she does not feel the large professional firm practices ethics she can trust: “I thought about my fear of becoming too much like Renshaw and his cohorts. Realized that if I accepted the proposed contract I would have taken one more step toward the line that separated us” (32). Large business holds the same threat for McCone that it does for Paretsky’s Warshawski. When the organization becomes too large, the threat of corruption becomes too viable. Both investigators prefer to maintain control over the political drives and ethical values of their agency at the expense of possible economic gain, which further ties them to their blue-collar roots and political causes.

McCone’s strategy to avoid becoming a corporate shill for the larger bodies, both government and private who are hunting the terrorist, is similar to Millhone’s. She humanizes her client by bonding with a troubled girl named Habiba. By perceiving the threat to this girl, McCone regards her international case as a simple assignment of protecting one little girl:

But even as I fought the notion [of becoming more like RKI and taking the case], a compelling image kept intruding. An image of big shiny dark eyes staring at me over the lip of an enormous marble urn. Big shiny eyes that—had it not been for the quick actions of a brave young woman—might now be staring blank and dull from a steel drawer in the morgue. (Muller, *Wild* 31)

By converting the abstract into the concrete and local, McCone satisfies her need to help those who cannot defend themselves by giving the girl a legal voice and protection. This rationalization allows her to function in the role of detective and crusader without being overwhelmed by the larger organizations she is collaborating with on this case.

Unlike Grafton’s Millhone and Paretsky’s Warshawski, McCone is neither intimidated by nor entirely suspicious of the wealthy:

Years before I would have been intimidated by walking into such a gathering. I'd have felt naïve and poorly dressed next to these beautiful people. But in the interim I'd met too many genuinely beautiful people who used their wealth and leisure time to finance literacy programs and organize AIDS benefits and raise funds for the arts to be impressed by cheap people with money. (Muller, *Wild* 106)

In McCone's world, wealth does not grant respect or corruption to its holders. Instead McCone focuses on what one does with money as the measurement of a person. This measurement satisfies McCone's personal quandary of keeping in touch with her blue-collar roots and being true to her political beliefs she discounts her monetary gain and focuses on what "good" she can do with the money she makes. Her political justifications are built upon an ideal of action, which also allows her to accept the help of attorneys at All Souls who come from affluent and middle-class backgrounds. Her justification based on action is similar to the reasoning behind blue-collar workers' acceptance of writers from different social classes during the 1930s proletarian movement. Although this justification does leave McCone open to the accusations of feminist groups who claim that middle-class white society takes on the causes of minorities to control their voices and destinies, McCone escapes this accusation through her mixed racial heritage.

A Wild and Lonely Place marks a major change for the character of McCone. Her balancing act between the growth of her business and her need to feel that she is serving her political beliefs is changed by her friend Hank's announcement that he and his wife are leaving the All Souls Coop. At first, McCone is disconcerted by Hank's decision, until he points out the obvious: "The co-op you're mourning doesn't exist any more" (323). With this realization, McCone feels free to terminate her connection with the increasing corporate All Souls and establish a business more in keeping with her belief in the power of grassroots movements and fighting for the rights of the working class. The new business puts an end to McCone's constant self-policing and she can focus on working for those she sees as in need monetarily or politically.

In consequence, McCone can avoid the powerlessness that comes from her constant fear of betraying her roots and, instead, seize power as an advocate for those individuals she has always sought to help.

Paretsky's Warshawski, Grafton's Millhone, and Muller's McCone provide a continuum of political awareness in feminist hard-boiled detective fiction. Each of the feminist detectives has her own way of dealing with differences in class and politics, but none of the methods is without potential political drawbacks, much like the constant evolution of political awareness the reader experiences. Warshawski's approach is the most militant and demanding of those she encounters. She advocates one approach to the correct path of social reform, similar to Herbst's characters of Victoria and Mrs. Winter. Millhone presents a startling contrast. She takes each case on a person-by-person basis, struggling to humanize large organizations. She resembles Chandler's Marlowe in her ability to see the person behind the social persona. Her awe and discomfort with the more affluent social classes keep her from copying his cool disdain. McCone provides a middle ground that is composed of introspection and the ability to identify with individuals in need, regardless of their class. She, like many feminists, is aware of how people can be silenced when an outsider takes up their cause. All of the feminist hard-boiled detective writers incorporate shades of proletarian protest techniques into their work.

4.7 Power of the People

Social class plays a role in hard-boiled detective fiction for both masculine and feminist writers. For the masculine detective, social class was a variable to be manipulated to gain the objective viewpoint the detective needed to solve the crime and remain free from questionable elements that could cloud his vision or taint his isolated status. Like their proletarian predecessors, feminist hard-boiled detectives see social class as a platform for enacting political

change, which keeps them connected to the blue-collar community they value and free of any taint success and “filthy lucre” could bring them.

The feminist hard-boiled detective’s manipulation of social class does contain potential problem areas, such as the glamorization of poverty. The economic choices of Warshawski, Millhone, and McCone can be seen as showing a lack of concern for the lower social class and the economic improvements they need to obtain the basic amenities of living. Each detective portrays her impoverished state as one of nobleness and sacrifice, characteristics valued by proletarian writers. McCone’s connection to this problem may be the least direct. While she rises in her economic status, she still idealizes the individuals in the working class as having more potential than those in the idle upper class. While nostalgic nobility is associated with the idea of giving up a privileged lifestyle to adhere to personal political convictions, akin to those who follow a religious calling and deny worldly goods, this concept has a negative side: the romanticization of poverty. The idea of the noble economic sacrifice makes the state of being poor alluring. While feminist detectives show that a woman on her own is likely to be a part of lower socioeconomic classes, the conflict between being a member of and empathizing with lower social-economic classes has plagued the feminist movement since the mid-1980s (Warhol 259). In this sense, the feminist hard-boiled detective is using social class to make a point while exploiting the ability to gain access to middle-class comforts. The feminist detective represents these working-class women and the growing concerns that they face.

There is the inherent fear that feminist hard-boiled detectives are helping the working class to have political power over them and to deny them a voice. Warshawski, Millhone, and McCone avoid this danger in different ways. All three have ties to a minority community in terms of social class and family background. Warshawski and McCone have strong ethnic ties,

while Millhone was raised as an orphan with no ties to any ethnic community and therefore no access to their voice. These connections to the oppressed give the hard-boiled feminist detectives a tie with the other oppressed communities that works to negate the idea that they are stealing the voices of others. Warshawski and McCone also have clearly defined political agendas that they uphold publicly and measure their actions by internally. Millhone may not have overt political justification, but her political beliefs and ethics are tied to her conceptions of right and wrong, which allow her to measure the social value of those around her.

Feminist hard-boiled detective writers use the same tools of political reform that the proletarian movement, specifically female proletarian writers such as Josephine Herbst, use to carry out their social agendas. They have also taken the power of blue-collar status from their masculine forefathers and used it, not as a platform of objectivity, but as a platform from which they may enact social commentary.

Chapter Five: No Woman Is an Island

He that can live alone resembles the brute beast in nothing, the sage in much, and God in everything.

Balthazar Gracian, 1647

5.1 Strength in Numbers

Community provides important power structures, aspects of identity, and connection for feminist hard-boiled detectives, as it does for the protagonists in women's proletarian fiction of the 1930s. The ties to community that are so powerful in women's writing differ from the expected isolation created in the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective genre. Kingsley Widmer proclaimed that the toughness of the hard-boiled character is an inheritance from the American hobo tradition, with the lone rebellious heroes traveling the country in self-discovery and defiance (3). The idea of the lone outsider who can clearly view society is much older than hobos and Hemingway. Chandler, Hammett, and Cain owe a debt to Henry David Thoreau, as do many of the "classic" hard-boiled detective writers (Nyman 20). Thoreau's tenants of rugged individualism and transcendentalism can be seen in many classic tough guy American heroes, especially those concerned with maintaining order. Thoreau's ideas of the self-made and self-actualized man provide a pattern for the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective tough guy.

Chandler's Philip Marlowe did not spend a great deal of time at a pond nor did he philosophize about growing beans; however, Marlowe, like Hammett's Sam Spade and many other of their tough brethren, is created with a strong streak of self-reliance, individualism, and supposed isolation from society and personal connections. In *Tough Guy Writers of the Thirties*, Kingsley Widmer describes the hard-boiled character as "an isolato" (xxix). The classic masculine hard-boiled detective is purposefully alone, with a sense of empowering solitude rather than destructive isolation. These detectives are presented without wives, children, parents

(and often siblings), and connections to their neighborhoods. Their lack of relationships has been seen as giving them a distinct, pristine moral and ethical quality (Walton and Jones 190). They are not enmeshed in the complicated emotional dramas of a family life, and they remain pure of heart regardless of the criminals they interact with or actions they take to re-establish the violated social order.

Masculine hard-boiled detectives predicate their masculinity on this isolation, on how effectively they solve crimes, and on how constant they remain to their ethical orientation. Sheldon Norman Grebstein posits that the hard-boiled detective's moral code is taken from "Hemingway's Code," which allows him to reject social conventions and then to focus on bravery and professional honor (23). When the masculine hard-boiled detective successfully solves the case and keeps his values intact, his prowess as a detective and a man is confirmed. Grebstein's idea is based on the notion that the hard-boiled detective can stand outside of the influence of mainstream society and that the order he inscribes is separate from that society, both of which are questionable beliefs. The masculine hard-boiled detective's purported objectivity and ethical code is dependant upon his isolation. Even when they do have partners, as in Sam Spade's case at the beginning of *The Maltese Falcon*, the partnership appears on the surface to be strictly a business arrangement, with little attachment between the two individuals.

Isolation is intentionally conflated with the illusion of objectivity in the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective genre (Walton and Jones 190). While the hard-boiled detective may note the irony of law, he reinscribes the middle-class social order over and over again, protecting and upholding mainstream society's ideals and decrees. Therefore his "objectivity" may be seen as a mask used by mainstream society, which in turn questions his claim of isolation. The traditional masculine hard-boiled detective is not an outsider with an unimpeded

view of the fringes, rather he is at the center of society, looking at the fringes of society with the jaundiced eye of mainstream order.

Proletarian literature may have come of age at the same time as hard-boiled detective fiction, but it did not adopt the isolationist ideas of the traditional masculine version of the genre. Instead, the proletarian movement was about community. Membership in or empathy with the working class was seen as a necessary element for a member of the party and for those who sought to mold a core of proletarian literature.

These battling views concerning isolation allow the feminist hard-boiled detective to do a delicate balancing act as she maintains community ties and preserves the authority to establish order in a genre that values isolation. This fragile equilibrium between connection and authority requires the reader to look at some basic assumptions about isolation, objectivity, and the power of the hard-boiled detectives, both masculine and feminine. In contrast to her masculine counterparts, the feminist hard-boiled detective enjoys many connections through intimate personal involvements, family ties, and community activities. Yet, she cannot ignore the vital power the masculine hard-boiled detective enjoys via his isolation. What emerges in feminist hard-boiled detective fiction is an incarnation of authority that does not use an illusion of objectivity; rather, the visions of justice are molded by staunch political beliefs and the feminist hard-boiled detective's personal ties.

5.2 Masculine Tradition and Isolation

America has long had a strong affinity for the idea of the self-made, isolated hero. Jopi Nyman, in *Men Alone: Masculinity, Individualism, and Hard-Boiled Fiction*, credits the isolation of the masculine hard-boiled detective as being part of the tradition of rugged individualism and a hyper-masculinization of the detective through an emphasis on the idealized construction of a

powerful white male character who survives chaotic criminal landscapes and returns order to those landscapes. Nyman sees the concept of the American autonomous individual in hard-boiled detective fiction as being idealized to the point where female characters, non-white characters, and characters that are not masculine, are seen as the Other and forced to the fringes of society (20). Through this construction of the lone white powerful male detective, the tough guy's voice then becomes one of seeming objectivity. But his mask of objectivity is just another conduit that mainstream society uses to uphold its power structures and replicate its order in chaotic landscapes. His isolation is a sign of his resistance to corruption and the power of an individual.

In Chapter 13 of *Bloody Murder*, Julian Symons theorizes that the masculine hard-boiled detective's isolation also allows the focus of the writing to remain firmly on the plot. The reader's attention is focused on the case unfolding, and authors can make their points without lecturing readers.

The masculine hard-boiled detective, Nyman points out, is separating himself from those who dwell on the borders of society. Social fringes represent what theorist Gloria Anzaldua calls a "borderland." Anzaldua's *Borderlands/La Frontera* explains that the members of the borderland are those individuals who have been pushed out by the mainstream. The inhabitants include criminals, ethnic minorities, political minorities, those who violate the standard gender norms of their times (such as the femme fatale), and the economically deprived. Her analysis does not include the white male as a member of the borderlands.

For the borderland to become non-threatening for mainstream society, it must be either "tamed" and put into an ordered form that the mainstream is capable of recognizing and endorsing or kept "in its place" away from the mainstream. Establishing this order and

maintaining the distance between borderland and mainstream is the job of the hard-boiled detective. The traditional masculine hard-boiled detective, who is knowledgeable about the criminal world, enters the borderland and questions its inhabitants to uncover the missing narrative and restore order to the violated mainstream. These traditional males are not the inhabitants of the borderland; they belong to the mainstream. And since they are not removed from society, their isolation is an illusion to give them the power to establish the preferred order of the mainstream.

The hard-boiled detective's degree of isolation serves the purpose of establishing the traditional masculine detective's control. In "The Tough Hemingway and His Hard-Boiled Children," Grebstein posits that the second criterion of toughness is a demand that a hard-boiled detective have "control over personal feeling and natural appetites, especially in a professional situation" (24). Chandler's Marlowe, Hammett's Spade, and Cain's Huff are all men who appear to be without ties, whose isolation is self-imposed and speaks to the detectives' ability to remain in control over unruly emotions. These detectives are focused upon the business of the case and would see relationships as a distraction that reflects poorly on their ability to concentrate and control their urges (Grebstein 23). For these detectives to engage in strong emotional relationships during a case would leave them open to dangerous emotional manipulations, which could remove them from authority. Once the reader and other characters realize the detective has abandoned logic and reasoning and started reacting on a purely emotional level, the detective's judgments are open to question. The hard-boiled detective's power, associated with certain degrees of socioeconomic isolation, is threatened when potential lovers enter the stories.

The hard-boiled detective genre has close ties to film noir, a style of black and white filming associated with the crime movie genre of the 1940s, and a polarized vision of women as femmes fatales or innocents. A connection with a femme fatale is particularly destructive for the detective because he will lose his isolation from the borderland and its inhabitants when he becomes emotionally united with her. Consequently, the detective loses his objectivity and is left open to the possibility of corruption by making mistakes in judgment, being manipulated, or even abandoning his ideals of justice. Femmes fatales are women who are excessive in their desires for power and monetary gain, who must be stopped for the plot to regain order (Walton and Jones 193). Priscilla L. Walton and Manina Jones theorize that the femme fatale is a victim of the masculine hard-boiled detective's need to maintain his isolated state by rejecting the female and the criminal (Walton and Jones 193). While this threat to isolation may appear to be the cause for rejection on the surface, the femme fatale is also dangerous because of her connection to the borderland and the lawlessness that exists there in mainstream society's eyes. Slavoj Žižek posits that the femme fatale represents the desires the detective must not give in to (63). Žižek's interpretation further reduces the femme fatale from a two-dimensional character to a mere symbol.

Femmes fatales populate the world Raymond Chandler created for Philip Marlowe. In *The Big Sleep*, Marlowe is tempted by Vivian Sternwood Regan and even invites her back to his apartment, an area he is very protective of: "But this was the room I had to live in. It was all I had in the way of a home. In it was everything that was mine, that had any association for me, any past, anything that took the place of a family" (135). Vivian is keeping secrets from Marlowe and preventing him from finding answers about the exact fate of her last husband, Rusty Regan. While her motives may be construed as somewhat sympathetic, Vivian is a femme

fatale who enjoys the power and the danger her connection to the fringe elements of society gives her. She is a woman who can travel across social borders. While Marlowe does feel a bond with Vivian, he ultimately leaves her behind and follows a path that aligns him with her father, General Sternwood. By giving his loyalty to the General, Marlowe avoids any emotional corruption that could occur in a relationship with Vivian. He removes himself from any possible alliance with the borderland (Vivian), and retains his association with masculinity and authority as it is embodied by General Sternwood. In general, it is Marlowe's client that ultimately causes Marlowe to focus on his professional ethics and suppress his private urges. The strength Marlowe draws from this professional tie is similar to the power the feminist hard-boiled detective finds in the client/detective relationship.

In *Farewell, My Lovely*, Marlowe is besieged by yet another femme fatale, Mrs. Grayle, as well as a nosy do-gooder, Anne Riordan. While Marlowe deftly evades the sexual trap of the femme fatale offered by Mrs. Grayle, at the end of the novel it is Miss Riordan who demands that Marlowe kiss her (246). Miss Riordan does not provide the temptation of corruption and a life of crime that Mrs. Grayle does. She appears on the surface to be essentially undistruptive to Marlowe's ethical values. As the child of an honest police officer in a corruption ridden local government, Riordan seems to share the same code of honor as Marlowe. Riordan has a talent for turning up in dangerous situations on the fringes of society. She moves from mainstream to the borderland very easily. Through this movement, Riordan could be concealing, or carrying, taint from the borderland into the mainstream and ultimately to Marlowe. Her association with Mrs. Grayle and criminal elements makes her something of an unknown. Marlowe deals best with Riordan when she is in his office and firmly entrenched in mainstream society. There, he can prescribe her role and limit her power by not sharing information with her, not keeping her

informed with the happenings of the case, and generally limiting her involvement. The book ends with Riordan demanding that Marlowe kiss her, but the reader is not privy to his response. Thus, he apparently remains unaffected by the residual taint of the borderland a lawless female might transmit.

The same pattern of lovers equaling threats holds true for Hammett's Sam Spade. In the beginning of *The Maltese Falcon*, Hammett's Spade finds himself extremely isolated after the death of his partner, Miles Archer. He deftly avoids lasting emotional attachment and manipulation by Brigid O'Shaughnessy, as well as a potentially more agreeable romantic alliance with his secretary, Effie Perine. O'Shaughnessy embodies the obvious threat of an inhabitant of the borderland who is waiting to lead Spade astray. In contrast, Perine is a savvy assistant who understands crime and represents a safe association with the mainstream for Spade. While she is not as obvious a threat as the femme fatale, she could cloud his judgment and make him vulnerable to mistakes. Spade ignores the potential romantic ties and complications that Perine presents for him, much in the same way that Marlowe evades Riordan's romantic attempts. Being the object of desire grants Spade the power he needs to keep the women in his life at bay, while he solves the mystery and retains his hard-won objectivity through continued isolation from lasting attachments. O'Shaughnessy allows Spade to be the detective and construct her role in the crime, and Perine allows Spade to dictate her role in his life as he has done from the beginning in their business relationship. Spade is by no means sexually innocent or entirely a proponent of the mainstream majority, as evidenced by his often unclear motivations. He is the classic hypermasculine, self-reliant figure, described by Nyman, who controls the roles of those who dwell in the borderland and of those who exist in mainstream society, and is therefore worthy of the reader's admiration.

Cain's classic works show what can happen when an isolated protagonist leaves isolation and falls into the borderland. *Double Indemnity* is a hard-boiled warning for detectives who think they should follow the Mrs. Grayles and Ms. O'Shaughnessys they encounter. As Joyce Carol Oates wrote in "Man Under Sentence of Death: The Novels of James M. Cain," Cain's protagonists are engaged in struggles that they will lose and as a result society will create the necessary punishment and order (140). Huff's downfall in to love and corruption represents what can happen when the hard-boiled detective gives in to the desire Zizek sees embodied in the femme fatale (63). While Huff slowly loses his hold on his job and life, Keyes maintains his isolation and control, providing an example of what Huff should be doing. Huff enters the borderland and chooses an existence the mainstream deems dangerous and chaotic. His choice shows that the authority of the white male fails when he leaves his mainstream role. While it is Keyes, the firmly grounded representative of mainstream society, who remains alive and seemingly isolated at the end of the novel, he does not solve the case. Keyes also falls pray to attachments: notably his attachment to Huff. Huff becomes a carrier of the danger and corruption of the borderland, but Keyes fails to see that criminal element because of their closeness. These dangerous relationships further underscore the need for the detective to remain isolated from the borderland and loyal to the mainstream in the hard-boiled genre. The attachment to the mainstream is masked with the illusion of isolation and objectivity, which in turn helps grant the masculine hard-boiled detective authority and masculinity.

Just as there are exceptions to most rules, there are exceptions to the undermining power of attachments, and the disempowering effect they have on masculine hard-boiled detectives. Women tough guy writers, such as Vera Caspary, were able to create characters that could rise above the temptation of the potential femme fatale and the chaos of the borderland to sustain

strong emotional attachments to the Other. In Caspary's novel, *Laura*, Detective Mark McPherson falls in love with Laura, a woman who may have murdered her fiancé's lover. From the beginning, Caspary crafts Laura as a kind of femme fatale and member of the borderland. She is withholding information from McPherson, but she is also naïve. This mixture of characteristics places her between the mainstream and the borderland. She possesses an élan that draws men to her, as evidenced through her relationship with jaded writer Waldo Lydecker and her fiancé, Shelby Carpenter. Laura's roots are far from the cultured social circle she finally enters, as she displays her ability to cross social borders.

Like most emotional bonds in the hard-boiled genre, McPherson's attachment to Laura and Waldo threatens his objectivity on the case. The threat of potential corruption is not lessened by Laura's lying to protect her fiancé and the actions she takes without McPherson's approval. She appears dangerous, uncontrolled, and chaotic. What saves McPherson from the same fate as Cain's Huff is that McPherson sacrifices his emotions for Laura to find out who committed the murder. This isolated state does not protect McPherson from feelings of betrayal when he discovers what Waldo has done. McPherson demonstrates his ability to keep his point of view free from the manipulation of others, while allowing himself to develop meaningful connections to other characters. With Caspary, the borderland is one that can be tamed; its inhabitants can be mainstreamed, and its power to corrupt, limited.

What Chandler, Hammett, and Cain show the reader is the power of individualism and isolation on a detective who is strictly focused on the case. Women tough guy writers like Caspary, precursors of the feminist hard-boiled detective author, open up new avenues for their protagonists when they portray men who are capable of forming lasting ties and retaining their power and integrity. While Caspary wrote police novels, her ability to show strong ties

combined with powerful drives link her work to both feminist literature and proletarian literature of the 1930s.

5.3 Proletariat Progress

Women proletarian writers saw the power in connections between individuals and large groups and sought to capitalize upon these bonds to promote their causes. For Brody, Herbst and Maritta Wolff, working class Americans comprise the border dwellers. This narrow view of border dwellers does not mean that proletarians were unaware of race and gender issues. In *Nobody Starves*, Brody's character Molly is expressly racist in the beginning of the novel as she describes the various immigrant workers with whom she works at the factory. Barbara Foley points out the inconsistent focus the 1930s American Communist Party placed on the "woman issue." While the party as a whole understood women to be invaluable partners in the social struggle, especially when it came to motherhood and organizing, they tended to keep to the established social hierarchy, with men taking the lead and women in more subservient internal party positions (Foley 218). Women proletarian writers created works that displayed the political aspects of personal relationships and produced a "collective aspect" to their characters that showed the autonomous character to be isolated and impotent (Foley 241). What these women writers were creating was a viable, powerful community capable of interrogating political hierarchies and addressing the "the woman question" at the same time. In Herbst's *Nothing is Sacred*, Mrs. Winter is highly cognizant of the political follies her daughters and their husbands commit, as well as what she will have to do to keep them from capitalist decay. Herbst's *Rope of Gold*, considered largely autobiographical, documents Victoria's growing awareness of women in relation to party politics and the roles women play in the communist

movement. These works are about the individuals' connections to something larger than another person or even class struggle.

Walton and Jones hypothesize that the feminist hard-boiled detective uses the power of isolated of the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective to explore contradictions in power structures and gendered oppression in society (196). They see the female detective as an "outlaw hero" girding herself with the power of those who violate unjust laws, a criminal and a law-bringer (Walton and Jones 199). Finding ties in the self to larger political and socioeconomic groups contradicts the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective's emphasis on the power of the individual and the need for isolation to clearly view the truth. Critics such as Nyman and Dennis Porter find the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective's reliance upon isolation and individualism to be a response to historical pressures. Porter sees the isolation of the early masculine hard-boiled detective as a movement to assuage mainstream white society's fears of communism, immigration, and crime (*Pursuit* 196). The focus upon the individual as autonomous may then be a historical pacification of the reader's fear. Contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective writers and women proletarian authors of the 1930s see women's power coming from their connections to larger causes and communities. Walton and Jones note that the feminist hard-boiled detective gains much through her associations with others (190). Rabinowitz comments that women proletarian writers sought to identify with the laborer and with the maternal to create a group of fertile political mothers (56). Isolation, then, is a misstep when dealing with historical and contemporary issues. Walton and Jones are partially correct; the contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective is an "outlaw" in that she has bonds with those who are members of the borderland. However, outlaws affect little change in mainstream society. Walton and Jones note that the feminist hard-boiled detective must remain tied to the

mainstream in order to influence the interpretations and outcomes of her cases. As politically freeing as in the idea that the personal relationships have political relevance and power, it also exposes the contemporary feminist hard-boiled detectives to the possibility of losing their power through engendered bias by these ties.

5.4 Political Feminism: Connections and Control

Muller, Paretsky, and Grafton were not the first women detective fiction writers to see the power inherent in making connections to those who dwell on the fringes of society. Gypsy Rose Lee's *The G-String Murders* (1941) chronicles a murder in a strip club, where the lower socioeconomic classes go for entertainment. Lee, the protagonist, comments freely on shoddy working conditions, the dangers of the job, and the crime in the area. She firmly takes up the voice of the borderland inhabitant and expresses desires for safety and a better living. Although the character Lee gets engaged at the end of the novel, her strong voice, frank opinions, and ties to the other strippers stay in the reader's mind. Combined with the earlier women proletarian writings of the 1930s, Lee's 1941 novel provides a glimpse of a powerful woman in a lower-class, seedy world, similar to the one that contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective fiction utilizes.

Feminist hard-boiled detectives are created by their authors to be more connected to their loved ones, various communities, and ethnic heritages than the traditional masculine hard-boiled detectives of the 1930s. Paretsky's Warshawski, Grafton's Millhone, and Muller's McCone have strong emotional involvements with lovers, family, their communities, and their work. Paretsky's Warshawski has had a fair number of romantic engagements, and she often brings up her Polish/Italian lineage through direct reference to her deceased Italian mother, her love of opera, her preference for Italian food, and commentary on the shifting ethnic make-up of her

neighborhood. Grafton's Millhone has more recurring lovers than Paretsky's Warshawski, is defined by her heritage, and has recently discovered ties to family. Muller's McCone has also evolved through her emotional attachments to men and family. Her sense of family is particular, and often under question, as she tries to define where exactly her connections lie. Hard-boiled feminist detectives make very few claims to objectivity and are aware of their political biases and emotional connections. Their ties are complex and hold the threat of both disenfranchisement and strength.

Emotional attachments appear to be more dangerous for the feminist hard-boiled detective than for her masculine counterparts. Women, by contrast, must deal with the myth that they are creatures ruled by their emotions, a misconception of the nineteenth century. The myth is compounded by the social view that a woman should be loyal to her lover regardless of his transgressions, a notion of loyalty that is upheld in the legal system through the protection from testimony that spouses enjoy and the backlash connected to women who react against spousal abuse. For feminist hard-boiled detectives there appears to be conflicting community demands. If she follows her emotional ties, she is seen as being less powerful and giving her authority over to the man in her life. She loses her authority, both personally and professionally. Relationships have partnership obligations. If she ignores her partner, then she may become emotionally disenfranchised.

Feminist hard-boiled detectives come to the genre with a large number of conflicting demands for fulfilling professional roles and maintaining ties to families and communities. On the one hand, the political factions thrive on connection, and women have traditionally enlisted the support of groups to solve problems. On the other hand, strong connections can hamper the feminist hard-boiled detective's authority. Connections, especially to a lover, have the potential

to reduce the detective to a dependant status where she follows her lover regardless of his or her values. Also, multiple ties can impose conflicting demands on the feminist hard-boiled detective. She finds herself torn between the communities she feels connected to and the demands each group makes. Herbst has characters like Mrs. Winter, who tries to guide the men in her family onto a more productive path. Mrs. Winter attempts to turn her family into an effective group intent on obtaining one goal. In contrast, when a man in a close relationship with the feminist hard-boiled detective threatens her sense of power, she cuts her ties with him. The latter reaction is more in keeping with the relationship of Herbst's Victoria with Jonathan from *Rope of Gold*. Jonathan needs to take the lead in the relationship, both personally and politically, with Victoria to feel productive. Victoria is then left feeling isolated and ineffective. To break free from these feelings and return to causes that she believes in, she distances herself from Jonathan and strikes out on her own.

Paretsky's Warshawski and Grafton's Millhone both deal early on with male counterparts of the femme fatale. In *Bitter Medicine*, Warshawski investigates a malpractice suit, but when the killer is revealed to be Warshawski's love interest, Dr. Peter Burgoyne, she must choose among her roles as a member of the women's community lobby for better healthcare, a member of the mainstream society focused on revealing the criminal, and a loyal lover of Burgoyne.

In some ways, Warshawski's relationship with Burgoyne is far simpler to deal with than most feminist hard-boiled detectives' encounters with criminal lovers. Her lover provides her with an easy solution to the mystery: Burgoyne is sorry for what he has done, confesses all and then kills himself. The investigation gives the borderland community Warshawski represents in the case some justice for their dead members. She does not have to deal with Burgoyne trying to manipulate her into letting him go or running off with him, either of which would represent a

perilous journey into the criminal borderland. Ostensibly Burgoyne ceases to be a threat to Warshawski when he dies. The finality of this ending has much in common with masculine hard-boiled detective works, in which the protagonist firmly rejects the temptation of the femme fatale. Paretsky uses Burgoyne's memory to explore other facets of Warshawski and her professional power.

Even though Warshawski publicly professes not to know Burgoyne well enough to be upset by his lies and participation in Consuelo's death, she feels the impact of her involvement with him. At the end of the novel she wants to explain her feelings to Mr. Contreras: "I turned to face him, gestured with my right hand, but didn't speak. I couldn't put my feelings into words. I hadn't known Peter well enough to be eating my heart out over him. His bones and brains on the desktop flashed into my mind ... But [his death is] not my personal burden" (Paretsky, *Bitter* 258). She tries to figure out why Burgoyne's death has such an impact on her, when, in the end, her case was successful. Warshawski's inability to articulate her emotions, combined with the deep lethargy she experiences, is part of depression. She escapes the possible corruption of Burgoyne, but does not remain unmoved by her association with him.

Burgoyne's death makes Warshawski doubt her own judgment and whether she still has what it takes to be a detective: "... Maybe I was just burned out. Too much city, too much time spent in the sewer with people like Sergio and Alan Humphries" (Paretsky, *Bitter* 258).

Warshawski has entered an emotionally nebulous space where there are no clear markers to guide her to an easy answer. Failure in one of her connections has a ripple effect for Warshawski that destabilizes all aspects of her life. Her reaction to the betrayal of her lover is in sharp contrast to Spade's feelings about O'Shaughnessy. Where Warshawski questions her

judgment, it is enough for Spade that he upheld his professional and personal code in the end. He remains firmly in power, while Warshawski struggles to maintain her authority.

Warshawski's brief flirtation with a dangerous criminal male does not prevent her from becoming romantically involved with other men as the series progresses. Perhaps it is Paretsky's way of showing how one negative encounter does not stymie Warshawski's ability to function in all aspects of her life. Her relationships are severely tried by her refusal to share information or power with the men in her life. In *Killing Orders*, she has a brief relationship with Robert Ferrant, a reinsurance broker she met in an earlier novel. It ends when she refuses to allow Ferrant to protect her:

'No one protects me, Roger. I don't live in that kind of universe. I wouldn't screw around with some business deal you were cutting just because there are a lot of dangerous and unscrupulous people dealing in your world Well, give me the same respect. Just because the people I deal with play with fire instead of money doesn't mean I need or want protection. If it did, how do you think I'd have survived all these years?' Protection. The middle-class dream. (215)

Ferrant merely seeks to offer Warshawski the same protection she offers others. He represents the mainstream, upper class, white male seeking to protect a weaker woman. What Ferrant does not take into account is that Warshawski is not weaker, that she is a member of the borderland, where his traditional gendered rules do not apply. She realizes that once Ferrant begins to protect her, he will have power over her, which may in turn diminish her authority and ability to act alone. The same issue appears again in Warshawski's relationship with Conrad Rawlings in *Tunnel Vision*. Warshawski's relationship with Rawlings comes to an end with her refusal to share her information with him and allow the police to investigate for her. Rawlings is trying to place his mainstream institutional order onto Warshawski, who prefers the freedom she acquires from the borderland. As Herbst's Mrs. Winter sees the corruption of masculine power on her

familial ties, she tries to steer those men onto paths that she feels will help them. Warshawski sees the same threat, but merely ends the relationships before they can damage her hold on power or professional standing. Mrs. Winter's path is one of compromise and sharing of power and responsibility, which ultimately fails. Warshawski's approach to such threats is to eliminate ties to avoid questions of authority and power. Without the ties, Warshawski's power is unquestioned, and there are no power struggles in regards to her right to hold the position of detective. Both Herbst and Paretsky have an awareness of how the masculine and the mainstream can disempower female protagonists. Where Herbst's characters still try to work within the support systems they have and change the men around them, Paretsky's detective prefers the power in the borderland and removes obstacles that place her in professional jeopardy.

In these romantic aspects, Warshawski appears to have traits in common with the femme fatale. Like the classic temptress, Warshawski desires to establish her own goals. Warshawski differs in that her designs are not criminal and intended to garner personal gain. Rather, she seeks to establish her authority in a manner that is recognized by the mainstream and borderland alike. With this authority, Warshawski can then communicate the message she sees as being ignored or suppressed by the mainstream. Instead of tempting the mainstream male, like the femme fatale, Warshawski seeks to limit his authority over and involvement in her life.

Grafton's Millhone directly addresses issues of power in her association with male lovers and professional partners, while maintaining her authority and role. In *A Is For Alibi*, Millhone becomes involved with attorney Charlie Scorsoni. After Millhone discovers the truth about Scorsoni's involvement in a murder, their relationship ends in a violent confrontation with Millhone shooting Scorsoni. Like Warshawski, Millhone has to make a choice between which

connections she values more. She faces the same possibility of losing her authority and power as a detective that Marlowe and Huff face. If she gives in to temptation as Huff does, and follows an older social pattern for women to stand by their lovers, then she gives up her power as a detective. Instead, Millhone chooses to keep her power as a detective and create a new independence for herself. Grafton, like Paretsky and other feminist hard-boiled detective authors, 1930s women proletarian writers, and members of the borderland, realizes the benefits of connections, even romantic ones. But Millhone follows Warshawski in ending relationships she sees as threatening to her role as a detective.

Throughout the series Millhone has recurring romantic relationships with the same partners. Robert Dietz, a fellow private investigator, is one of Millhone's on-again/off-again relationships. As professionals, Millhone and Dietz share a common courtesy and trust. They feel comfortable contracting out parts of cases to each other. In *G Is For Gumshoe*, Millhone even allows Dietz to act as her bodyguard. Her reliance upon his protection is an aspect of professional trust that is missing from Warshawski's relationship with authority figures. Millhone does not fear the same reduction in power that Warshawski battles, due in part to the fact that Millhone and Dietz's work relationship is built upon professionalism, respect, and trust. These work ties allow Millhone to avoid being seen as weaker for depending upon another. Dietz's recruitment of Millhone in his work further underscores how successful a professional she is. They both deal with society's borderland and treat each other with professional understanding. In contrast, Warshawski's relationship with Rawlings is fragmented by a lack of professional respect and the often-hostile connection between police officers and private investigators. Millhone and Dietz's professional relationship is a healthy partnership.

The intermittent status of Millhone and Dietz's romantic relationship is due to Millhone's use of partial isolation as a type of protection when dealing with issues of personal trust. Millhone is an orphan who has always felt isolated from other children, the community she grew up in, and the idea of family. She expects people to leave her, a common fear in adults with similar childhood backgrounds. She is selective when cultivating friendship and professional connections, and does not go out-of-her-way to interact with large groups. Her selectiveness is a type of protection. Instead of using her limited connections to ensure she remains free of corruption, like Marlowe and Spade, she uses them to make certain that no one gets close to her and then leaves her again. She fears the loss of connection, not the connection itself. This emotional issue is illustrated for the reader when Millhone's relationship with Dietz ends after he leaves her to take a job for an indefinite amount of time in Germany. When they meet again in *Is For Noose*, Millhone tells him why they will not be getting back together: "What I don't like is being taken up and then abandoned. I'm not a pet you can put in a kennel and retrieve at your convenience" (20). Millhone's ability to back away from Dietz differs from Warshawski's distance from her lovers. Warshawski protects her right to be a detective and her power as a detective. She also ensures that mainstream views do not limit the power she has garnered as a member of and advocate for the borderland. Millhone, on the other hand, protects her emotional stability. Her struggle is not about being a detective; it is about being a woman who desires constancy in a relationship. She builds upon the need for ties, as expressed by women proletarian writers, by adding a feminist demand that her needs be met as partner in a relationship.

Perhaps one of Millhone's most complicated romantic relationships was with her first husband, ex-police officer Mickey Magruder. At the time of their marriage, they were both

police officers. Magruder was older and less inclined to follow regulations than the young Millhone. He was being investigated by Internal Affairs for an alleged beating. While he claimed innocence, Millhone ended the marriage when Magruder asked her to lie to provide him with an alibi. As Millhone sees it, Magruder violated her sense of honor (Grafton, *O* 29).

Throughout the series, Millhone fabricates stories easily and quickly to gain what she needs. When she lies, it is always to achieve an end she feels is just and in keeping with her professional and personal integrity. By asking her to lie in an investigation, Magruder tries to force Millhone to go against her beliefs, compromise her professional values, and implicate herself in a situation with unknown context. When challenged to act in a way she considers dangerous to her power and professionalism, Millhone, like Warshawski, Victoria, and Marlowe, ends the relationship to protect the power of the role of detective and to maintain her individual integrity.

Ironically, Millhone discovers that Magruder was, in fact, innocent of the crime. This realization poses some potential problems for Millhone. She has followed the traditional path when her power is threatened by a romantic liaison. Like Warshawski, Marlowe, and Spade, Millhone ends the relationship at a point where she can still function as a credible professional. Instead of “taking his [Magruder’s] part” as would be the traditional role for wives, Millhone leaves behind the supportive role of wife and takes up residence in society’s borderlands, where she makes her own rules (Grafton *O* 42). Now, she is haunted by the question of what would have happened in the case if she had stayed with Magruder. Did she choose the wrong role to play? She negotiates her doubt in four ways.

One way Millhone removes herself from the “what if” questions is by adhering to the original context and reasoning of her choice. She did not leave Magruder because he committed the crime; she left him because he wanted her to commit a crime. Magruder’s innocence or guilt

is beside the issue. She also reaffirms her choice to leave by telling her own story. Millhone's voice provides the narrative context for the events of the past, and her power to interpret those events in light of new evidence is a testament to the power of her voice. Her justification of her actions reinforces her honor.

A second way Millhone deals with any miscalculations she may have made is through the benefit of hindsight. When Millhone married Magruder she was 21. Now in her late 30s, she has the maturity and experience to see that Magruder was a reckless and dangerous police officer, someone she needed to be wary of even on professional levels (Grafton, *O* 46). His threat to her professionally and her subsequent break with him were based on valid concerns in retrospect. This realization helps Millhone and the reader deal with her choice in a more logical and positive light.

A third way Millhone deals with the idea of a wife leaving her husband during such trying circumstances is by using her distance from the past to admit that her love for him was more hero worship than an enduring bond between partners and equals (Grafton, *O* 47). With this admission, Millhone makes the breakup of the marriage seem inevitable rather than contingent on the outcome of the Internal Affairs investigation. She can, then, accept her part in the ending of the marriage as a mixture of righteousness and disillusionment. Millhone's choice to discontinue a potentially damaging relationship has roots in women's proletarian literature of the 1930s. Herbst's Victoria in *Rope of Gold* leaves Jonathan when it becomes clear that their marriage will not provide them with the means or support to attain their respective goals. To a lesser extent, this rationale is echoed in Brody's character Molly from *Nobody Starves*, who leaves her husband and returns to her family. Millhone is participating in a feminist personal practice as well as a proletarian political practice.

The final way Millhone is able to deal with the events of her past marriage is through Magruder's death. Through his coma and subsequent demise, Millhone is able to reconstruct events of the past and interpret the information in ways that give her peace, without having to deal with any differing opinions or recriminations from Magruder. Her authority, as an empowered member of the borderland and as the last living participant in the marriage, allows her to construct the truth any way she wants. This tactic is similar to those used by Marlowe and Spade in that these detectives control the voices that craft the final image for the femme fatale. The reader does not hear about what events inspired Vivian Regan or Brigid O'Shaughnessy to turn to lives of crime. It is Marlowe and Spade who have the control in the narrative. When they reconstruct the role of the femme fatale and other potentially dangerous women in their lives, their versions are the ones that are validated and accepted. Millhone is following in their footsteps.

Grafton, like Paretsky, shows that the feminist hard-boiled detective is able to function in all areas of her life, regardless of negative emotional experiences. Millhone also provides an important new realization in that she believes there are reasons to end relationships other than a threat to professional power. Possible threats to her emotional state cause her to use her partial isolation as a protective barrier. Most importantly, Millhone does not shy away from examining her reasons to leave or stay, and she is ready to deal with the consequences of those choices in the best manner she can. Sometimes Millhone's solution is to end the relationship. At other times, it includes drawing back from the relationship to allow for individual space. Such self-awareness, professional awareness, and introspection on the power of connections are traits that Millhone has taken from writers such as Herbst and Brody.

Like Warshawski and Millhone, Muller's McCone has several lovers as the series evolves. Her early romantic relationships were hindered by the demands her lovers placed upon her. In Muller's first novel, *Edwin of the Iron Shoes*, McCone begins a romantic relationship with police Officer Greg Marcus. Marcus, like Warshawski's Conrad, demands that McCone share information with him and leave cases to the police to solve. He also wants her to play a more traditional wifely role. His demands upon McCone threaten to limit her power as a detective and a woman by placing social restrictions on what she can investigate and what roles she can play. McCone resents this intrusion and in response moves closer to the borderland. Marcus even refers to McCone as "papoose." Although ostensibly a term of endearment, it reduces McCone to an infantile state while underscoring his whiteness and her Native American heritage. Marcus is then the adult white male who desires power over the rebellious McCone. Like Warshawski and Millhone, McCone ends relationships she feels are a threat to her ability to hold on to her power and authority. She moves towards the fringes of society to be closer to those she wants to connect with and help, leaving behind the oppression and limitations of the middle class.

McCone's current lover, Hy Ripinsky, does very little to limit McCone's power in the role of detective or woman. The reciprocity in their relationship is similar to that of Grafton's Millhone and Dietz. McCone may ask Hy to assist her on some aspects of a case, and he returns the favor. They both retain authority as professionals and share ties to social borderlands. This sharing of power makes for a good professional relationship, but it poses a problem on the romantic level because of a lack of information sharing. In *Wolf in Shadows*, Hy disappears for weeks on end without any explanation to McCone, and in response she chooses to investigate him. McCone's need to understand the where and why of Hy's disappearance stems from her

fear of being used. She needs to ascertain whether or not Hy presents the same threat to her that O'Shaughnessy presents to Spade. Eventually, McCone and Hy develop a system of communication that allows them to inform each other without having to relinquish the power of their roles. McCone, like Grafton's Millhone, is engaged in a relationship based on a mutual profession and shared political beliefs. Unlike Millhone, McCone manages to work past fears of isolation and reduction to show the power of a romantic connection when both individuals are committed to helping each other while respecting professional relationship boundaries. Remarkably, they have managed to create one of the few mutually beneficial romantic bonds in feminist hard-boiled detective fiction.

Romance is not always in the feminist hard-boiled detective's best interests. The need to create and break romantic ties to preserve power in the roles of detective and woman and also be able to indulge in the connections that women proletarian writers and feminists laud is a complicated balancing act for the feminist hard-boiled detective. Feminists often make these vital decisions by choosing to retain their power and position on the fringes of society, where social order and gendered roles break down. There, they are afforded a freedom in relationships they do not find in mainstream society.

5.5 Family Connections

For the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective, family connections are practically nonexistent. The reader knows very little about Marlowe's past, except for his education. Similarly, Sam Spade is more focused on his cases than on revealing any family ties. From the tradition of women's writing, feminist hard-boiled detective fiction emphasizes familial ties and women's ability to act effectively within that group. Feminist hard-boiled detectives, while appearing alone in the world, are connected to their communities and have conflicting roles of

group member and detective. What emerges is a unique relationship that requires the feminist hard-boiled detective to remain attached to, yet distant from, their families.

Paretsky's Warshawski has an idea of family that is defined by abandonment and isolation since the death of her parents. She often dreams of her mother or father holding her, talking with her, or doing simple tasks with her. These dreams provide her with a connection to her immigrant-mother's deep love for family and music and her police-officer-father's ideas of honor. Warshawski can idealize her parents and draw from the strengths she sees in them because they are dead. Their death allows her to construct them to be anything she needs and forgive them when she discovers their flaws. These ties provide her with a powerful sense of self, even if it is based entirely upon her memories and perceptions. In many ways, this sense of identity in connection with family is what Herbst shows to be falling apart in *Nothing is Sacred*. After Mrs. Winter's death, her daughters can remember her as being more approving of their lifestyles and their pursuit of middle-class material luxuries.

Warshawski's living relatives are much more problematic for her. In *Burn Marks*, her father's sister, Elena--a drunken elderly resident of a single-occupancy boarding house, with a gambling addiction and a criminal past--turns to Warshawski for help. V. I. tries to convince her uncle Peter to take in his sister, only to find him too embittered by Elena's alcoholism. Even though Warshawski shares this sentiment to a lesser degree, she falls back into the pattern of trying to guide family by example. She takes care of Elena the way she was raised to believe family should, and she considers her sacrifice to be one that should inspire her reluctant uncle. She shows the value of her ties much the same way Herbst's Mrs. Winter does. While Mrs. Winter's daughters bring her trouble and grief, she still tries to guide them, provide for them, and

ensure their safety, even though she knows they may not respond to her actions in the manner she desires.

Warshawski's desire to live up to her ideals cannot close the gap between her and the remaining members of her family. In *Killing Orders*, Warshawski attempts to show kindness and a desire for family connections to her estranged and disapproving Aunt Rosia. Rosia has ignored Warshawski and her family for many years, following a conflict she had with Warshawski's mother. Warshawski agrees to work for Rosia to show that breaches can be overcome for the sake of family unity. Rosia, in return, hires Warshawski, fires her, lies to her, and ignores her existence. While Warshawski originally welcomes the close ties to Rosia and her family, the darker aspects of family life surface cause her to withdraw from her familial ties. She becomes aware of the emotional violence in herself. Warshawski is also a member of the borderland and feels the same violent emotions as Rosia. But the parallels between the two end with these feelings. How they act on these feelings distinguishes them, and Warshawski is determined not to follow Rosia's negative example. Even though Warshawski does value her family, she realizes that she needs distance from them. She gains a power of connection, not utilized by traditional masculine hard-boiled detectives, but promoted by women proletarian writers.

Grafton begins her series with Millhone lacking biological familial connections, giving Millhone an isolation similar to Chandler's Marlowe. Millhone stumbles upon her extended family in *J Is For Judgement*. Until then, her orphan status gives her a sense of uniqueness and quirkiness that helps her define her character. Her realization that she has family shatters the isolation enjoyed by masculine hard-boiled detectives and shows how a loner might feel adjusting to the idea:

I felt a sudden shift in my perspective. I could see in a flash what a strange pleasure I'd taken in being related to no one. I'd actually managed to feel superior about my isolation. I was subtle about it, but I could see that I'd turned it into a form of self-congratulation. I wasn't the common product of the middle class. I wasn't a party to any convoluted family drama—the feuds, unspoken alliances, secret agreements, and petty tyrannies. Of course, I wasn't a party to the good stuff, either, but who cared about that? I was different. I was special. At best, I was self-created; at worst, the hapless artifact of my aunt's particular notions about raising little girls. In either event, I regarded myself an outsider, a loner, which suited me to perfection. (180)

Millhone's perceived isolation gave her an unlimited power to construct herself as a unique individual--the epitome of the rugged individualism Nyman sees at play in traditional masculine hard-boiled detective fiction. Her strong sense of control over her identity is also present in her work as an investigator and in other aspects of her life. The end of her loner status means that Millhone must now view herself in relation to others, sharing genetic codes, bloodlines, history, and physical likeness. Millhone is being reborn from her mock isolation into a world filled with family and tradition. The idea of family threatens to modify her sense of self. Millhone's ideas of isolation must now incorporate the demands of a family and a past, which force her to reevaluate her life choices, her self-image, and her ways of choosing her roles.

Millhone flounders under her new perceptions, as she sees parts of herself replicated in strangers: "She [Millhone's cousin Liza] looked not like me, but how I felt I looked to others" (Grafton, *J* 210). Resemblances are more than physical and include food preferences as well: "... Jesus, the peanut-butter-and-pickle sandwiches aren't even mine anymore" (Grafton, *J* 282). Millhone is forced to share herself with others and resents it greatly: "In reality, I felt as if someone had just stolen everything I held dear, a common theme in all books you read on burglary and theft" (Grafton, *J* 219). She is experiencing identity theft.

While Millhone struggles with the idea of connection to her family, she eventually rallies when she realizes that connections allow others to give to us as well as take from us. It is in this reciprocal relationship that the strength of the connection comes through for women and, specifically, for the feminist hard-boiled detective. What Millhone gains from her growing relationships is a connection to her deceased mother and an idea that family can bring her closer to those she has lost (Grafton, *Q* 152). Her initial reluctance to pay the price of being part of a group fades when she realizes that through connections come ties to those who are gone. The strength Millhone gets from these ties is a tolerable price to pay for the loss of her uniqueness. Like her proletarian mothers, Millhone realizes that the strength of numbers can nourish her.

Muller's McCone is different from Warshawski and Millhone in that she comes from a large working-class Native American family, to which she is actively connected throughout the series. Her familial identity changes in *Listen to the Silence* when she learns that she is adopted. This discovery ties into her self-image, the way she pictures her relationship with her parents, her belief in basic truths, and her connection to Native American culture.

McCone's realization that she had been lied to about her birth, and her search for her origins, turn her close relatives into suspects. She uses her knowledge of their habits, personalities, and beliefs to successfully interrogate them for information critical to finding her birth origins. Her knowledge of her family can be turned to her advantage once they begin to treat her as an outsider. McCone succeeds, where Mrs. Winter fails, to use the strengths and weaknesses of family for finding the answers she needs.

While McCone has always claimed at least a little Native American blood, she discovers that her birth mother is Shoshone and develops a new awareness of the Shoshone tribe and a desire to connect with their community. Fostering this bond allows McCone to experience more

cultural variety and underpins her desire to help others. She now has a concrete connection to an oppressed community that is considered on the fringes of mainstream society. The Shoshone tribe gives McCone's political beliefs a concrete basis in personal experience. The use of such links reveals an unconscious connection between contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective writers and women proletarian writers of the 1930s.

Where masculine hard-boiled detectives find strength in their solitude, women proletarian writers, feminists, and feminist hard-boiled detective fiction authors find family ties to be empowering and bewildering. Warshawski, Millhone, and McCone are women who must create a balance between the communities they identify with and their professional associations to successfully maintain their roles as detectives. While they use these bonds, they are also aware that these same connections could overwhelm them and cause them to lose their power and vision as detectives, women, and members of the borderland.

5.6 Community Connections

Community is the basis for power and identity for feminist hard-boiled detectives, and this sense of community is similar to the community ties seen in women's proletarian fiction of the 1930s. The feminist detective's relationship with the community communicates her socioeconomic alliances, ethnic alliances, and friendships. These bonds generally do not occur within the boundaries of mainstream society; rather, the communities in question exist on the fringes of society, where the oppressed live and where the feminist hard-boiled detective is empowered.

Paretsky's Warshawski is aware of Chicago's immigrant population and the problems they face. She identifies a neighborhood by the ethnic make-up of its residents. Her home is in an Italian neighborhood, and she travels from one ethnic gathering to another to find clients and

solve cases. Warshawski's easy ability to move from one ethnic borderland to another allows her to build connections with those in political and economic need. She then becomes a part of their struggle and takes up their problems as her own. Gone is the alleged objectivity enjoyed by the masculine hard-boiled detective; in its place is an extended version of the political connections valued by women proletarians and feminists.

Warshawski's connection to the crusades and concerns of the working class and immigrants does not end at the edges of the neighborhoods. She incorporates these ties into the charities she supports. She takes women's political concerns out of the home and into the public sphere. Warshawski supports her friend Lotty's clinic for women, organizations designed to aid and promote women in business, and alumni groups concerned with keeping the children in her neighborhood in schools. Through broad alliances, Paretsky allows Warshawski to create the same global political ties that women proletarian writers attempted to nourish and promote.

The vital ethnic and community awareness Paretsky creates is powerfully displayed in Warshawski's self-perception, which hinges on her idea of ethnic identification. Her half-Jewish, half-Italian background is revealed throughout the series through food, music, and language. She frequently enjoys tortellini, and sausages and peppers, along with good wines. Her life's sound track is comprised of Italian operas. In *Hard Time*, Warshawski uses her verbal proficiency in Italian to pass for an immigrant with little English and ferret out information. She uses her ties to her ethnic heritage to help her solve a case at the Women's Detention Facility of Coolis. These personal touches allow the reader to see how enmeshed in her culture Warshawski is—when it suits her. These connections add validity to Warshawski's political beliefs and credibility to her claims to work for her clients because she cares. It is this idea of community

membership and credibility that resonates in the works of women proletarian writers of the 1930s, who attempted to speak for the working class and for the proletarian movement.

Warshawski's primary ties are to her friends: Lotty Herschel, a Jewish immigrant who fled an anti-Semitic Europe; and Mr. Contreras, her elderly Italian neighbor downstairs. Lotty provides a moral barometer for Warshawski. She is one of the few people Warshawski shares information with and apologizes to on occasion. The bond between these two women is strong. This friendship is one of the few that Warshawski maintains, even though it threatens to limit her power from time to time. Both women hurt each other. Both women protect and forgive each other. Their acceptance of faults and follies allows them to retain their power. They do not hope to radically change the other's behaviors and goals, as is the case with Warshawski's lovers. They respect one another's individuality. This give-and-take represents one of the few well-balanced relationships in Warshawski's life, and it allows her a connection to someone who accepts her role and does not require her to give up her convictions or job. This understanding is the ultimate healthy tie sought after by women proletarians and feminists.

Warshawski's other positive relationship is her friendship with Mr. Contreras, a caregiver figure close to her home. Mr. Contreras feeds her, looks after her dog, screens her visitors, and watches her comings and goings to make sure that she returns from what he knows are risky outings. His tie to the home makes him the stable male that Warshawski can depend upon, without threat to her power as a detective. Mr. Contreras' realm of influence is confined to Warshawski's home. He rarely appears outside of the home sphere, so his influence upon Warshawski's life is limited to that part of her existence. In return, Warshawski provides Mr. Contreras with a daughter figure with whom he shares his life and with a sense of purpose in his

retired years. This relationship is giving and fluid. It is the truly supportive friendship that women proletarian writers hoped to see in literature and life.

Millhone's ties to her community are not as overtly political as Warshawski's or Muller's connections. Millhone has a few close friendships that define her involvement with her community. Her ties to her community and its ethnic diversity are shown through her interactions with food. Like Warshawski, Millhone's tie to her landlord, Henry, provides her with a caring male figure who does not threaten her on a personal or professional level.

Millhone's favorite eatery is Rosie's Tavern. Rosie, the proprietor, offers Millhone food, company, and ties to ethnic communities. The tavern is close to Millhone's home, which allows her to bring friends as well as business associates to dinner. Only in *Q Is For Quarry* did Rosie begin to use menus. Until then she merely told customers what she was cooking: " 'It's veal porkolt. Veal cubes, lotta onion, paprika, and tomato paste. You'll love it.' . . . She was already writing down the order as she spoke, so it didn't require much from us in the way of consent" (Grafton, A 24). Rosie's imperious style allows Millhone to enjoy diversity in food and atmosphere without having to decipher the mysterious Hungarian food for herself. This guided ordering allows Millhone to experience a small amount of cultural diversity while retaining her comfort zone. She makes forays onto the cultural border, but is not overwhelmed by it. Grafton is engaging in an old tradition in women's literature: sharing food as a means of caregiving. Food provides Millhone with an economy of affection. It is the consumption and sharing of food that allows Millhone to avoid long emotional talks with other characters. Food is a symbolic interaction.

Food and friendship are common ties that establish an alternate family for Millhone. Her landlord, Henry Pitts, is a retired baker cum crossword puzzle artist who provides Millhone with

a rent-controlled living space and fresh baked goods. Millhone's interactions with Henry are marked by exchanges of food. Henry gives her bread, invites her over to dinner, and often accompanies her to Rosie's tavern. Grafton's Henry and Paretsky's Mr. Contreras are in the middle of a traditional gendered caregiver switch: elderly male characters looking after the physical needs of the otherwise independent female protagonists. Both gentlemen express paternal concerns about the feminist hard-boiled detectives' lifestyle choices. Their ties to the home, the traditional domain of women, allow them to deal with the feminist hard-boiled detectives in a familiar arena. Both are retired, not very physically active, and experiencing the dilemmas of health that come with aging. These traits combine to contrast Henry and Mr. Contreras with the vital women for whom they care.

Muller has created a small community of reformers in McCone's world. Her friends Hank Zahn, Anne-Marie Altman, Hy Ripkinsky, her nephew Mick and his wife Charlotte, share McCone's desires for social reform. Their acquaintanceships are based on a common drive to help those who cannot help themselves. The chosen professions in the group--lawyers, detectives, and computer experts--allow them to work effectively together. McCone's life is shaped by her need to be with people who allow her to feel as if she is contributing to the social and political causes she believes are valuable. Her friendships further her goals and provide her with a strong political base. Her drive to help the oppressed inspires her to become a member of fringe communities, so that she and her friends can directly interact with those in need. Like Warshawski, McCone's friendships are an expression of her larger political beliefs and needs. McCone's relationships are primary examples of the way women proletarian writers envisioned productive friendships.

Personal, political, and professional relationships form a supportive web for feminists and women proletarian writers. Feminist hard-boiled detectives do not draw power from all relationships. They temper connections that could be hazardous to them and use their ties to the social fringes when necessary. In this way, they create a delicate balance between distance and closeness designed to keep them in their positions of power and prevent them from being relegated to subservient roles to meet society's expectations.

5.7 Community Ties Create Power for Feminist Hard-Boiled Detectives

Feminist hard-boiled detectives rely on personal, political, and professional connections, like the women proletarian writers of the 1930s and the contemporary feminist writers. Where traditional masculine hard-boiled detectives used their isolation as a validation of their power and right to make judgments, feminist hard-boiled detectives engage in a delicate balance of roles designed to validate their self-images and political beliefs and to maintain their power as professionals and members of social borderlands.

Emotional relationships have always posed a threat to the power of the hard-boiled detective. Chandler's Marlowe and Hammett's Spade repeatedly resist the femme fatale to prove their strength and indulge in rugged individualism. In contrast, feminist hard-boiled detectives engage in romantic relationships and manage to rise above the temptation that Cain's Huff fell victim to, namely, being seduced from a position of authority and power into one of powerlessness. Warshawski, Millhone, and McCone end relationships that threaten their power as detectives. They move outside traditional gender and social roles and find power in their connections to social fringes, which allows them to create their own identities in liberating ways. Like the 1930s women proletarian writers, feminist hard-boiled detective fiction authors understand the power in connections and keep hoping to find empowering bonds.

One particularly powerful connection that women proletarian writers explored was the unity and lack thereof found in family ties. Feminist hard-boiled detectives continue this exploration in their complex relations with their relatives, but on a much more suspicious and troubled level, vastly different at times from women proletarian writers. Family contextualizes the feminist detectives, gives them ethnic roots, creates their connections to social borderlands, and engages challenging relationships with varying degrees of closeness and isolation. Family reveals an important sense of self, which allows the feminist hard-boiled detectives to control how they construct their identities as well as how they display their identities to others.

Where the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective is removed from the community, women's proletarian literature and feminist literature has influenced contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective fiction to create women detectives who are connected to their communities through their political causes and friendships. These bonds to the world around them allow them to use the power of groups and gain stability from their connections to friends and communities, and mirroring proletarian literature.

Contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective fiction effectively blends proletarian, feminist, and traditional masculine hard-boiled detective fiction genres to create a genre that examines the perils and strengths of connections, from individual levels to communal levels. In contrast to the isolated traditional masculine figure that appears to function in only one aspect of life, his contemporary feminist counterpart shows how life cannot be compartmentalized, disconnected, and lived without crossing social borders.

Chapter Six: Breaking the Veil of Silence

A tough guy is a man with a gun. A proletarian is a man with a manifesto, and sometimes a gun.

Harvey Swados, 1966

6.1 Violence and the Role of Hard-boiled Detective

The image of the American masculine hard-boiled detective is one of a man worn down by the physical confrontations inherent in his job, but who keeps working his cases nonetheless. In “The Tough Hemmingway and His Hard-Boiled Children,” Grebstein ranks the tough guy’s ability to function in his role, regardless of physical pain, as the first criteria of toughness (23). In these fictions, enforcing the laws and restoring order requires aggressive, confrontational, and often violent actions. Hard-boiled detectives must be able to use violence to establish order and deal with the consequences of aggression when it is used against them. Mastering both aspects of inflicting and withstanding violence is a mark of masculinity and authority in the classic hard-boiled detective fiction.

American society has a tradition of authorizing the use of violence to patrol boundaries and suppress groups and individuals who would disturb its order. This authorization is enmeshed with gender sanctions that strictly regulate who can use socially approved violence and who cannot. Traditionally, men have been the approved dispensers of aggressive social justice. The masculine roles approved for such acts include detectives. Historically, women have not been allowed the same free access to violence and positions of authoritative justice as men. This denial sets up an interesting contradiction for feminist hard-boiled detectives, who must deal with violence as part of their jobs without being deposed from their role of detective and without invoking fear in the reader with the image of an uncontrolled violent woman.

Women's proletariat writers of the 1930s laid the groundwork for feminist hard-boiled detective authors to show violence in a more productive and subversive light. Instead of avoiding or advocating violence, they sought to uncover the stories that have been silenced by social violence. Their ability to give voice to and portray the customarily ignored negative consequences of social violence opened an avenue for feminists. Now they could explore these pathways for women to prepare for violence, survival violence, and take up violence as a tool of their own for establishing order. The women writers of the 1930s displayed violence as a powerful political tool and rescued the power of the forgotten or silenced voices in these confrontations. Contemporary feminist hard-boiled detectives follow these paths and explore a variety of relationships with violence and power.

6.2 Violence and Social Sanctioning

The right to use violence to establish order is a powerful privilege. Historically, in American society, men have traditionally been granted this entitlement, while women have been denied this right. A viable example of the connection between violence and authority can be found in military service and in the police forces, where those who hold the authority to use violence are seen as masculine. This masculinization of authority carries over into society's view of those who are allowed to wield violence. Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Women and War* chronicles the pride America takes in the service of its military forces. Elstain goes on to say that those who serve in combat for the American cause are valorized by America and are seen as heroes of the land. Elstain also explains that service to the state, in matters of war and authorized violence, is a strictly masculine privilege (1). The connection between citizenship and military service validates social action and participation as a citizen, which in turn provides the erroneous assumption that all citizens have equal rights. Women do not have full access to

military duties and therefore are seen as lesser citizens (D'Amico 110-113). Police officers, secret service agents, and hard-boiled detectives are seen as masculine professions in which violent contact is part of the role and could harm women to the point that they are no longer able to fulfill the role. In return, women are seen as creatures that need protection rather than as protectors of society. The polarization of these gender roles underscores the gendering of power and authority in a way that makes it difficult to conceptualize how a woman could hold a position of authority that employs violence with the same success and approval as a man.

The equation of the active and aggressive with the masculine and the passive and peaceful with the feminine is an age-old myth that societies draw upon (Kelly 48). This statement is based on essentialist reasoning, dependant upon some kind of preexisting essence that determines gender characteristics. Within this essential debate is the discussion regarding the idea that women should not use violence because it goes against their nature. This argument is reductive and avoids the real issue of what social boundaries are protected and violated when women use violence.

Works like Diane Fuss' *Essentially Speaking*, put forth the view that constructionism and essentialism are complexly interwoven into dubious arguments about roles and traits based on biological sex. One must examine how the essentialist idea is used to understand its purpose (12). In this case, the idea that women are peaceful creatures by their very nature masks the fact that this peaceful passivity has kept them from taking positions of power in society. It is not a question of whether women are capable of violence, but what illusions are preserved by the idea that they are not. Lois McNay's *Foucault and Feminism* expands this idea that women are relegated to the position of passivity by social institutions, which are designed to keep them from creating positions of power for themselves (10). This social sanctioning and denial is in keeping

with Judith Butler's theories on performativity and gender, in which she views society as allowing and denying access and use of specific body parts in order to preserve traditional gender roles and actions (11). Butler's assertion of how performance subverts the expectations and restrictions of society holds true in cases of sexuality, as well as of violence. The feminist-hard-boiled detective performs all the acts of the hard-boiled detective, including those that require her to interact with others in a violent manner to regain a voice for those who were oppressed.

What is created by the character of the feminist hard-boiled detective is a paradox. A woman is holding a position of masculine authority and retaining her gender and establishing an order that often challenges the politics of mainstream American society. This tenuous position of authority requires the feminist hard-boiled author to constantly subvert the social expectations of gender, role, and authority. The most powerful tool the author can use for this kind of subversion is bringing the suppressed voices of the minorities and border dwellers to the center of the narrative.

Recovering the oppressed voices, as well as her own, may be seen as a socially approved act of violence for the feminist hard-boiled detective, as discussed by McNay (10). Violent policing by mainstream society targets those on the fringe, whose politics, beliefs, or actions threaten the status quo. Traditional masculine hard-boiled detective fiction supports this process. The protagonist is usually heterosexual, male, and generally white. The suspects are characterized as individuals of excess and deviance, either through emotional excess, addictions, sexual deviance, or lack of self-control (Leonardi and Pope 125). Because these individuals were seen as a threat to the hierarchy of mainstream society, they exist on the fringe and then are removed from any position of power by death or imprisonment. Their ability to cross boundaries

is characterized by their excessiveness. Since boundary crossing is a powerful act that can lead to subversion of mainstream social order, these individuals must be contained and limited.

What society really fears, according to Vanessa Friedman in “Over His Dead Body: Female Murderers, Female Rage, and Western Culture,” is the violent woman. The idea of women using violence shatters patriarchal society and forces society to recognize women as subjects rather than passive objects. Since society has denied voice and authority to those who threaten to change its structure, it is unarticulated female rage that society fears (Friedman 67-68). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar investigate this idea in *Madwoman in the Attic*, an exploration of how society conceptualizes women in extremes, either as angels or as monsters, and denies their voices (8). Like sexuality, the right to wield the power of violence is carefully socialized and regulated by law and made the domain of men. Society has rights of passage set up to ensure that only a selected few are privileged to use violence.

Proletarian literature has a complex relationship with violence that focuses on the denied right of a masculine minority to use violence. More often than not, protesting workers found themselves on the receiving end of mainstream society’s oppressive violence. They also had an unarticulated rage which mainstream society feared. Women proletarian writers of the 1930s sought to give voice to the silenced workers. The feminist hard-boiled detective writers’ tools for breaking the silence are similar to those used by women proletarian authors to promote political and social change. Feminist detectives inflict and endure violence to show that women can perform their roles as detectives in the face of threats. They also use the act to reveal internal conflicts, social prejudices, the power of the constructed image, and different strategies for avoiding the label of monster woman. These strategies of avoidance allow them to voice the concerns of the oppressed class they represent. They draw strength from the tools of their trade

in such situations. In *Volatile Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz explains that items which are used regularly become a part of a person's mental self-image (80-82). Feminist hard-boiled detectives use items such as clothing and handcuffs to help them construct a strong and able image for themselves as well as the reader. These women detectives remake the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective's use of violence.

6.3 Violence and the Traditional Masculine Hard-boiled Detective

Chandler's Marlowe, Hammett's Spade and Cain's Huff all face life-threatening confrontations. While part of these confrontations hinge on their ability to suppress and separate themselves from the deviant, excessive other, another part of the confrontations concern their need to end the threat with which they are dealing, as explained by Leonardi and Pope (126). Violence is a consolation technique that gives the reader a feeling of safety and order within the text (126). The traditional masculine hard-boiled detectives do not always come out the clear victors when attempting to silence subversive characters with violence.

Losing the battle does not mean the masculine hard-boiled detective has lost his war, role of detective, or masculinity. The defeats the masculine hard-boiled detectives suffer generally come in the beginning and middle of the texts, which leaves the ending for their decisive victories. These failed altercations generally come during fact-finding escapades, where the detectives glean valuable information from the interactions during the early stages of the investigations. By the end of the texts, the hard-boiled detectives stop their opposition, reveal the hidden information, and have the final voice in establishing order. It is their views the reader is left to remember when the case is solved, placing the hard-boiled protagonist in a position of power.

The masculine hard-boiled detectives are also given a chance to prove their toughness by living through the confrontation, as described by Grebstein's first criterion of toughness. In *Farewell, My Lovely*, Chandler's Marlowe gets into a fight when he questions Amthor, a fake psychic and his bodyguard:

I kicked my stool back and stood up and jerked the gun out of the holster under my arm. But it was no good. My coat was buttoned and I was too slow ... The Indian hit me from behind and pinned my arms to my sides ... I let go of the gun and took hold of his wrists. They were greasy and hard to hold. The Indian breathed gutturally and set me down with a jar that lifted the top of my head. He had my wrists now, instead of me having his. He twisted them behind me fast and a knee like a corner stone went into my back. He bent me. I can be bent. I'm not the City Hall. He bent me ... His hands went to my neck. Sometimes I wake up in the night. I feel them there and I smell the smell of him. I feel the breath fighting and losing and the greasy fingers digging in. Then I get up and take a drink of water and turn on the radio. (130)

Marlowe displays his ability to take physical punishment during an investigation and still get the job done. The descriptions are brutal, emphasizing the damage he is taking. The lingering pain he refers to shows his continued endurance of physical ailments that signal his willingness to keep fulfilling his tough guy role as detective. Marlowe mocks his toughness with references to being "bent," showing that tough guys do get hurt. His matter-of-fact attitude shows calmness during confrontation and is a testament to his ability to control his emotions in times of crisis, much like Muller's McCone. His ability to think rationally and his continued investigation of the cases prove that Marlowe is not overwhelmed by the role of detective.

Marlowe also retains his humanity and masculinity throughout this confrontation. Admitting to the feel of choking in his dreams, Marlowe is marked by the violence he experiences. His masculinity is not threatened because he does not give up his position of authority, even when he is faced with bad dreams. Control and calm thinking are Marlowe's

tools for retaining his role and power when he loses fights. A boy elegantly fells Hammett's Spade in *The Maltese Falcon*:

The boy's leg darted out across Spade's leg, in front. Spade tripped over the interfering leg and crashed face-down on the floor. The boy, keeping his right hand under his coat, looked down at Spade. Spade tried to get up. The boy drew his right foot back and kicked Spade in the temple. The kick rolled Spade over on his side. Once more he tried to get up, could not, and went to sleep. (130)

Being taken down by a child presents a more substantial challenge to bouncing back in terms of maintaining his role of detective and his claims of masculinity. One element that saves Spade is the fact that the boy's attack is unexpected. Spade had roughly searched the boy earlier, taken away his weapon, and thought the boy harmless. The boy's physical aggression is a surprise in part because Spade is concentrating upon another person and the potential physical conflict between them. Spade is in an unfair fight, where he plays the role of hero ambushed by criminals without a code of right and wrong.

Cain's Huff, the fallen hard-boiled protagonist of *Double Indemnity*, even retains some of his ability to use violence and his power as a detective after his first nearly fatal confrontation with his ex-lover Phyllis. Huff plans on murdering Phyllis so that he can be with her stepdaughter, Lola. During the rendezvous, Huff realizes his plans will not work out that night: "Another twig cracked, closer this time. Then there was a flash, and something hit me in the chest like Jack Dempsey had hauled off and given me all he had. There was a shot. I knew then what had happened to me ... I had come there to kill her [Phyllis], but she had beaten me to it" (197). Any claim to authority Huff may have made during the novel is eroded by the crimes he commits. Here, Huff is caught off guard, like Hammett's Spade, but not with the same retention of power that Spade has. Huff is plotting on killing an unsuspecting person, not merely disarming an underage boy. There is no redemptive social value in his actions, so his claim to

the authority of the detective is non-existent. Huff also shows weakness by never really recovering from the shot. In the end, when he supposes that Phyllis will kill him on the ship to Mexico, he is still weak from the wound. The role of violent aggressor grants Phyllis a position of rising power that contrasts with Huff's retreat from power. His murder signals his final removal from authority, power, and masculinity by making him passive and weak.

Even when on the losing side of confrontation, most of the masculine hard-boiled detectives manage to retain their position as detective and their right to construct a sense of order in the chaotic world about them. This ability to fight back and work through their losses is a characteristic the feminist hard-boiled detectives will utilize for similar reasons, but through the use of different tools and to obtain vastly different political outcomes. The masculine hard-boiled detective has shown it is possible to suffer failure and still maintain power. The feminist hard-boiled detective will show that it is possible to suffer failure and still have the power to interrogate mainstream political practice, social expectations, and injustice.

6.4 Proletarian Tradition and Violence

The proletarian idea of conflict is one where violence is a tool used by the upper classes to make certain the workers are not overstepping the boundaries the business leaders have established. In Catherine Brody's *Nobody Starves*, Molly and Bill are fired when they demand better wages and working conditions. Meanwhile, stories of lockouts and police intervention at strikes circulate. The reality that mainstream society uses violence as a tool to keep fringe classes and borderland political movements in check is one feminists are aware of and explore in their literature. Previously, in traditional masculine hard-boiled detective novels, violence was a necessary measure taken by the detective to suppress the Other (Gordon 82). Now in proletarian

literature, the voice of the Other is heard, and the powerful suppression felt under mainstream society's violence is seen.

Albert Halper's *The Foundry* ends with the workers in an uncontrolled violent riot against the management of the foundry. This violence is different from the precision lockouts and protests dispersed by the police. The workers are unrestrained and do not have a precise target. They are articulating a rage that mainstream society refused to allow them to voice. The continued suppression of the workers deprived them of any avenue through which they could direct their energies, with a goal and feeling of progress.

The violence found in the text of women's proletarian writing of the 1930s is used as a means of discovering the silenced voices of the working class. Instead of showing violence as the chaotic outbreak of a single suppressed voice, writers such as Herbst and Brody give voice to oppressed groups. They show how the violence of the mainstream harms the proletariat at work and at home. They display the overlooked aspects of mainstream society's power when it uses violence against those on the fringes.

In Herbst's *Rope of Gold*, the protagonist, Victoria, finds her life is in danger when she travels to Cuba to aid sugar plantation workers. Herbst depicts the violence through random conflicts and shootings at the plantations and on the streets. Victoria encounters men and women who have been victims of the battle. She even directly confronts the possible threat of violence to her person when she enters the area of conflict to make sure that her correspondence gets through to the United States. Her writing reveals the effects of violence on the working class; her words give the "losers" in the confrontation final input on what the violence means to them. She unveils a different kind of order, one that the mainstream society in Cuba wants repressed.

Herbst's Victoria, from *Rope of Gold*, takes up the pen rather than the sword. If Victoria

were to resort to a gun, the ghost of the violent monster woman would overshadow the powerful political message she imparts. Instead, she uses her description of the violence against the Cuban workers to build a new political message. Her articles are designed to display the suffering of the Cuban workers and families at the hands of the brutal mainstream authority figures.

The revelation of an ignored consequence to mainstream society's violent order keeping is a strong tradition proletarian writers like Herbst create for other protesting writers, like feminist hard-boiled detective writers. In *Nothing is Sacred*, Herbst examines violence between two social classes struggling to survive. Here, the domestic life takes center stage. Mrs. Winter watches the confrontation between two competing lifestyles: the working class and the rising middle class. Although Mrs. Winter is not exposed to the direct violence of police officers breaking strikes, she experiences her way of life and her values being pushed aside as society moves toward more money-orientated values. The violence here is more abstract, but still as powerful as the direct physical confrontations in other works. Through Mrs. Winter's struggles, Herbst brings the political into the domestic sphere, making the proletarian cause a woman's cause. The unfolding of political struggles in the homes of the lower classes is another aspect of social violence that the feminist hard-boiled detective writer utilizes in her work.

It is Brody's *Nobody Starves* that gives the harshest depiction of how violence can be used to create a political message for women. Bill shoots his wife, Molly, at the end of the novel. This action, more than any other act of domestic violence, is a micro version of social violence. Bill's rage builds throughout the text as he is turned away from jobs, loses those he does secure, finds his union hopes crushed, and loses Molly as she returns to her family to provide for their unborn child. Bill acts out his frustration by killing Molly, who has become a symbol of promise as well as a financial burden for him. Molly's death illustrates the far-

reaching consequences that violence against the working class can cause when this socioeconomic body is denied a voice and political power. The resulting tensions and frustrated unarticulated rage manifests itself in violent and deviant ways, such as Molly's murder. The clash between the public arena of commerce and the domestic sphere of home and motherhood erases the political and social boundaries between the two, another theme contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective authors share with women proletarian writers.

6.5 Violence and Subversion in Feminist Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction

The reader's possible negative reaction to a violent female character is an uncomfortable factor that arises from this appropriation of violence by the feminist hard-boiled detective writers. Many feminist critics of the hard-boiled genre have expressed this concern about women characters using violence. In *The Woman Detective* and "Habeas Corpus: Feminism and Detective Fiction," Katherine Gregory Klein does not see innovation in the mainstream popular genre of hard-boiled detective fiction. Instead, she sees too much compromise by feminism for the sake of formula, which makes the feminist detectives appear to be Marlowe in drag ("Habeas" 202). Other critics such as Rosalind Coward and Linda Semple in "Tracking Down the Past," feel that the hard-boiled genre is inhospitable to feminism and that Paretsky and Grafton's violence offers no interrogation of social gender norms because there is no critical contemplation of the ramifications of the violent acts (52). In this view of the feminist hard-boiled detective as copying masculine genre conventions, the protagonist is like a child mimicking her elders' actions, but having no real conception of the power that propels those actions.

Feminist hard-boiled detectives are created to do more than parrot their masculine predecessors. Feminist hard-boiled detective authors create their protagonists to represent

groups who experience social oppression. The feminist detectives have an awareness of the power that violence provides for enforcing and protesting society's edicts, practices, and suppositions. In *Sisters in Crime*, Maureen Reddy theorizes the potential subversive power of violence when she writes that feminist hard-boiled detective fiction is a genre less a part of an existing tradition and more a part of a counter tradition where traditional tools can interrogate the hierarchy they once upheld (174). The counter traditions Reddy discusses utilize mainstream tools, such as violence, but for different political ends. The feminist hard-boiled detective is taking part in protest and rebellion by seizing careful control of violence and leaving behind the uncontrolled havoc found in Al Halper's *The Foundry*. Banished is the image of the untamed masses rushing chaotically forward in a riot of violence and freedom. In its place, feminist-hard boiled detectives present a precise replacement and redirection of authority.

In *Dissenting Fictions: Identity and Resistance in the Contemporary American Novel*, Moses carefully describes rebellious fiction as “contemporary novels that critically engage existing political and cultural structures, creating fictional worlds that simultaneously indict and rewrite the power relationships they define” (x). Feminist hard-boiled detectives are aware that they have the power and authority to use violence to complete their professional tasks. They are also aware of the fact that violence gives them the power to oppress others and to inscribe an authority that is more in keeping with their political beliefs. But there is a social stigma connected to violent women, and the threat of violence to women pushes them to construct themselves as survivors.

Hard-boiled detective fiction is filled with violent crimes. Generally, detectives encounter at least one murder in the course of their investigation. In feminist hard-boiled detective fiction, especially in the case of Sara Paretsky's V.I. Warshawski, murder is often connected with larger

political concerns (Walton and Jones 145). Walton and Jones see Paretsky using a corpse to represent an entire oppressed, abused, or neglected class (Walton and Jones 146). This extrapolation from the individual to one or more greater concerns is a common trait in feminist hard-boiled detective fiction and allows the detectives to address a social injustice by solving the mystery connected to the plight of a single individual. In this way, feminist hard-boiled detectives use violence to reveal an idea or further a cause. One victim, for feminist hard-boiled detectives, becomes the poster child of an oppressed group.

Apologizing is another way that Paretsky's Warshawski deals with the potential negative reaction of the reader to her violence. Warshawski treats violence as a necessary tool she must use, yet one she does not relish. In *Killing Orders*, the reader finds Warshawski exchanging gunfire with a hit man, Walter. While she does apologize for her actions, it is but a one-page apology in a text of many graphic renditions of violence:

He [Walter, the injured hit man] still didn't say anything. I pulled the Smith & Wesson from my jeans belt. "If I shot your left kneecap, you'll never be able to prove it didn't happen when you attacked me at the door."

"You wouldn't" he gasped.

He was probably right; my stomach was churning as it was.

What kind of person kneels in the snow threatening to destroy the leg of an injured man? Not anyone I would want to know. I pulled the hammer back with a loud click and pointed the gun at his left leg.

(235)

Warshawski's threats and actions are repulsive on many levels. With the click of the gun, she places herself in a position to violate the same moral norms she, as detective, is designed to uphold. Nonetheless, she remains the hero because Paretsky allows Warshawski to meditate on her actions in ways her masculine counterparts generally do not.

Warshawski's transgression of those gendered social boundaries, and the battle to retain her agency, is one fight many women readers understand. In the world of the reader, the dangers

of transgression, as well as the motivations of subversive acts, are of primary concern in political fields. Chandler's Marlowe takes it as his right to instigate violent actions without pondering their political ramifications. Marlowe violates no boundaries, because he is the one setting the boundaries in the text; therefore, he has no need to justify or mediate his actions. Warshawski's acknowledgement of the horrific implications of her acts lets the reader know she is aware of how close she is to social boundaries, and that she is still in control of herself. She is not irrational, and does not react purely on an emotional level; rather, she is constantly thinking about the situation and the role she is playing. These processes allow Warshawski to show the far-reaching, yet personal, scope of violence, which gives a voice to aspects of violence long ignored.

Alison Littler in "Marele Day's 'Cold Hard Bitch': The Masculinist Imperatives of the Private-Eye Genre" notes Warshawski's comments about her repulsion to violence, even as she endows them with a referential quality that cites the job of detective as the validation for the action. In this case, the role of detective forces Warshawski to be in the present confrontation (128). Warshawski's comments, such as her internal acknowledgement of the "stomach churning" aspects of her confrontation with Walter, do have a referential quality, as Littler states, but the referent is not the job of detective, but the idea of an alleged preexisting moral code (235). Part of hard-boiled detective fiction centers on the idea of a preexisting ethical or legal code, which is a comfort to the reader (Evans 163). The code brings order and sets up the hard-boiled detective (masculine or feminine) as the link to a code of behavior that appears eternal and stable. In acknowledging such a code, Warshawski draws attention to the fact that she has the power to produce the morality in the text, simultaneously showing her subordination to her political/ethical code and her power to manipulate it. The reader is also reassured by the

revelation that Warshawski has not abandoned her beliefs. If she were to appear morally deviant, such as Ann Jones' irrational castrating woman in *Women Who Kill*, then the boundary that separates hero from criminal would be transgressed, and no order could successfully be inscribed.

Warshawski's rhetorical remorse has disturbing qualities. Its power to soothe the audience's objections is problematic. Social gender expectations demand Warshawski apologize for defending herself and for doing her job. Yet this need to apologize is a basic uncertainty that plagues her position of authority and causes Paretsky to constantly qualify Warshawski's actions. Warshawski's job and position of detective endangers her life in the course of the investigation. As part of the hard-boiled genre, Warshawski the detective must confront the harsh and violent aspects of criminal life. That she must apologize for doing her job can be seen as reductive to her overall power as an effective female character and detective. Is she apologizing for the violent attributes of her profession, or is she paying lip service to patriarchal order? The graphic transgressive image of violence that attests to Warshawski's subversion of order is firmly planted in the text and in the reader's mind. The self-reflection allows the reader to reinitiate Warshawski back into the good graces of society.

Warshawski's connection to violence extends to receiving physical injury as well as inflicting it. Her role as detective places her in danger and does not guarantee that she will emerge from the confrontation without damage simply because she carries a gun. She often suffers from both verbal and physical abuse. When Warshawski is on the receiving end of physical confrontations, Paretsky opens up and explores the threat that her detective will be reduced to a victim and lose power as a detective. On the one hand, Paretsky must avoid creating a violent amoral monster as a protagonist. On the other hand, she must create a

protagonist that will not give up her role as detective simply because she has been hurt in the line of duty. Warshawski must avoid the passivity that is connected to the idea of the victim.

In *Bitter Medicine*, Warshawski ventures into Chicago's gang territory and is beaten by a group of young men. Instead of cutting straight from Warshawski setting up the meeting to the confrontation, Paretsky takes care to show the reader how Warshawski prepares herself for a possible violent confrontation: "At nine-thirty I dressed in dark clothes that were easy to move in. Instead of running shoes, I put on the heavy rubber-soled oxfords I use for industrial surveillance. I couldn't run as fast in them, but if I had to kick someone at close quarters, I wanted it to count" (51).

Warshawski's need to examine the usefulness of her clothing choices is both a mental preparation, reflecting a woman's desire to make herself as safe as possible, and a confrontation with the cultural myths of provocative dress. Mary P. Koss et al. in *No Safe Haven: Male Violence Against Women At Home, At Work, and In the Community*, names two popular myths surrounding violence against women. In the first, the woman has somehow provoked the attack because she dresses in a sexually provocative manner. In the second, the woman presents herself as possessing a grievance against the male attacker in question (8). This idea of provocative dress warranting violent action plays upon the concept of fairness and justice in society (Littler 128). Detective fiction has a basis in the idea that the wrongdoers will be punished for their trespasses against society. Warshawski, as detective, is charged with making sure justice is served. Paretsky takes the itemization of clothing to great lengths to display the lack of sexuality in Warshawski's dress choice. Warshawski's clothing is practical, professional, and clearly indicates the role she intends to perform during the confrontation. Her wardrobe choice also works to minimize her connection to the passive role of victim. Paretsky creates Warshawski to

be vital and aggressive even in situations where women can be quickly reduced to a powerless state.

Warshawski's dress also provides her with a prepared mental image of herself. Elizabeth Grosz in *Volatile Bodies* theorizes that objects and items kept in close contact with the body or used on a regular basis can become part of an individual's mental self-image (80-82).

Warshawski is using her wardrobe to build a mental picture of herself as ready for conflict in an aggressive, rather than a subservient, manner. Her clothing choices are designed to help her imagine herself as prepared for conflict. Warshawski's possession of gun is also part of her self-image. Her reliance on the gun in serious conflicts, in addition to her carrying the weapon, allows her to see it as a tool of her trade. This conception works to solidify her role of detective and of her right to use violence when necessary.

Warshawski's appearance is also designed to help present non-victim physical markers as she travels. Rosalind Wiseman in *Defending Ourselves: A Guide to Prevention, Self-defense, and Recovery from Rape* explains: "There are ways to walk more safely. Keep your head up, look ahead and drop your shoulders (do not hunch them). Walk with a relaxed step (not too long or too short), and keep your hands out of your pockets" (43). The concern for safety and the ritual of dressing defensively create a bond with the reader who sees Warshawski contending with concerns found in life.

The idea that she has feelings of resentment is harder to dismiss. Warshawski's motivation for the meeting is to find out if the gang is connected to the murder she is investigating. Her questioning them at all shows that she suspects them to be guilty. Lurking in the background of the confrontation are provocation and masochism. The misconception is that Warshawski is the one with the questions and therefore must be picking the fight. With this view

of Warshawski as the instigator, the blame for any up-coming confrontation is socially placed at her feet. Warshawski is turned into the one who is overstepping the boundaries of power and right, and that makes the confrontation her fault. Paretsky juxtaposes the popular myths that blame women in violent encounters, and Warshawski's position as the detective, with the right to interrogate and be violent. This comparison reveals the way social expectations work to neutralize women's power and how women such as Warshawski can retain agency as detectives and women.

The possible crimes of rape and battery Warshawski anticipates are means of enforcing boundaries of power and authority. Mary P. Koss et al. explain that the key to understanding violence against women is to stop seeing it as sexually motivated and begin to comprehend it as a struggle to maintain power and dominance (6). With this reasoning, rape thus becomes the greatest possible reducer of agency for a woman, because it dispossesses her of all control, even over her own body (Koss et al. 7). Warshawski's movements are threatening to the male gang. She is invading their territory and questioning their actions. The social boundary and corresponding literal boundary of gangland Chicago are manifestations of Warshawski's more direct transgression, to maintain her role as detective and exercise her agency.

Warshawski's investigation of the death of a woman in labor and her baby unites the domestic and the political spheres in a conflict of social desires. Not only does she represent an outside point of view for the gang members, threatening to reexamine their activities, but also she makes them take a look at how their actions, violent and political, influence the domestic sphere of their neighborhood. Like Brody, Paretsky is showing how political drive and rebellion can have a negative effect upon the women involved with members of the gang.

Implicitly present in Warshawski's scene of preparation and wardrobe choice is the idea of resistance. Warshawski is both anticipating the threat and planning her defense. The path she chooses, via oxford shoes, is called aggressive resistance. William B. Sanders in *Rape and Woman's Identity* explains two aspects of resistance and why aggressive resistance is the most positive choice. Sanders shows that women such as Warshawski who employ aggressive resistance (kicking, punching, biting) have a greater chance of escaping physical harm (145). The second, less successful, type of resistance is passive resistance made up of screaming (144). Sanders concludes that women who only scream during the attack "communicate helplessness" rather than prevent the attack (144). Warshawski's choice to use physical force, if necessary, shows her view of the best choice a woman and detective can make in that situation.

Linked to both aggressive and passive resistance in the never-ending causal chain of social myths is the idea that women who do not physically resist attackers must want to be attacked (Sanders 146). Warshawski's journey into gangland is glaringly dangerous, even if it is a part of her job. If she does not physically resist the confrontation then she is submitting to a punishment for infringing on male turf. To keep her authority, Warshawski has no choice but to engage in a physical confrontation, a far cry from Herbst's Victoria, whose power depended upon taking indirect action and only revealing parts of the confrontation.

Warshawski is brutally beaten. The inability to escape all violent confrontations is a fact in the hard-boiled detective's existence. Instead of allowing herself to become a victim, she chooses to construct herself as a survivor, retaining her role as detective as well as her authority. In *Battered Women Who Kill: Psychological Self-Defense as Legal Justification*, Charles Patrick Ewing takes exceptional care in defining the psychological aspects of a victim. Of great importance is the concept of "victimized self," which explains that victimization is more than a

physical condition; it is also a mental state in which women enable their own victimization by rationalizing the abuse they suffer, making no effort to defend themselves, and living with a self-focused anxiety which leads to withdrawal from the outside world and an inward focus on correcting the flaw that merits abuse (64). The quickest way for Warshawski to correct the trait that puts her in a position of abuse would be to give up her position of authority as detective. Instead, Warshawski chooses to retain both her position and the case. Keeping her case is extremely significant because it once again places Warshawski in the physical and theoretical path that first lands her in danger. Keeping the case also signals her refusal to limit her area of influence and authority, which drives home the realization that women do not necessarily have to relinquish all their power after traumatic violent experiences. In *Defending Ourselves*, Rosalind Wiseman gives a list of other changes victims make to reduce the chance of future violent confrontations and of diminishing their own power. In this list, Wiseman tells how victims will change their daily routines, where they live, relationships and fear environments that are open to the chance of harm (159). In Warshawski's refusal to give up her power and the case, she refuses to give in to the fear and reestablishes control over her own body and life. Throughout the series, she continues to meet with suspects and clients, refusing to alter her plans because of dangerous locales and threats. When she is personally threatened, she neither relocates to another apartment, nor hides in her own to keep out of an unsafe environment. The sameness of the quality of Warshawski's life before and after her attack shows the control in her life, as well as how a sense of security can be salvaged after experiencing violent trauma. Warshawski, like other women, can refuse to become a victim.

Warshawski is surrounded by caregivers who voice both concern and popular concepts of the victim category. Lotty Herschel, Warshawski's longtime friend, tells her: “ ‘So what were

you trying to prove by going off alone instead of turning what you knew over to the police? Sometimes, Victoria, you are unbearable!’ Lotty’s Viennese accent became noticeable, as always when she was upset” (Paretsky, *Bitter* 60). On the surface, the reader can see that Lotty’s censure finds its roots in both concern and love, but there are more unpleasant connections lurking in the reprimand. Julie Allison and Lawrence Wrightsman in *Rape: The Misunderstood Crime*, address the idea that society holds women responsible for preventing attacks on their person (99). Failure to prevent the attack once again raises the idea of victim blame. By reproaching Warshawski, Lotty misses a chance to lay the blame on the attackers. Lotty does not blame the local police for letting the gang situation escalate or parents for raising delinquent children. The violent action is accepted as inevitable by Lotty, a punishment for Warshawski’s transgressions. The patriarchal aspects, both positive and negative, are held up as constants, while only Warshawski’s actions are deviant. Playing out here is a common fear women face that even loved ones will blame them for the crime they had little or no control over.

Lotty’s suggestion of going to the police is both reductive and socially powerful. By advocating that the police should take Warshawski’s place, Lotty is telling her to give up her own authority to a mainstream institution and hope that it will correct the damage it has inflicted. This abdication would eliminate Warshawski’s authority and place it in the hands of an institution that was not serving her purposes in the first place. Lotty’s statement also underscores the fact that Warshawski, like so many other women who encounter violent situations, did not report the incident. Sanders suggests that the main reasons women do not report crimes to the police stem from the ideas that the police will blame the victim, doubt the crime ever happened, or question the severity of the crime as described by the victim (82). Were Warshawski to go to the police now, she would leave herself open to a great deal of blame, condemnation, and

backlash for a crime she neither instigated nor could avoid. She would be forced to share with the police information she does not desire to share. To do so would damage her authority and right to reinscribe order back into the text as the detective. Her further refusal to turn her power over to the police displays her distrust of the department to handle the case with the same intensity she does or to establish the order she desires to see at the end. Warshawski is holding onto her right to tell a tale that offers an alternative to mainstream society's version of events. This voice is one she shares with the women proletarian writers who struggled to document the triumphs and setbacks of their political and personal causes.

The direct violent confrontation in Paretzky's feminist hard-boiled detective fiction is accompanied by the emotional residue of violence that molds Warshawski and other characters. In *Bitter Medicine* and *Killing Orders*, Warshawski contemplates what violence has revealed about her character. *Bitter Medicine* ends with a depressed Warshawski coming to terms with her role in a suicide, while *Killing Orders* closes with the protagonist examining the dark side of her nature that not only demanded she fight for her life, but brutally threaten a wounded man to gain the information she desires. She does not walk away from these encounters unchanged. Instead, she displays the deep emotional effects violence has upon everyone, even those who "won" the conflict.

This theme is echoed in characters such as Lotty Herschel. Her childhood and teen years are marked by the experiences of severe anti-Semitism known to survivors of the Holocaust. The violence and persecution she has known feeds into her staunch political beliefs of religious freedom and freedom of medical choice for women. In *Total Recall*, Lotty's past is revealed to the reader, along with the daily struggle she faces to suppress some of the violent and traumatizing memories, while allowing other memories to shape her reactions to people, political

movements, and large institutions. Lotty's experience with the Nazi movement has given her a healthy distrust of organizations that easily allow hate and discrimination to be incorporated into their practices. Such an extreme wariness is an apt example of how violence in one's society can mold those it seeks to suppress on emotional levels that transcend the boundaries of organization and enters the home. Lotty and Herbst's Mrs. Winter each struggle with a way of life they see as being destroyed by larger conflicts.

What comes to light in Paretsky's writing is an encompassing view of violence. She examines social myths through Warshawski's conflicts. What unfolds are women's concerns about violence, strategies to retain their professional roles when dealing with violent encounters, the necessity to become survivors instead of victims, and most importantly, how violence emotionally marks those who come into contact with it.

Sue Grafton's first novel, *A Is For Alibi*, ends with a memorable violent confrontation between Millhone and her ex-lover, revealed murderer Charlie Scorsoni. Scorsoni chases Millhone, who finds a hiding place in a trash bin. The build up to the final confrontation reveals a different reaction to life-and-death situations than Warshawski's introspection. Millhone gives the reader the pure emotion of the time:

Was I just imagining everything? He sounded like he always did. Silence. I hear his footsteps moving away. I eased up slowly, peering out through the crack. He was standing ten feet away from me, staring out toward the ocean, his body still, half turned away. He started back and I ducked down. I could hear footsteps approaching. I shrank, pulling the gun up, hands shaking. Maybe I was crazy. Maybe I was making a fool of myself. I hated hide-and-seek. I'd never been good at that as a kid. I always jumped right out when anyone got close because the tension made me want to wet my pants. I felt tears rising. Oh Jesus, not *now*, I thought feverishly. The fear was like a sharp pain. My heart hurt me every time it beat, making the blood pound in my ears. Surely he could hear that. Surely he knew now where I was.

He lifted the lid ... I blew him away. (278)

Millhone's reaction to the violence is not the self-assured claim of the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective, nor is it the introspective and slightly apologetic meditation of Warshawski. Instead it is ripe with her emotions of the moment and filled with doubt. Millhone's emotional upheaval is a signal of the seriousness with which she handles the violent situation. She knows that the encounter is potentially fatal for either her or Scorsoni. If she is going to take a life, she wants to be as sure it will be a case of self-defense rather than an error in judgment. Her ultimate goal is to defuse confrontation in the least violent way.

Millhone's reaction is emotionally visceral. Her ability to make connections between experiences and events is usually logical and rational. Here, her jump back into childhood games is irrational and unexpected. The lack of a careful, calm, and rational examination of the situation allows the reader to see that Millhone is reacting to the situation and not carefully planning the execution of her ex-lover. With her terror, she banishes the idea that a grudge motivates the violent act, as suggested by Wisemen. Her fear works with her doubt to keep her from being transformed into the Jones' monster woman who is an untamed killing force. Instead, Millhone is terrified and forced into action.

The fact that the setting for the climax of the scene is one of Millhone huddling in a trashcan is not the most power-laden of images for the detective. If anything, Millhone seems to lose her power by virtue of her fear and physical predicament. She definitively regains any loss of power and authority by killing Scorsoni. Millhone's reluctance and fear to do so appeals to the reader, and her final act of disregarding emotional distress and shooting Scorsoni proves her toughness by Grebstein's standards and cements her place as the detective and authority figure.

Millhone's personal connection to Scorsoni is part of what propels the conflict between his desire for money and Millhone's desire for truth onto a personal as well as professional level.

Like Brody's Molly, Millhone finds herself the victim of thwarted political aspiration and oppression. While both characters show how personal relationships are molded by social and political desires, Millhone's ability to defend herself and then tell the story she wants to tell gives her the power to create her struggle in any manner she desires.

Millhone's emotional and physical reactions to gunplay elicit her reader's sympathy and demonstrate her ability to maintain her role; her reactions to hand-to-hand conflicts are more problematic. These conflicts give her a rush: "There's something about physical battle that energizes and liberates, infusing the body with an ancient chemistry--a cheap high with a sometimes deadly effect" (Grafton, *F* 195). Millhone's admission about feeling high and admitting the possible fatal outcome gives the reader a glimpse of the untamed monster woman Jones paints as terrorizing society. Her admissions allow for the possibility of the monster woman to enter the text. Millhone would be violating professional and social codes, and deriving a physical pleasure from violence.

In itself the admission of the rush is not enough for Millhone to cross over into the land of monster woman. It is her emotional reactions to the rush during the fight that raises the most problems for the detective. In *N Is For Noose*, a drugged Millhone confronts the murderer, Brant:

He [Brant] left the den, hollering my name as he went. Now he was mad. Now he didn't care if I knew what was coming.... I was suddenly larger than life, far beyond fear. Luminous with fury. As I turned right out of the den into the darkness of the hallway, I could see him moving ahead of me.... I began to run, picking up speed, my Reeboks making no sound on the carpet. Brant sensed my presence, turning as I lifted myself into the air. I snapped a hard front kick to his solar plexis, taking him down with one pop. I heard his gun thump dully against the wall, banging against wood as it flew out of his hand. I kicked him again, catching him squarely in the side of the head. I scrambled to my feet and stood over him. I could have crushed his skull, but as a *courtesy*, I refrained from doing so. I pulled the handcuffs from my pocket. I grabbed the fingers of his right hand and bent them backward, encouraging compliance. I lay the cuff on his right

wrist and snapped downwards, smiling grimly to myself as the swinging of the cuff locked into place. I put my left foot on the back of his neck while I yanked his right arm behind him and grabbed his left. I would have stomped down on his face, pulverizing his nose if he'd as so much as whimpered. (319)

Millhone's power and fury endow her with a cruelty that barely is restrained when she subdues Brant. This uncontrolled violent person is Millhone at her most terrifying. She gains partial leeway by virtue of being drugged and feeling more detached from her moral code than usual. While she gains a modicum of sympathy for being in a drugged state, in other texts such as *F Is For Fugitive*, Millhone's comments about the rush of fighting and her desire to continue beating her opponent even when the conflict is over, threaten reader allegiance. Millhone's wild desire to continue to crush those with whom she fights is mediated by the fact that no matter what her emotional response is to the combat or how powerful she feels while the rush is going on, she remains in control and does not cross the boundary into brutality. While in the grasp of the emotional urge to continue hurting her assailant, Millhone contents herself with the active resistance advocated by self-defence instructors. Her self-control is what establishes her in the role of detective.

Millhone also jeopardizes the hard-boiled detective's reliance upon a code of behaviour. Warshawski's values remain strong and unchanging, but Millhone has a problem with the clear-cut images of right and wrong: "If bad guys don't play by the rules, why should good guys have to?" (Grafton, *O* 322). Millhone's moral ruler slides to accommodate the situations she encounters. The unstable code gives her the room she needs, ethically speaking, to undertake actions that might seem unsavory in stricter guidelines. It gives her the right to mislead and conduct illegal searches with a clear conscience. Her use of the sliding code does not distract the reader from understanding that this give in Millhone's code applies to her and not to the criminals she is investigating. Millhone's code of justice does not slide when it is applied to

others. Her sliding code also shows that Millhone is not as open about her political beliefs as Paretsky's Warshawski, but she does have a belief system she tries to communicate through her actions and judgments. What she transmits is the hidden truth that has been suppressed or silenced: a truth akin to that which women proletarian writers tried to communicate.

Like Warshawski, Millhone is marked by the violence she experiences. It is not something that disappears at the end of the novel. Her ordeal with Scorsoni haunts her for several novels afterwards, making her wonder what kind of person kills, even in the line of duty, as seen in this discussion between Millhone and her long time friend Henry:

"I mean it. I am tired of feeling helpless and afraid," I said. ... He said, "So defend yourself. Who's arguing with that? But you can drop the rhetoric. It's bullshit. Killing is killing and you better take a look at what you did."

"I know," I said. ... "Look, maybe I haven't dealt with that. I just don't want to be a victim anymore I am sick of it."

He said, "When were you ever a victim? You don't have to justify yourself to me. You did what you did. Just don't try to turn it into a philosophical statement, because it does not ring true. It's not as if you made a rational decision after months contemplating the facts. You killed somebody in the heat of the moment. It's not a political campaign and it's not a turning point in your intellectual life."

I smiled at him tentatively. "I'm still a good person, aren't I?"

[Henry replies] "What happened to you doesn't change that, Kinsey, but you have to keep it straight. Blow somebody's brains out and you don't brush that off."
(Grafton, *B* 367)

Regardless of how she bends the rules to complete a case, Millhone sees herself as a "good guy," protecting the rights of others and correcting injustice. She cannot easily accept her actions for several reasons. Her reflection upon her actions underscores the seriousness of the violent acts. She does not take for granted her right to hurt others. This line of thought suggests that while Millhone can get out-of-hand in physical fights, she understands the power of violence to harm all parties and is not an advocate of a violent solution in all cases. In this manner, she is not a threatening, out-of-control monster woman seeking to hurt society.

Millhone is not an official of the mainstream authorized by society to use violence to maintain order. That privilege is left for the official border keepers, such as soldiers, as explained by Elshtain. Instead, Millhone is left wondering how to treat the situation. The key is the idea that each incident is an individual situation. As Henry suggests, Millhone is considering her actions on a one-on-one basis and resisting the urge to create an overarching philosophy about the use of violence. Considering each incident on its own merits with its unique context allows Millhone to see her actions as the only option available to her at that time. Creating a larger rule of thumb may force her to see herself as a failure or a monster by de-contextualizing the events. Context allows Millhone to retain her power and justifies her actions.

Power provides a thrill for Millhone. The items she uses during fights, such as her weapon or other objects, seem to give Millhone strength. In *N Is For Noose*, Millhone finds the handcuffs of the murder victim she is investigating during her battle with Brant: “I took out Tom’s handcuffs and tucked them in my back pocket. I could feel myself swelling with power. I was suddenly larger than life, far beyond fear” (319). This feeling of power is a deviation that Grosz describes in *Volatile Bodies*. Instead of feeling physically empowered by objects she is familiar with (like her clothes or her gun) Millhone derives physical power from objects she encounters. In this case, Tom’s handcuffs give her a feeling of strength and allow her to see herself as empowered with the ability to stop Brant.

Grafton’s does not use violence in the text to create an overt political message. Millhone avoids using violence as a contemplation on the nature of gender and society. While she does find herself in violent situations, she sees a more peaceful existence for the hard-boiled detective: “I didn’t have my gun. I’m a private investigator not a vigilante. Most of my work takes place in the public library or hall of records. Generally speaking, these places aren’t dangerous, and I

don't need a semiautomatic to protect myself" (Grafton, *O* 345). Her affirmation that detective work is comprised mostly of research makes the incidents of violence more startling and out-of-the-ordinary. Violence is removed from the function of common tool used to patrol boundaries and suppress deviants and turned into an unexpected spectacle meant to shock. Instead of political tool, Millhone sees violence as a rupture in the fabric of society that does not necessarily have to occur during the process of her job. Her reliance upon words and the revelation of print is much in keeping with Herbst's Victoria from *Rope of Gold*, and her reliance upon her writing to liberate the truth from oppression.

Muller's McCone provides a third and more diverse response to the violence she encounters. She carefully outlines the possible outcomes of the situation for the reader in seemingly objective terms, moves to the possible solutions, and then takes her action, be it violent or non-violent. Like Warshawski, McCone presents overt political beliefs throughout Muller's novels. McCone's actions, like those of the characters created by women proletarian writers of the 1930s, are designed to bring about an alternative order to the designs of mainstream society. Violence is a tool McCone uses to do this. In *Wolf in the Shadows*, McCone sees a sniper, Marty Salazar, waiting for her and her friends. She quickly plots what the sniper intends to do: "He'd wait to identify his quarry, had them clearly in sight, then spray them with bullets. A person coming out of the pipe would never see Salazar. Would never know what hit him" (358). McCone then couches her decision to shoot Salazar in third person: "But he [Salazar] was clearly visible to a person up here. Only yards away—easily within range of her gun. If she was a good shot. And she was—very" (258).

This movement reads like an equation, with Salazar equaling the death of friends and McCone's shooting of Salazar equaling the safety of friends. Faced with this logic, the reader

cannot object to the use of violence to stop Salazar. McCone's third person reference to herself creates a separation between perpetrator and violent act. The sharp breakdown is similar to what the reader finds in Grafton's work. This distance between the necessary action and the female detective, McCone, must be bridged. If McCone stops referring to herself in the third person, ceases to talk about what needs to be done, and proceeds to action, the gap between direct action and responsibility is bridged. In this movement from theory to application, the socially feared image of the violent woman becomes tangible in the text. While Muller does not have McCone directly apologize to the reader, the character of McCone does acknowledge the conflict between the idea of the violent woman and the demands of her job: "Everything I believed in told me this was wrong. Everything I cared about told me this was right...." (Muller, *Wolf* 358). Muller ends the confrontation with McCone taking the shot. Any graphic display of Salazar's death is left for the reader to imagine. In this gray area between belief and action, there is an almost apology wrapped in the logical language of cause and outcome. The reader understands that McCone sees no alternative to the act of violence and the necessity to follow through, thus her role as detective is secure in the reader's mind. She must protect those who are persecuted and about to be silenced permanently, an outcome close to the heart of women proletarian writers.

Strategizing while immersed in potentially violent situations is McCone's hallmark. In sharp contrast to Millhone's frantic emotional responses and Warshawski's careful introspection, McCone is focused on the situation and weighs the best options. In a careful game of cat and mouse, McCone, in *A Walk Through Fire* tries to outmaneuver Matthew, a killer. She displays her well-honed skills in on-the-spot strategy. When the time for the confrontation comes, a weaponless McCone shows her planning skills at their best: "... It [a flashlight she has] was the right color, would gleam like gunmetal in the moonlight. And if I positioned my hands on the

bulb end in a certain way, it might resemble a handgun” (309). McCone is the epitome of aggressive resistance. Her cool thoughts and abilities to defuse potentially violent situations allow the reader to see her careful consideration of all the options. Her choices then appear to be logical. The reader can validate her reasoning and does not question her choices in such situations. Her authority as a detective and her right to utilize violence when she feels she must remains intact.

Muller also provides a moving portrayal of violence between cultures in *There's Nothing to be Afraid Of*. In this novel, a Vietnamese family that recently immigrated to San Francisco is dealing with landlord and cultural acclimation problems. Dolly Vang, a young woman trying to find her place in American society, is moving away from Vietnamese culture and searching for a career in Hollywood. Duc, one the sons, despises American culture and longs for a purist Vietnamese lifestyle. As McCone endeavors to discover who murdered a local porn producer interested in starting a career for Dolly, she must deal with the silence of a Vietnamese sub-culture, represented by Duc, who is resentful of “Americanization.” During her investigations, McCone sees the Vietnamese culture Duc holds in high regard lose ground to American culture.

Violence for McCone provides an opportunity to interrogate social expectations, not a shocking situational occurrence that deviates from the detective’s normal day. It is part of her job, a common enough incidence, which she deals with in a logical, orderly fashion, just as she does the other aspects of cases. Her authority and her ability to successfully handle these confrontations allow her to vindicate the clients she feels are being suppressed by society.

McCone associates emotionally with objects. McCone, like Warshawski and Millhone, finds comfort in the possession of weapons: “The Colt rested reassuringly against my hip” (Muller, *Where* 339). Her self-perception and confidence are enhanced by her possession of the

tools of her trade that she can proficiently use if the situation turns violent. These associations prevent her from becoming anxious, doubting her abilities, and perhaps sliding into victim hood.

6.6 Violence Is a Problematic Tool for Feminist Hard-Boiled Detectives

In the end, feminist hard-boiled detectives pick up the tool of violence and wield it with tenuous and problematic authority. While 1930s women proletarian writers revealed the stories suppressed by social violence, feminist hard-boiled detective writers go further by using violence to ensure that their characters' clients, representatives of traditionally repressed classes, are given a voice. These women writers bring a new point-of-view to the social violence found in traditional masculine hard-boiled detective novels, which allows for the voices of the oppressed and victimized to be heard in the text.

Through violent conflicts, feminist hard-boiled detectives like Warshawski, Millhone, and McCone confront social fears, expectations, and requirements. They manage to perform their roles regardless of the violence they encounter or the violence they inflict. Through careful rhetorical navigation, Paretsky, Grafton, and Muller keep the reader from seeing them as violent monster women. Instead, Paretsky gives the reader an introspective Warshawski, who integrates social expectations of the reader with what she feels her violent actions say about her. Grafton presents an emotional Millhone, who brings the immediacy of the violent moments to the reader while still managing to control her often aggressive impulses. Finally, Muller's McCone creates a logical series of outcomes that show what her actions and non-actions will render in violent situations, which creates the image of the cool-headed detective in place of the out-of-control violent woman. In the end, the feminist hard-boiled detective stands as a protector and agent of social change, like her proletarian forerunners.

Chapter Seven: Power of Revelation

Today knowledge has power. It controls access to opportunity and advancement.

Peter F. Drucker, 2001

7.1 To Tell the Truth

Revealing what has been hidden is at the center of detective fiction. Discovering what lies beyond the secrecy surrounding a crime is part of what makes the hard-boiled detective a powerful figure. Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton, and Marcia Muller are very aware that the causes and clients that their detectives' champion are not automatically validated by mainstream society. They, like Herbst and Brody, have adopted strategies for dealing with revelation in ways designed to maintain their protagonists' power as detectives, and further the causes of their clients. One divergence between traditional masculine hard-boiled detective fiction and feminist works is the nature of the criminal. For feminists, criminals are no longer isolated individuals or small groups; now the villains are components of mainstream society, political practices, and large corporations. Consequently, the feminist hard-boiled detective can no longer provide the clear-cut resolutions that were once a part of the hard-boiled genre. Instead, victories are partial affairs measured by individual achievement. Additionally, feminist hard-boiled detectives practice selective revelation and call on others to help them solve cases. Feminist hard-boiled detectives do not share everything they know with the police or even with their clients; rather, they protect their clients and causes by withholding information. They also call upon those they can trust to help them gather information, to quickly and effectively resolve cases.

Perhaps the most controversial tool the feminist hard-boiled detective uses is deception. The detective, as a traditional symbol of justice and order, is known for bringing the truth to light. Feminist hard-boiled detectives are aware that there are many interpretations of the truth

that could hamper their investigations and remove them from power. To maintain the role of detective and exercise control over the investigation, feminist hard-boiled detectives practice the risky art of lying.

Women proletarian writers of the 1930s had a strong awareness of the power of revealing and hiding information. In their works, secrecy is a tool for opposing authority. Combining secrecy and the revelation of hidden events, allows for those in the borderland to interpret conditions and causes. Similarly, the feminist hard-boiled detective not only protects and disseminates the knowledge she collects, but she also lies as a way to ensure that others who are in positions of mainstream power do not suppress her causes.

7.2 Resolution

For the feminist hard-boiled detective writers, case resolution is not the authoritative victory usually found in the works of classic masculine hard-boiled detectives authors. In the adventures of Chandler's Marlowe, Hammett's Spade, and Cain's protagonists, the villains are individuals. Once these villains are revealed and the violation of order is righted, society is safe again. As Christine Evans explains in "On the Valuation of Detective Fiction: A Study in the Ethics of Consolation," this system gives the reader a false sense of security that shows the problem can be fixed. The reader sees that criminals are invariably caught and placed into the prison system for their reformation (163). This containment is a handy myth that shows mainstream society as an effective protector of its members.

Even the idea of reformation through prison is a myth fostered by mainstream society to help police its borders. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault explains that society's prison systems are not designed to reform, rather to create a criminal culture for mainstream society to use to control its citizens through fear (182). This system of chasing and labeling criminal

elements allows society to mark boundaries in geographical and socioeconomic ways that, in turn, allows mainstream organizations to oppress the voices of those elements while preserving the ignorance and integrity of its own population. Secrets place their keepers in precarious and often disempowering positions. As Eve Sedgwick discusses in *Epistemology of the Closet*, people with secrets who would be seen as criminal or deviant in society are vulnerable. When others discover their secrets, like hard-boiled detectives and other criminals, those with the secret are suddenly in the discoverer's power. Individuals with the power of revelation have the ability to control and, to a certain extent, construct the situation into the order they desire. Even when the masculine hard-boiled detective decides to keep secrets from mainstream authority the order he establishes is one that promotes the values of mainstream society.

Marlowe takes the classic traditional path of full revelation of the hidden aspects of a crime in *Farewell, My Lovely*, and gives the police the full details of a murder and the criminal actions of Mrs. Grayle, also known as Velma. Mrs. Grayle is the missing girlfriend of an ex-con girlfriend. It is his search for her that first introduces Marlowe to the mystery. Chandler creates an interesting rhetorical framework at the end of the novel. The final fate of Mrs. Grayle is revealed in a discussion between Marlowe and Randall. They look at the possible courses of action she could have taken, her good chance of making it through trial without a conviction, and her mistake in killing a police officer. Because they cannot fathom her motive for shooting the cop, she is reduced to an irrational murderess in the end. Luckily for the reader, and for Marlowe's world, she is contained physically and psychologically at the end of the text, with the two members of mainstream authority working to create the image of her that best fits the order of society. Marlowe does approach resolution with some variation of full disclosure.

In the *Big Sleep*, Chandler's Marlowe plays a double game of revelation and silence. Marlowe is more than happy to turn in the criminal, Eddie Mars and his gang for blackmail. Yet, he does avoid revealing the fact that Carmen Sternwood, General Sternwood's youngest daughter, is responsible for the murder of the missing Rusty Regan. Marlowe knows what happened to Regan and confronts Vivian Regan, Carmen's older sister:

"All right," I [Marlow] went on heavily. "Will you [Vivian] take her [Carmen] away? Somewhere far off from here where they can handle her type, where they will keep guns and knives and fancy drinks away from her? Hell, she might even get herself cured, you know. It's been done."

"... I did just what you said. I went to Eddie Mars. She[Carmen] came home and told me about it, just like a child. She's not normal. I knew the police would get it all out of her ... And if dad knew, he would call them instantly and tell them the whole story. And sometime in the night he would die.... I was playing for time.... I thought she might even forget it herself. I've heard they do forget what happens in those fits.... I knew Eddie Mars would bleed me white, but I didn't care. I had to have help where I could get it...."

"You'll take her away," I said. "And do that awfully damn quickly ... I'm leaving. I'll give you three days. If you're gone by then—okay. If you're not, out it comes. And I don't think I don't mean that." (195-197)

Marlowe hears the reasons behind Vivian's cover-up of Carmen's crimes. They bear a striking resemblance to Marlowe's reasons for keeping the fate of Rusty from General Sternwood as well. When Marlowe learns the entire story from Vivian, he gains the upper hand in the situation. Vivian's family would be hurt if Carmen's actions were revealed, but since Carmen appears to be mentally deficient, she would probably be placed in the same kind of facility that Marlowe is advocating. Marlowe does not have as much to lose as Vivian. With the facts, which can be refuted since Marlowe was alone with Carmen and it would be her word against his, Marlowe does not have enough to go to the police. With Vivian's confession, Marlowe can turn the situation into one he finds more desirable. The reader approves of Marlowe's solution. Marlowe's insistence on placing Carmen in such a facility is in keeping with the expectations of containment and punishment advocated by mainstream society.

In *The Maltese Falcon*, Sam Spade uses a ploy similar to Marlowe's to find out the truth about Brigit O'Shaughnessy's actions in the case. He realizes that her version of events could cause him to be implicated in the crime, so he uses her confession to make sure he remains free and the order of mainstream society is upheld. Spade encourages Brigit to confess and then turns her over to the police:

“Swell. Come in. Here's another one for you.” Spade pressed the girl forward. “She killed Miles. And I've got some exhibits—the boy's gun, one of Cairo's, a black statuette that all the hell was about, and a thousand-dollar bill that I was supposed to be bribed with ... What in hell's wrong with your little playmate, Tom? He looks heartbroken ... I bet, by God! when he heard Gutman's story he thought he had me at last.” (215)

Spade may walk a thin line between right and wrong in *The Maltese Falcon*, but he does not waiver from the judicial demands of his role at the end of the novel. In a speech before the police show up, Spade makes a considerable effort to enumerate for O'Shaughnessy the many reasons why she does not understand his role. His intent is to ground himself solidly on the side of mainstream authority and establish his power and right to reveal her secrets to the police:

You'll never understand me, but I'll try once more and then we'll give it up. Listen. When a man's partner dies, he's suppose to do something about it ... He was your partner and you're supposed to do something about it. Then it happens we were in the detective business. Well, when one of your organization gets killed it's bad for business to let the killer get away with it. It's bad all around—bad for that one organization, bad for every detective everywhere. Third, I'm a detective and expecting me to run criminals down and then let them go free is like asking a dog to catch a rabbit and let it go. It can be done, all right, and sometimes it is done, but it's not the natural thing. The only way I have of letting you go is by letting Gutman and Cairo and the kid go. (214)

The listing shows Spade's familiarity with the codes of mainstream society and the principles of his profession. His recitation of the list works to reestablish his place in the mainstream hierarchy and his right to expose O'Shaughnessy's secrets. His points are a reminder to both of where they respectively stand and what will be the next logical step for Spade. Spade manages

to draw himself back from the edge of temptation. Even when Spade, like other hard-boiled detectives, goes close to the boundaries of mainstream society, he still honors the detective's obligation to reveal the hidden to mainstream society.

James M. Cain's Walter Huff in *Double Indemnity* confesses his crimes in writing and verbally to investigator Walter Keyes. Huff withholds information from Keyes and the police throughout the novel on behalf of the women with whom he fancies himself in love. His confession to Keyes is more than the simple revelation of hidden information to the reader. The work is in first person point-of-view, with Huff narrating. The reader knows about the crimes that Huff commits and realizations he has concerning Phyllis and Lola; therefore, his confession to Keyes is pointless for the purpose of providing a revelation to the reader. Since the last scenes take place on a cruise to Mexico where Huff plans to confront Phyllis, there is little chance his confession will bring her to justice. Huff's confession is another use of revelation to help restore social order in the novel. The revelation insures that instead of a prison sentence, Phyllis will remain in exile in Mexico upon threat of arrest in the United States. Huff's fate seems to be death at the hands of Phyllis. Their fates guarantee that they will not be a threat to the mainstream society.

The power of interpreting events is one proletarians used. In literature and journalism, they put forth their point of view concerning political progress and oppression. They found the power of interpretation to be most profound in their literature:

Ernest Ottwalt, an opponent of Georg Lukacs in the important *Linkskurve* debates of 1931-32 over proletarian literature, criticized inherited literary forms for "striving after a closed-in work of art that is content and complete in itself, and before which the reader is automatically transformed into a hedonist consumer, drawing no conclusions and being satisfied with what is given to him." The goal of proletarian literature, Ottwalt insisted, was "not [to] stabiliz[e] the consciousness of the readers; it seeks to alter it." (Foley 251)

Ottwalt sought works that moved beyond modernism and the self-contained novel. He endeavored to find works that would connect with the life situations of the workers and inspire them toward revolution. Part of that inspiration comes in the form of revelation of the hidden. Proletarian literature allowed a voice hidden and suppressed by mainstream society to be heard. Its stories show the harsher practices of large mainstream organizations and corporations as they punish the worker. This revelation in itself is ground breaking. Instead of a story of deviance that is contained in detective fiction, proletarian literature shows the deviant to be the martyred and persecuted and points out flaws in the American social system. At times the revelation appears to be an uncontrolled and violent thing, like the riot at the end of Albert Halper's *The Foundry*. This work shows how the constant suppression and silencing of workers' concerns will erupt in a violent revelation that frightens instead of enlightens. This scenario is a social warning of what continued oppression can bring. Women proletarian writers such as Josephine Herbst and Catherine Brody display a more delicate and selective view of the power of revelation.

Herbst's *Rope of Gold* valorizes the publication of the plight of the working class. Victoria's most powerful moments come when she realizes that the purpose of her writing is to enlighten the Americans about the suffering of the Cubans. Victoria gives the oppressed a voice and a face that evokes sympathy. Throughout the work, Herbst interrupts the traditional format of the novel with mock newspaper articles commenting on the progress, or lack thereof, of the proletarian movement. Instead of containing stories of proletarian struggle, Victoria knows that the desire for change will be fed if they are given to public. This desire for change does not mean that Victoria goes through the novel revealing profound social truths to all she meets. She practices a selective sharing of information. Victoria is aware of potential hostile and

unsympathetic audiences. Thus, she will either share or deny knowledge, depending upon the temperament of the audience.

In Brody's *Nobody Starves*, factory workers and the unemployed share information about job openings, strikes, and potential lockouts, by word of mouth. They are careful to keep the news from mainstream authority figures, such as upper management and police officers. While this secrecy does produce an effective support system for the workers, the denial of an official voice hurts the proletarian cause and creates frustration on the part of the characters, who vent their frustration in violent ways. Brody masterfully illustrates how selective information sharing can give hope and livelihood to individuals, yet the absence of an official voice, recognized by mainstream society and workers alike, can create a festering pressure that will, as in Halper's *The Foundry*, resolve itself in violent outbursts. Communication, selective and universal, is a theme further explored by other women proletarian writers of the time.

In the beginning of *Rope of Gold*, the reader finds Victoria and her husband, Jonathan, at his family house for a holiday celebration. Jonathan's family is one used to wealth and privilege, who have little understanding of the workers' plight in America and even less interest in learning about it. While Jonathan struggles to explain the great things the proletarian party is trying to do for those in need, Victoria is silent except for her laughter at the pinnacle of the debate. After the evening, Victoria points out to Jonathan the nature of his family and how unlikely they are to listen (15-17). Victoria has a keen awareness of audience and the potential effectiveness of shared information. She knows that Jonathan's family is a lost cause: "'You might know it,' said Vicky bitterly, shrinking down in the bed. 'He'll help Tom but when did he ever help you?'" (16). She also knows that newspaper articles documenting the struggles of the workers in Cuba have a better chance of working for her party's ends. In her selective sharing, it is important to

note that she avoids sharing information with groups that could potentially harm her effectiveness.

Herbst uses this selective information sharing again in *Nothing is Sacred*. Mrs. Winter understands how her town's social system works and is cognizant of her lower socioeconomic status when compared to bankers and businessmen. With this understanding in mind, she only offers a protest at her son-in-law Harry's informal embezzlement hearing at his lodge: "My husband is old, he has worked for me all his life, and now I have to take care of him. I have to think of him first" (30). This summary is merely a small glimpse into the financial pressures that are plaguing Mrs. and Mr. Winter in their retirement. She knows that the audience is made of mainstream, white-collar, social climbers who have little empathy for her and her family. Even though she provides the money for keeping Harry out of jail, she understands that the lodge members will be in favor of business owners receiving repayment first before someone of her low socioeconomic class and gender: "What of justice to her? Where did that come in?" (31). She is aware that the audience is not only unsympathetic to her financial plight, but could deny her claims if she protests too much. Instead, she chooses to share her concerns with her daughters and sons-in-law, with limited success.

While she finds power in the sharing of information, she is also aware of the power that withholding information from the public can bring. As part of her agreement, Mrs. Winter seizes control of the lodge's distribution of information regarding Harry: "Very well, I can do it [repay the missing money]. I am old and you are young men, but I can do it. But listen to me—if you dare to let this out, if a word of this is breathed, I'll not help, for then what would be the use? I am doing this only for my daughter's good name, and if you don't promise to keep this a secret I'll let the debt go, you can do as you please" (31).

To gain power in the bargaining process, Mrs. Winter is selective about how she wants information revealed to those on the outside. She uses information and money as she sees fit. Feminist hard-boiled detectives have taken up the practice of selecting clients that are not potentially harmful representatives from mainstream organizations. Not only do feminist hard-boiled detectives hold to the practice of using revelation to show how social groups are silenced by the mainstream, but they also are selective about with whom they share information.

In the *Poetics of Prose*, Tzvetan Todorov explains that “at the base of the whodunit we find a duality. This novel contains not one, but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation” (44). Feminist hard-boiled detective writers unintentionally combine the genres of the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective with the political manipulations of revelation in the 1930’s proletarian literature, especially strategies employed by women, to create a story with three narratives. The two narratives are the traditional narratives of investigator and crime to which Todorov refers. The last narrative is the political metanarrative. This third narrative, combined with the political practices of the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective novel and the proletarian movement form a transgressive vein in the novel. The melding forms a protest novel out of what appears, on the surface, to be a conventional form, which is the kind of transgression Cathy Moses discusses in *Dissenting Fictions*.

In her work, Moses shows how groups that were barred from having a voice in mainstream society can transform traditional genre forms into revolutionary tools by working against the mainstream from the inside. Feminist hard-boiled detectives create villains similar to the ones used by proletarian women writers, in that the villains are larger social and corporate organizations. In addition, the engagements with these faceless entities end in a disappointing partial victory. Feminist hard-boiled detectives also make a practice of being selective in sharing

information, like their proletarian mothers. Parts of the feminist hard-boiled detective's crime-solving ideas come from group efforts, rather than the effort of one individual against society. While they are willing to share information to a point, they do engage in blatant deception in the course of their jobs, which raises questions of ethics, gender, and power.

7.3 Individual Victims and Corporate Killers

One thing that has persevered throughout the evolution of the feminist hard-boiled detective genre is that individuals are the primary victims. This individual victim is a standard, which the feminist hard-boiled detective pieces together from the masculine hard-boiled detective and women proletarian writers. Chandler's Marlowe often began by working one case for an individual, but stumbling upon more connections in the course of his investigation. In *The Big Sleep*, Marlowe investigates a blackmail case for General Sternwood, but uncovers gambling rackets and the murder of smuggler Rusty Regan. While searching for the wife of Dimitrios Aleidis, Marlowe stumbles upon another missing person, Velma, which is the key to uncovering the murder. Hammett's Spade follows the same course. In the *Maltese Falcon*, Spade is employed by O'Shaughnessy and, while looking into the disappearance of her fictitious sister, Corinne, uncovers the international scam that resulted in his partner's death.

Open cases are gateways to deeper forays into the criminal world the detective must investigate when lies and corruption are uncovered. Women proletarian writers, who were creating their works at the same time as Chandler, Hammett, and Cain, make the most of these opportunities for social exploration. Like the masculine hard-boiled detective authors, feminist hard-boiled detective writers use the individual, but as a case study for the larger social problems. Herbst's Mrs. Winter in *Nothing is Sacred* is a miniature version of the social corruption unethical greed spawns. Brody's Molly in *Nobody Starves* is the poster girl of

tragedy for an oppressed working class. The proletarian provides a small picture of the suffering of the masses. In doing so the proletarian writer endeavors to put a personal face upon a problem and make the individuals involved in the conflict real to the reader, so as to elicit the reader's sympathy and action.

Feminist hard-boiled detective authors have unconsciously melded these two traditions to form a powerful connection between the individual and society. From the masculine hard-boiled detective, feminist hard-boiled detective writers use a single case to draw their detectives into more complex criminal plots. From the women proletarian writers, the feminist detective connects the original individual case to larger social corruption to form a compelling political statement and examine the flaws of society. This process is most evident with Paretsky's Warshawski and Muller's McCone.

Walton and Jones point out in *Detective Agency* that criminal connections with large organizations show that crime is part of society and cannot be removed, like a cancer, from the social ranks (212). Paretsky's Warshawski, Grafton's Millhone, and Muller's McCone give their cases an immediate relevance and contextuality for the reader by showing the victim to be someone they can connect with on an empathetic level. In *Blood Shot*, Paretsky's Warshawski investigates a paternity case for an old friend, Caroline Djiak, but along the way confronts a global chemical company, which she suspects of participating in illegal practices. Likewise, in *Burn Marks*, Warshawski begins by helping her Aunt Elena find a place to live and ends by examining the plight of the retired who live on substandard fixed incomes.

Grafton's Millhone takes a subtler path. Millhone deals with individuals throughout the case, and these individuals have ties to larger institutions that they wish to preserve. While Warshawski makes the direct connection from the individual to the social problem, Millhone

does not leap from one person to a great evil. She knows that corruption exists, but she lets the reader draw the nuances from the text and make the connections.

Muller's McCone follows in Warshawski's more obvious footsteps in making the connection between the individual and the political/social. She helps a single family, the Vangs, in *There is Nothing to Be Afraid Of* and looks at the problems immigrants experience trying to make a living in America and still retain their native cultural identities. In *Where Echoes Live*, McCone works a missing person case that turns into an examination of corporate demand and environmental preservation.

While the criminal remains an individual, the antagonists in feminist hard-boiled detective fiction tend to be larger institutions that are connected to mainstream society. Watson and Jones feel that the corporate/institutional role of the antagonist is part of the new feminist "whodunit" (209). Instead of the traditional criminal element from masculine hard-boiled detective fiction, which was characterized as either feminine or deviant, feminist hard-boiled detective writers follow the proletariat tradition and characterize society and large institutions as the real oppressive forces. While critics such as Watson and Jones see the feminist hard-boiled detective's interrogation of institutions, such as insurance companies, police agencies, and international businesses, as thought-provoking, it is important to note that the real power comes from the fact that the individual client is not dropped from the investigation. The real power of the feminist hard-boiled detective's investigation is that the human face connected to the case is not forgotten when the social injustice is revealed. The client, victim, or friend in question is still a vital part of the equation, with faults to which the reader may feel repelled or sympathetic.

In *Burn Marks*, Warshawski's investigation does reveal the problems facing the elderly in society. While Aunt Elena does disappear and reappear periodically from the text, the mixture of

her desperation, alcoholism, and money problems keeps her from being seen as totally blameless for the situation. Elena has problems, some of which are manipulated by larger social institutions for profit, but she does not move forward to face her alcoholism. While Warshawski's political and ethical anger is justly aimed at those institutions which exploit people like Elena, she also shows that individuals cannot keep waiting to be rescued and must assume the personal responsibility to correct what they can. Very few people are without blame in Warshawski's world, even when larger social structures seem to be the overshadowing problem.

The same can be said for Grafton's Millhone. In *O Is For Outlaw*, Millhone looks at corruption in law enforcement and the legal system, but does not excuse her ex-husband from playing his part in keeping it secret. In a similar fashion, Muller's McCone displays the faults of individuals along with the faults of society to show that it is not enough to point out only institutional failings. In *A Wild and Lonely Place*, against the backdrop of violent political retributions, the dysfunction of Habiba and her family show individual biases and flaws that can lead people to make decisions based on hate and greed. This focus on the flaws of the individuals tied to the unethical influence of money and greed can also be found in the works of women proletarian writers such as Herbst and Brody. Here, victims are just that--victims. In feminist hard-boiled detective fiction, the client or the "victims" are part of the solution and the problem.

Case resolutions do not pose the clear-cut endings for feminist hard-boiled detectives they do for the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective. Feminist detectives save one person, while thousands of others fall through the cracks. The idea that many others suffer while only a few are saved, destroys the reader security Evans sees as created in the containment of evil found

in traditional masculine hard-boiled detective fiction. Evans explains that traditional detective fiction allows the reader to see corruption and the criminal world in detail, with the containment of the criminal accomplished by death or incarceration (163). That feeling of safety is jeopardized in feminist hard-boiled detective fiction by its lack of a clean resolution. There is no comfort for the reader that the representatives of mainstream society will be able to solve the problem, or even escape being implicated in creating the problem.

Even when traditional masculine detective fiction offers what appears on the surface to be ambiguous resolutions to situations; in actuality, the endings confirm the genre consolation that Evans talks about. In *The Big Sleep*, Chandler's Marlowe does not turn Carmen Sternwood over to the police for the murder of Rusty Regan. While Marlowe appears to disregard the need for justice, his idea of how to handle the mentally ill young Carmen is in keeping with what official agencies could do for her. His demand that she go away to receive treatment and be kept from harming anyone is just as effective a consolation for the reader as imprisonment or death. This resolution can be seen as a more efficient effect in regard to Carmen. Since her mental stability is questionable, placing her in jail or killing her would be cruel and heartless. Instead, Marlowe avoids the red tape of lawyers and any defense Carmen's sister, Vivian, could buy her, and places her in an institution that can provide society with protection.

Similarly, James M. Cain's Walter Huff in *Double Indemnity* appears to have gotten away with murder, but the threat he and Phyllis embody is contained at the end of the work. Huff reveals the crime so that Keyes can make sure that Lola is not punished for a murder she did not commit. He makes sure that innocents are protected. The continuation of Huff's life is questionable in his final confrontation with Phyllis. He believes that she will kill him. In his death, Huff then ceases to be a threat to his society and to the reader's sense of right and wrong.

Phyllis also ceases to be a threat, exiled to another borderland--Mexico. In both cases, the unconventional endings are just as complete as the more traditional endings from which the reader draws a sense of security.

Feminist hard-boiled detectives solve cases but rarely provide the solution to the overarching dilemmas of society. Like those of women proletarian writers of the 1930s, the problems feminist hard-boiled detective authors face go beyond the pages of the text and into the political and social struggles of life. The failure of the feminist hard-boiled detective to totally remove the threat from society creates a “... self-consciousness about such conflicts [that] becomes part of the formula itself, creating an unsettling disruption of established norms” (Walton and Jones 212). This disruption creates an unsettling inconclusiveness that invites social critique and allows the reader to feel as if the detectives are relating to the same struggles the reader is experiencing in life (Walton and Jones 211). Life is not improved, but the reader is made more aware.

This open-ended resolution permeates the feminist hard-boiled detective genre. In *Blood Shot*, Warshawski discovers a dangerous cover-up perpetrated by a chemical company; she is only able to only stop an individual and not the entire company. In Sue Grafton's *O Is For Outlaw*, Millhone is able to finally resolve the questions surrounding a single case of police corruption, but she in no way puts a stop to all corruption in that department. In fact, the case she does solve is one that occurred several years ago, so the resolution does not begin to address the issue of current corruption in police departments. In Muller's *Listen to the Silence* and *There Is Nothing to be Afraid Of*, McCone uncovers racial and social prejudice, but can do nothing to stop the hateful acts that these biases produce.

Like the 1930's women proletarian writers, these feminist detective writers are taking steps to bring social concerns to light. Victoria from Herbst's *Rope of Gold* foreshadows this step-by-step progress in her ability to help only a few farmers and workers and publicize their plight. While she uses newspapers and other types of media as tools for reform, her progress, like that of Warshawski, Millhone, and McCone, is measured by the individuals she helps. One person saved does represent a type of victory. In a similar spirit, Herbst's Mrs. Winter in *Nothing is Sacred* and Brody's Molly in *Nobody Starves* show the same uncertain progress. For feminist hard-boiled detective authors and the 1930s women proletarian writers, there is nothing certain about social reform and nothing that could definitively offer a solution to the problems they reveal.

7.4 Telling a Tale: Information Sharing

Revelation of the hidden actions and stories is critical for hard-boiled detective fiction. It is the detective's job and social obligation to bring to light the missing information for the sake of the client and social order. This process is a small reenactment of the confession/absolution model that Foucault mentions in *History of Sexuality, Vol. I* (6). Revelation provides the mainstream with the power to reincorporate those who have broken boundaries back into society. The Revelation of the hidden information is not always as straightforward as it may seem. As McNay suggests, Foucault's theory of confession does not take into account false confessions or deception on the part of the one confessing (12). In addition, lying in this model reveals boundaries in social structures, as Foucault discusses in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice* (34). With this line of reasoning, it is not the rebellion of lying in itself that is powerful or threatening to mainstream society, but it is the limitations and boundaries lying reveals, which show power and lack thereof in the structure (Clark xv). For masculine hard-boiled detectives,

the obligation to bring to justice those who have violated society's laws is balanced against the obligation to keep the client's information confidential. Like the masculine hard-boiled detective writers, women proletarian writers of the 1930s and contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective writers realize that information can be used to disrupt a budding fringe community or political movement. Consequently, feminist hard-boiled detectives often strive to withhold information they discover from authority figures of mainstream society who would use the knowledge to violate the communities the detectives champion.

Masculine hard-boiled detectives withhold information for the sake of the client as well. To solve cases and gain access to information, masculine hard-boiled detectives withhold information about their clients and cases from authority figures during the process of the investigation. Chandler's Marlowe explains this tactic to General Sternwood as he describes his encounter with Captain Gregory in *The Big Sleep*:

The head of a Missing Persons Bureau isn't a talker. He wouldn't be in that office if he was. This one is a very smart cagey guy who tries, with a lot of success at first, to give the impression that he's a middle-aged hack fed up with his job. The game I play is not spillikins. There's always a large element of bluff connected with it. Whatever I might say to a cop, he would be apt to discount it. And to *that* cop it wouldn't make much difference what I said. When you hire a boy in my line of work it isn't like hiring a window-washer and showing him eight windows and saying: 'Wash those and you're through.' *You* don't know what I have to go through or over or under to do your job for you. I do it my way. I do my best to protect you and I may break a few rules, but I break them in your favor. The client comes first unless he is crooked. Even then all I do is hand the job back to him and keep my mouth shut. (182)

In definite terms, Marlowe outlines the rules of information sharing for the masculine hard-boiled detective. Unless there has been a crime perpetrated by the client, the hard-boiled detective has free reign to lie, withhold information, and mislead those he encounters, including the police. Misleading the police underscores the often hostile relationship between hard-boiled detectives and police officers, but the masculine hard-boiled detective does not lose any power or

authority through the distribution of misinformation. Marlowe and his brethren manage to avoid the criminal connotations of withholding because the information in question does not keep evidence of a crime from the police. In addition, the masculine hard-boiled detectives do not lose power, because in the end the reader is aware that the privacy the detectives afford their clients only exists if no crime has been committed.

These policies are tested for Marlowe when he confronts Vivian Regan about Carmen Sternwood's role in the disappearance of Rusty Regan. Marlowe does discover criminal activity, but his actions to make sure that Carmen receives treatment and is placed in an institution where she cannot hurt anyone is a resolution which is similar to the social justice Carmen would have faced if she had been turned over to the authorities. While Marlowe can protect the interests of General Sternwood in *The Big Sleep*, Hammett's Spade must turn Brigid O'Shaughnessy over to the police when it becomes evident she did commit a crime. In a similar vein, Cain's Huff provides a full confession to Keyes at the end of *Double Indemnity*, and upholds the convention of showing the police all the information at the end of the case. All in all, the masculine hard-boiled detective uses information as a tool for restoring social order, with the practice of withholding information being nothing more than a tool he utilizes to ensure that justice is done at the end of the case.

Once information is revealed, the exposed person or persons in question lose power. The masculine hard-boiled detective knows this and uses revelation to disempower the criminal element. Those who find themselves oppressed by mainstream society through socioeconomic channels and/or political channels know this process all too well. Keeping certain information from the mainstream helps these fringe groups function and move toward obtaining their goals.

Women proletarian writers of the 1930s created characters that were familiar with the need for secrecy. Herbst's Mrs. Winter from *Nothing is Sacred* tries to keep information about her son-in-law's embezzlement from the general public to preserve her daughter's reputation. Her involvement in the repayment of the stolen money is kept from the general public's knowledge, as well. She also indulges in finding hidden information and is prone to reading the personal correspondence of her children for signs of trouble. Molly from Brody's *Nobody Starves* relies on a word-of-mouth system to keep her informed about union activity. Rallies and strikes could be stopped before they begin if the police or the management of factories learned that they were being planned. Secrecy and selected information sharing allows the proletarian political movement and families to survive. Deviant and somewhat illegal activities, such as the ones promoted by American proletarians in the 1930s and early 1940s are the kind of activities that masculine hard-boiled detectives would feel obligated to report to authorities, so they could be stopped.

Hiding information from the police is a practice that provides a meeting place for the status quo and the rebellion. On the one hand, the feminist hard-boiled detective works with an idea of justice similar to that of her masculine counterpart. She wants to reveal the concealed information surrounding the crime or mystery in question so that the parties who violate the rights of others can be made answerable for their transgressions. The feminist hard-boiled detective frequently finds herself in a position where she is trying to protect her client from being oppressed or pushed aside by the representatives of mainstream authority. Such neglect can happen because of the client's lack of financial resources, social status, or acceptable lifestyle choices. Consequently, the feminist hard-boiled detective employs a strategy that is a mixture of the masculine hard-boiled detective's drive for justice and the woman proletarian writer's need

to protect the community with which they identify through secrecy. The result is a process of omission and selective revelation.

Paretsky's Warshawski often finds that the villain she needs to bring to justice is a member of mainstream society. While this resolution does make a significant political statement, critics such as Walton and Jones see these political statements as overshadowing the element of the individual and the client in these cases (209). The dilemma of the individual is not overlooked in Warshawski's efforts. She often works diligently to protect her client's interests, and may do so through concealing information from the police and other highly placed mainstream social figures. In *Blood Shot*, Caroline Djiak, Warshawski's childhood friend, hires Warshawski to uncover the identity of her biological father. During the course of the investigation, Warshawski discovers that Caroline's biological father is Art Jurshak, a prominent figure in the Chicago business and political world, as well as Caroline's great-uncle. Warshawski discovers Jurshak's involvement in covering up illegal chemical pollution as well as his history of molesting his niece and nephew. While Jurshak is still alive and able to be held accountable for his crimes, Warshawski chooses only to reveal his involvement with the chemical company and not his past sexual crimes. She leaves the information with Caroline to do with as she will, even though Jurshak committed a crime. Warshawski knows that if this information were to become public, Caroline and her mother, Louisa, would both have to deal with the backlash and stigma it would bring them and their family. Warshawski chooses to conceal vital facts about Caroline's biological father from the public as a way of protecting Caroline, the reputation of her mother, and her place in her community. Her choice to keep it secret and protect Caroline and the fragile support system of friends, work, family, and ethnic identity that Caroline depends on, is found in the pages of women proletarian works. The reader

does note that Warshawski's actions in *Blood Shot* still bring Jurshak to light as a criminal and fit the social demand that those who violate order need to be exposed.

Warshawski continues the hard-boiled tradition of keeping information from the police, even when it is to the detriment of personal relationships. Bobby Mallory, an old police friend of Warshawski's father, constantly reminds Warshawski that she needs to give information to the police so that they can do their job. In *Tunnel Vision*, Warshawski's relationship with Conrad Rawlings is jeopardized and ends because of her refusal to turn over her information to the police and follow the protocol that they use. Warshawski keeps information from Rawlings so that she can identify the murderer. Rawlings sees Warshawski's refusal to include him in her information sharing as an endangerment to his life and an insult to the police. Warshawski sees her refusal to share information with the police as a way of keeping her power in the investigation as well as a method for ensuring that she is not victimized by another interpretation of events before she can find the proof she needs to support her theories. She knows that if she reveals her information too early, she runs the risk of being dismissed for false ideas, or of the criminals discovering her clandestine investigation and working to stop her. The latter idea is similar to the reasoning behind keeping secret the strikes and union activity in the proletarian movement until it is too late for outsiders to prevent them.

Grafton's Millhone follows a similar path to that of Warshawski. Millhone knows that sharing information with the authorities is something that must be delayed until all the evidence has been discovered. In *A Is For Alibi*, Millhone keeps the police in the dark about her trip to Las Vegas and her conversation with murdered card dealer, Sharon Napier. She has several reasons for not keeping the police abreast of her investigation activities. First, she does not want to lose any access to information they might be willing to share, by admitting that she has been

working on a case they consider theirs. Second, Millhone does not want the police to interrupt her investigation and her collection of evidence to support her theory about the crime. Finally, Millhone knows that if she is connected to the murder of Sharon Napier, she will lose her stance as detective and the power that role entails. Instead, she would become a suspect or a witness who would be allowed little or no access to case information. Any efforts to work on the case would be blocked by the police. Her omissions are an attempt to protect the integrity of her investigation as well as her claim to the power of the role of detective. She is more than aware of the fact that any close inspection or interrogation of her actions by mainstream authorities, such as the police, could destroy her position and endanger her efforts on behalf of her client. Her desire to protect both of those aspects is an echo from women's proletarian writing of the 1930s and their use of omission to try and safeguard themselves and others from the oppressive power of mainstream society.

Like Marlowe and Warshawski, Millhone is aware that there is some information about clients that should be kept confidential. In *C Is For Corpse*, Millhone does not tell the police about the affair her deceased client, Bobby, had with Nola Fraker, the wife of a prominent doctor and the primary suspect in Bobby's death. Instead, Millhone focuses on Dr. Fraker's illegal activities, which Bobby discovered and which, in turn, led to his death. Since the affair only broke social codes and not laws, Millhone respects Bobby's privacy and keeps his secrets from the police. This gesture that seeks to protect Bobby's memory for his friends and family is reminiscent of Mrs. Winter's demand of silence to protect her daughter's reputation in *Nothing is Sacred*.

Like Paretsky and Grafton, Muller's feminist hard-boiled detective, McCone, practices omission to protect her clients and her case. Throughout *A Wild and Lonely Place*, McCone,

attempts to protect nine-year-old Habiba from her father, the iron rule of her grandmother, and a terrorist bombing. McCone fails to mention to those she is working with that she knows where Habiba is hiding or that she has helped Habiba obtain legal counsel so that she can try to have a better life. McCone's omission works to protect her client, but creates a moral dilemma.

Habiba is a minor and her family has legal custody of her. McCone's failure to return Habiba to her family or reveal information about her whereabouts is a violation of the law. What saves McCone from becoming a criminal in this case is the poor quality of life Habiba suffers under her grandmother's control. McCone's actions are therefore designed to rescue Habiba rather than violate the law. McCone's refusal to share information about Habiba keeps mainstream authorities from blindly interceding and placing Habiba back in the same situation from which she needs to be rescued. McCone's concern for what mainstream society might do to Habiba is one that comes directly from women's proletarian literature. Herbst's Mrs. Winter is also concerned about the well being of her daughters and what the influence and power of an increasingly money-centered mainstream society is doing to them. On a similar note, Brody's Molly is concerned about the welfare of her unborn child and the dire monetary problems that she has encountered working in factories. McCone is continuing a long tradition of protection by withholding information.

McCone also refuses to share information with mainstream authorities and large investigation organizations she feels she cannot trust. In *A Wild and Lonely Place*, McCone is commissioned by a task force to help locate a bomber. The task force in question is led by a longtime friend, Adah Joslyn. As the work progresses, Adah's loyalty is to the task force and maintaining her role. Consequently, McCone does not feel that she can trust Adah with the information she is gathering. Adah increasingly demands that McCone change her style of

investigation and information sharing to fit the mainstream hierarchy she prefers (38).

McCone's reluctance to deal with Adah could be attributed to bitterness about her past experiences with sharing information with Adah:

My input often helped Joslyn make her collars. But once made, they were strictly hers; she never acknowledged my help, not even a private thank-you ... Now I began to wonder why I'd spent the last two weeks brainstorming with her about the Diplo-bomber. Why I'd put in long nights pouring over files that had to be back on her desk first thing in the morning ... I wasn't going to allow that prospect to stop me, though ... now that I'd seen Habiba Hamid' shiny dark eyes, I was in this for the duration ... I hadn't expected that I'd need to play manipulative games with a woman I regarded as my friend. (39)

McCone's concern stems from several sources. She does not wish to alter her successful pattern for solving cases. She also has reservations about sharing information and doing the work, only to have her efforts taken from her and credited to another. In addition, she wishes to help Habiba. The credit aspect of McCone's argument may seem somewhat petty at first glance. What does it matter who gets credit as long as a terrorist is brought to justice? Part of McCone's desire to attach her name to her work is political. McCone makes strong connections between her beliefs, both personal and political, and her actions when solving cases. Her removal from the solution of a case would also work to remove her from the political connections and statements she makes with the cases. In this situation, Adah would be silencing McCone and the traditionally oppressed political voice she represents. McCone's refusal to share information allows her to protect her client and her political statements, a method similar to the ones used by women proletarian writers.

Similarly, McCone avoids sharing information with large organizations she does not approve of or feels she cannot trust. RKI, a larger investigation firm, wants to work closely with McCone during *A Wild and Lonely Place*. She does not approve of the methods they use to resolve their investigations. Working with RKI and giving them information would aid them in

continuing using their dubious methods. McCone withholds information because she feels she cannot trust them to protect the values she wishes to transmit personally and politically in her case resolutions. Once again, McCone seeks to protect her political statements and the political values of her clients.

In providing the police and other standard authority agencies with a sufficient amount of information, the feminist hard-boiled detective gives satisfaction to police and other authorities that the social system is not threatened. Omissions and half-revelations allow the dangerous border region to protest to and react against the mainstream. Detectives like Warshawski, Millhone, and McCone follow the tradition of using omission and silence as protections, as practiced by women proletarian writers of the 1930s. This silence does not keep them from fulfilling the demand that the detective restore order to the text. The order they restore is different from what mainstream society envisions.

7.5 It Takes a Village to Solve a Mystery: Group Resolutions

A large part of the mystique surrounding the figure of the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective comes from the independence associated with the role. The individual discovers the circumstances involved in the mystery in question without having to rely upon the work of others. This independence helped the masculine hard-boiled detective to be seen by the public as a man who is more than capable of dealing with social problems, and thus is a prime example of the American concept of rugged individualism and Emersonian self-reliance (Nyman 20). While a key part of the hard-boiled detective's information gathering comes from questioning suspects and street informants, this is not the same as relying on a partner or another detective to aid in a case. On the one hand, the hard-boiled detective does not trust knowledge gained from informants and suspects as implicitly as he would trust the information gathered from a peer or

contemporary professional working in the same field. On the other hand, the hard-boiled detective is not asking informants and suspects for help to expedite the case; rather, he asks them because they are directly involved in the case and, therefore, have questionable loyalties, which the hard-boiled detective must uncover to judge the validity of the information. Chandler's Marlowe, Hammett's Spade, and Cain's Keyes are all prime examples of the importance in masculine hard-boiled detective fiction of a single effort to solve a case.

Marlowe frequently deals with those who dwell on the criminal fringes of society. In *The Big Sleep*, he questions Eddie Mars, an owner of a gambling house, as well as the primary suspect for blackmail and murder. Mars' criminal connections are clear to Marlowe. He knows that Mars is not going to incriminate himself. Marlowe takes this knowledge into consideration when weighing the veracity of Mars' answers. In the course of the investigation, Marlowe does talk with police officers in an attempt to glean additional information from them. Marlowe at no time during the case asks for help from Mars or the police. By avoiding their help, Marlowe remains free of any criminal taint associated with Mars and, likewise, steers clear of any threat to his authority from the police. Anne Riordan from *Farewell, My Lovely* is a less threatening figure for Marlowe, as she provides him with a lead to a meeting with the mysterious Mrs. Grayle. Marlowe merely takes her information and excludes her from other aspects of the investigation. With Riordan reduced to a tangential aspect of the case, she is not a threat to Marlowe's authority as a detective. The independence Marlowe values in his role of detective remains intact throughout his cases.

Hammett's Spade follows much the same path as Marlowe. Spade finds himself surrounded by lies in *The Maltese Falcon* and must even judge his client, Brigid O'Shaughnessy. Since Spade's partner dies in the beginning of the text, he does not have the opportunity to share

his case with another professional. Since Spade lacks knowledge about his partner's cases and the events surrounding his death, it is highly unlikely that the two collaborated on cases. Like Marlowe, Spade sees power in working alone.

Cain's Keyes makes the mistake of allocating the task of investigation to another. When he includes Huff in the workings of the investigation of the death of Phyllis' husband in *Double Indemnity*, Keyes shows how allowing another individual access to the authority and power of the detective can go horribly wrong. Keyes' trust in Huff gives Huff the edge he needs to stay ahead of the police and the insurance company in the investigation. His authority and power as a detective are severely damaged by his delegation of power to Huff. Once again, Cain provides riveting examples of the pitfalls that masculine hard-boiled detectives like Marlowe and Spade work hard to avoid.

The lone figure fighting for justice is a sharp contrast to the philosophy espoused in proletarian literature with its strong focus on the group and the individual working with or for the group. This is especially true for women's proletarian literature. Al Halper's *The Foundry* depicts a group rebellion at the factory, but the primary focus of the text skips from individual to individual, creating small interlocking stories that lack extensive teamwork of women's proletarian literature.

Herbst's *Nothing is Sacred* exemplifies what happens when the supportive community structure that women depend upon to be productive on the home front and political front breaks down. Mrs. Winter, the matriarch of the household, tries to create a unit where her daughters and their spouses pull together to disseminate information and keep the values that Mrs. Winter represents. As her daughters marry, they get drawn into a way life that values the pleasure of the

individual. In consequence, Mrs. Winter's daughters leave the safe community she has created and fall deeper into unhealthy lifestyles dominated by capitalism.

Herbst shows a community working together in subtler ways in *Rope of Gold*. The protagonist, Victoria, admires the plight of the working class and how the Cuban sugar plantation workers draw together to try and gain better wages and working conditions. She, in turn, works with individuals like Lester Tolman, her Cuban contacts--Alquinas and Vincente--and various families in Cuba to reveal the story of the workers' struggle and promote the proletarian movement. Victoria's use of the community around her allows her to create a more complete picture of the political and financial situation in Cuba, the extent of its effect upon the Cuban population, and the possible repercussions it could have for American workers. If Victoria remained independent in her investigation and did not rely upon others, she would not gain the insights both she and her reader discover.

The proletarian concepts of power and the necessity of group effort are ones that are utilized in the feminist movements. Second wave feminism promoted the idea of community in ways similar to those found in 1930's proletarian works. The importance of the group is one of the reasons identity politics is so important in proletarian and feminist works. Thus, the feminist hard-boiled detective author creates a delicate balance between reliance upon others to solve cases and the need to assert her protagonist's independence and control.

Paretsky's Warshawski is the most openly politically charged feminist hard-boiled detective currently inhabiting the genre. Like the women proletarian writers of the 1930s, Paretsky's Warshawski often uses others to aid in the process of her investigation. On a professional level, Warshawski uses databases and an assistant to help her with the basics of investigation. In *Hard Time* Warshawski uses the professional database, LifeStory, to do basic

background checks on suspects and clients (46). The technology allows her to gather information such as tax returns, financial solidity, loan information, employment history, and criminal records in a fast and efficient manner. She also uses her assistant, Mary Louise Neely, to gather basic information such as reasons for leaving employment and personal connections to friends and family, about individuals who do not appear in the LifeStory database. Between Neely and LifeStory, Warshawski can begin to piece together a picture of a person's life before she begins talking to suspects and family members. The mesh of technological and human community creates the supportive unity that proletarian writers, such as Herbst, used to successfully champion a cause.

Warshawski's use of partnerships to solve cases leaves her open to being misled in a similar manner as Cain's Huff. She avoids this peril with Neely because of Neely's professional trustworthiness and integrity. Neely was a police officer for ten years and supports many of the same political causes that Warshawski supports. There are others with whom Warshawski works who do not always take the same viewpoint as she. Murray Ryerson, a newspaper reporter and long time acquaintance of Warshawski's, takes an opposing view of an investigation in *Hard Time*. Even though Warshawski shares just enough information with Murray to make him question his take on events, his hostility towards her ideas makes him a dangerous and unprofitable partner. Murray's view is pro big business in this case, and with his ties to the media, he could easily drown out Warshawski's hypothesis of what lies hidden in the case. With this possible threat in mind, Warshawski chooses not to use him as a partner. In a similar vein, Warshawski is aware of how even electronic databases like LifeStory can be manipulated by organizations to create a false picture of an individual. Thus, Warshawski practices selective partnerships that often change depending upon the case and situation. Through careful selection,

she manages to retain the power and control that the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective valued, while still relying on the powerful community that women proletarian writers promoted.

Grafton's Millhone also shows a propensity for partnerships and group efforts in the author's first novel, *A Is For Alibi*. Generally, Millhone's partners are her professional peers. In this text, Grafton introduces the character of Robert Dietz, a Nevada detective who is investigating Sharon Napier, a potential witness. In *G Is For Gumshoe*, Millhone uses Dietz's bodyguard and security service for protection while she works on a case. Dietz also shares case information with Millhone. This professional dialogue is a testament to the competency of Millhone's investigative skills. Dietz is not an equal partner in the investigation; rather, he is a responsible resource Millhone can use to gain information that she feels is not biased by personal opinion or close ties to a group or situation. Millhone may use brief alliances with those outside her profession, such as Mrs. Ochsner in *B Is For Burglar*. Mrs. Ochsner is a retiree who lives close to a suspect Millhone is investigating. Millhone uses her to keep tabs on the suspect but limits her involvement in the investigation. As is the case with most hard-boiled detectives, Millhone is hesitant to rely solely upon the police force as a partner in investigation, for fear that they will either neglect the cases or overlook important leads. Following Warshawski, Millhone creates partnerships and uses group efforts to solve cases in a manner that is reminiscent of women's proletarian literature.

Muller's McCone displays a tendency to use collaborative efforts to solve cases. She, like Warshawski, uses assistants to ease the investigative process and obtain information in a much quicker fashion. Her assistant, Rae, handles clients and office duties, while her nephew, Ricky, uses the computer to electronically gather needed information for her. With the three of them, McCone has created a strong supportive group that can effectively deal with cases in the

positive manner of group support found in proletarian literature, while allowing McCone to retain control over the investigation.

McCone often discusses her cases with Hy Ripinsky, her long-time significant other and a professional investigator in his own right. In *A Wild and Lonely Place*, Hy discusses international politics with McCone, brainstorming with her about the bomber's impact and terrorism. Later on in the novel, he arranges connections for McCone when she tries to hide Habiba from her father and grandmother, and he helps her transport the girl. In *Listen to the Silence*, it is Hy who advises McCone on how to question her reluctant family members about the mystery surrounding her birth. She also helps Hy with his cases. In *Wolf in the Shadows*, McCone tracks down a missing and injured Hy and then helps him with a kidnapping case gone awry. Their professional relationship is a sharing of information and responsibility that allows McCone to retain power when dealing with her investigations, while gaining access to sources of knowledge she might otherwise have missed. Their partnership, both professionally and personally, fosters a supportive group atmosphere, which displays the healthy power of support that women's proletarian literature tried to communicate.

Feminist hard-boiled detectives utilize groups and partners when working on cases to show the power that a group can give to its investigation. This tradition is one Paretsky, Grafton, and Muller share with women proletarian writers of the 1930s. The feminist hard-boiled detective genre is a mix of the tradition of independence and group support that allows the feminist hard-boiled detective to retain control of the investigation while gaining access to information they otherwise might not have uncovered.

7.6 Liar's Club: Truth and Gender in Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction

In *History of Sexuality*, Foucault discusses the concept of confession as one of the primary systems through which violators of social order are reintroduced into mainstream society (6). Similar to the religious process, an individual comes to an authority figure, confesses transgressions, and receives a penance, punishment, and instructions for correcting the mistake and being redeemed. The power in this process, as Foucault describes it, is placed in the mainstream authority figure who hears the confession. This authority figure has the right to interpret the confession and, therefore, has the power to place the confessor in any role that he or she sees fit. This process is predicated upon the assumption that the confessor is telling the truth or, at the very least, relating a factual account. It does not take into consideration the prospect that the confessor could merely be telling the representative of mainstream society what he or she wants to hear to avoid harsh social scrutiny. In Foucault's system there is no room for lying.

There is a particular history and connotation associated with lies. John Kucich's *The Power of Lies* expounds upon the cultural and gender-connoted role of lies in Victorian society. While Kucich primarily deals with Victorian culture, his ideas can be applied to 20th century American society. In Kucich's view, the "truth" works to maintain mainstream social values. Truth is then the standard explanation and descriptions of people and events that is promoted by mainstream society. He further explains that the mainstream promotes the idea that lies are associated with the feminine and lower classes. They are the tools of deception that weaker and deviant Others, such as those who inhabit the borderland, use and can be viewed as a type of resistance to overarching mainstream values. These lies can lead the mainstream to believe that the individual in question has acquiesced to the dominant value system (Kucich 12). In effect, they provide the false confession.

The best example from hard-boiled detective fiction of lies being used to lead astray authority figures, such as the hard-boiled detective, comes from the traditional masculine use of the femme fatale. In *The Big Sleep*, both Carmen Sternwood and Vivian Regan, who are trying to keep him from discovering the fate of Rusty Regan, lie repeatedly to Chandler's Marlowe. Their lies conceal criminal activity. In *The Maltese Falcon*, Brigid O'Shaughnessy lies to Hammett's Spade to cover up her criminal activities and her involvement with the death of his partner. These instances exemplify Kucich's theory. In works of crime and justice, the criminal is the untrustworthy liar who falsely confesses to the authority figures. Criminal figures, in keeping with Leonardi and Pope's definition, tend to be deviant, excessive, and feminized in their appearance and actions (157). The femmes fatales' lying is also characterized by a deviant and feminized activity.

Often the hard-boiled detective lies to others during his quest for the truth, as well. The question then arises whether or not the lying "feminizes" the detective in a way that undercuts her authority and removes her from a credible position of power. For the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective, the association with feminization through lying is averted by the order he establishes at the end of the novel. His work ends the social disruption of the crime, giving him leeway to act, at times, in an unconventional manner during the investigation. Chandler's Marlowe lies repeatedly through the novels, both for seemingly random reasons and for case-related purposes. Marlowe introduces himself as "Doghouse Reilly" to Carmen Sternwood for no other reason than deriving pleasure in verbal play (Chandler, *Big 5*). Changing identities and relying upon sometimes alternate appearances are tools the hard-boiled detective uses. But in the introduction to Carmen, Marlowe plays with his identity with no real motivation.

Hard-boiled detectives can be expected to lie to criminals with little or no repercussions. After all, why should the detectives have to tell the truth to those they know are lying to them? Throughout the novel, Marlowe does rely upon misconceptions and lies to help him gather information. He lies to criminals and to police officers. General Sternwood calls these practices into question at the end:

“And you [Marlowe] allowed Captain Gregory to think I had employed you to find Rusty?”

“Yeah, I guess I did—when I was sure he had the case.”

He closed his eyes. They twitched a little. He spoke with them closed.

“And do you consider this unethical?”

“Yes,” I said. “I do.” (Chandler, *Big* 182)

This episode is slightly more complex. Marlowe, like the criminal elements he is investigating, misleads the police. He admits that this can be seen as unethical and runs the risk of crossing the line into the criminal, excessive, and feminine. What keeps Marlowe from being exiled from the role of hero is what he does with the information. Instead of working for personal gain, Marlowe uses the information to establish an order acceptable to mainstream society. The resolution he provides is one that meets the needs of society and his employer, so his little forays into the world of lying are nothing more than a detective using his tools to get the job done.

In similar situations, Hammett’s Spade must sort through lies to figure out what Ms. O’Shaughnesy is hiding. In the process of finding out what is happening, Spade misleads others as well. In the end, O’Shaughnesy offers to run away with Spade to avoid the police. If Spade follows her, then the lies he has told during the course of the investigation would work to feminize him, turn him into a criminal element, and remove him from his position of power. At the final confrontation, Spade lists the reasons why he will not give in to O’Shaughnesy’s temptation and the order he intends to reestablish. Spade’s refusal to give up the order he

represents make his lies tools of the mainstream that empower him, instead of markers of a fall into corruption.

Cain's Huff is the ultimate example of a hard-boiled detective feminized by lies. While Huff does leave behind a confession to Keyes to set the record straight concerning insurance fraud and murder, he is too removed from power to save himself at the end of the novel. The lies he has told on behalf of Phyllis, and for personal gain, have slowly relegated his position from an aggressive to a passive one throughout the novel. In the beginning, Huff is powerful, acting on his free will and taking steps to make his own decisions. As the novel progresses, he begins lying, taking orders from Phyllis, and finding himself reacting to situations instead of taking the initiative and being proactive. Huff's increasing passivity is a trait that has been socially linked with the feminine by society. By the end of the novel, despite his attempt to reestablish some order, Huff is powerless to save himself from the possible homicidal actions of Phyllis.

Women's 1930s proletarian literature is a testament to a keen understanding of the importance of mixing truth and deception. Herbst's *Rope of Gold* shows the power that can be found in the truth, when a previously silenced voice is heard. Victoria's work as a writer and with the proletarian party enables her to craft the message of the workers in a moving manner, which in turn allows the general public to see a side of the story traditionally suppressed by businesses and governments. Both Herbst and Brody show the power that secrets and lies can grant as well. For Herbst, the power of the lie is destructive. *Rope of Gold* shows how Mrs. Winter's three daughters lie to cover up their actions and plans for capitalist gain they know will not win their mother's support or approval. Here, lies allow a monetary and socially orientated value system to replace Mrs. Winter's work-related value system, showing that the secrecy of lies can be profoundly powerful. Brody, in turn, offers a more positive look at lying. Molly and

Bill witness union plots guarded with secrecy and lies to keep the management and the police from interfering. Lies told to the oppressor are powerful tools that the weak can use to try and marshal their strengths in secrecy. Lies allow those who previously did not have power to take that power without fear of mainstream authority figures stopping them. Women proletarian writers of the 1930s were aware of the destructive and potentially nurturing power that lies could provide for the oppressed working classes.

Lying is a precarious activity for feminist hard-boiled detectives. They must balance the demands of the role of detective with their ties to those who are traditionally seen as the Other and deviant by mainstream society. Lying, and the consequence of a powerlessness it could embody for the feminist hard-boiled detective, threatens to reduce them to a position of helplessness and link them with the criminal. Feminist hard-boiled detectives must endeavor to lie in productive ways that will aid their cases and allow them to move freely without mainstream authority agencies trying to limit their power, much in the same manner that Brody shows lies used productively by proletarians.

Paretsky's Warshawski has a background as a public defender and is aware of the power given to interpretation by society and, more specifically, by the justice system. While talking to her lawyer, Freeman, in *Hard Time*, Warshawski is forced to defend the truth of her statements about her automobile accident and the death of escaped convict Nicola Aguinardo. While Freeman questions her about Aguinardo and the accident, Warshawski tells him: "I am telling the unvarnished truth about Nicola Aguinardo. Not a court room truth" (66). These two sentences show that Warshawski has a very definite view of what passes for truth in courts of law. She, outside the court and in a conversation with her lawyer, is able to tell the truth completely. In the courtroom, her truth would be slanted and censored. The final product of the

courtroom is a selective partial truth. Warshawski's understanding of what the offices of mainstream society will allow to be heard harkens back to a similar awareness about mainstream society by women proletarian writers. Women proletariat writers knew that the more mainstream society controlled the presentation of information, the less likely it was that alternative viewpoints would be presented in a complete and contextual light. Herbst's Victoria knew this in *Rope of Gold*, which is why she began writing about the struggles in Cuba.

Warshawski is not naïve. She knows that anything and anyone can lie. Even her much valued database, LifeStory, can be manipulated to give Murray Ryerson a radically different version of the same background check Warshawski ran a scant couple of days before (269). Faced with a world where lies live on every level of society, Warshawski also engages in transgression to help her get the job done. On basic levels, Warshawski employs lies to keep people from discovering the real reason why she is searching for suspects. This way she can be assured that the people she is tracking are not aware of the reasons she is following them. In *Blood Shot*, she pretends to be a lawyer looking to award a financial settlement for an old automobile accident to track down potential witnesses, Joey Pankowski and Steve Ferraro (Paretsky 59). Warshawski's agency remains intact in this instance because of the fact that she manages to make progress in the case without alerting anyone to her intentions, and she is not misleading anyone in authority.

On a grander level of deception, after Warshawski is arrested in *Hard Time*, she arranges to lie about her location. She instructs Freeman not to tell people where she is, rather to let them think she has made bail and is merely "lying low" while she investigates potential criminal activity in Coolis, a women's correctional facility (363). This lie allows Warshawski once again to further her investigation without alerting those she is investigating to her actions and goals. In

contrast to the previous example, Warshawski is lying to authorities, but she is using another authority figure to perform the deed. Freeman's repetition of Warshawski's lie gives it an air of authority that would otherwise be missing from her declaration. This ploy keeps Warshawski in power and reflects the secrecy proletarian writers and activists used to keep strike activities secret until the last moment.

Warshawski's greatest risk comes from lying directly to mainstream authority figures like the police. In *Deadlock*, Warshawski lies to misdirect old family friend, Lieutenant Robert "Bobby" Mallory. When Mallory asks Warshawski what her fingerprints were doing in the office of murder victim, Clayton Phillips, she chooses lies to distract him from his line of questioning:

"What were you doing down there? [Mallory asks]"

"I put Phillips's body in the hold Sunday morning and I wanted to see people's faces when it came out on the conveyor belt [Warshawski replies] ... "

"What did you want to see Bledsoe for?"

"... My suitcase fell into the middle of a ship, I wanted to know if they recovered it ... my Smith & Wesson was in that case. That cost me three hundred dollars and I can't afford to replace it." I knew that would divert Bobby's attention. (205)

Warshawski's mock confession and misdirection work to keep Mallory frustrated so he does not look too closely at what she has been doing on a case he told her to stop investigating. If she had told Mallory the truth, and allowed it to become a police matter, there is a strong chance the resolution would not be the one Warshawski is trying to create. She, unlike Mallory, does not believe her cousin's death was an accident, but that it is tied to the problems a local shipping company is having. Mallory would see the incidents as two independent occurrences and would leave her cousins' death unsolved. In this case, telling the truth would take away her power and authority in the situation. Lying directly to Mallory is also threatening to Warshawski's hold on her power and authority as detective. If her lies are discovered without

the factual account of her actions, she could go from detective to suspect in one swift move. In that case, Warshawski would lose her position as detective and authority to interpret the information of the case. Either scenario makes Warshawski vulnerable. Warshawski mixes truth with her lies to grant herself some authority in the eyes of the law. She tells Mallory why she brought a gun to the boatyard, and some of her suspicions concern the deceased Phillips. This mix of truth and falsehoods allows Warshawski to maintain her authority without relinquishing her power as the detective or being dismissed as a manipulative lying woman, like Hammett's O'Shaughnessy. Paretsky's inventive use of truth and deception as tools for protest are traits that can also be found in characters created by Herbst and Brody.

Grafton's Millhone is the undisputed queen of deceit. Millhone is a self-described liar who theorizes about lying as being part of her character and about the general thrill she gets from breaking laws. In *O Is For Outlaw*, Millhone spends a great deal of time thinking about lies and her right to be creative with the interpretation of events when needed. She examines the unfairness of expecting detectives like herself to be held to a higher code of values than the criminals she investigates: "If bad guys don't have to play by the rules, why should the good guys have to?" (322). Millhone sees the strict laws that govern social behavior and the child-like expectation that "good guys" do not lie to be a restriction on her power as a detective. In her eyes she has every right to break a few laws to catch criminals.

Millhone feels even more at ease with her power to break codes and lie because she sees what she is doing, correcting criminal violations, as beneficial to society. This theory cements her power and authority as detective. Her ideas are the next step in the evolution of truth telling and lying that appear in women's proletarian literature. She does not lie to avoid mainstream authority. She lies to establish her own authority. Lying is a pastime that preoccupies her. In *H*

Is For Homicide, Millhone philosophizes on the problems of lying well: “The tricky part of any lie is trying to figure out how you’d behave if you were innocent” (266). For Millhone, unlike Warshawski, Marlowe, or women proletariat writers, lying is an artful act that must be perfected to be used as a viable tool in investigation.

Like most hard-boiled detectives, Millhone lies to the police. In *A Is For Alibi*, Millhone reports the murder of Sharon Napier to the Las Vegas 911, but she lies about the nature of the crime to get the police to investigate. She tells them she heard an intruder in her neighbor’s apartment, and now her neighbor is not answering (133). Here Millhone is an anonymous caller whose small lie helps the police uncover a more serious crime. In effect, she is turning over a part of her investigation to the police and removing herself from the authority position. Millhone’s loss of power is limited. She gives up the authority voluntarily. She is not in a turf battle with the police where she would run the risk of losing all claim to the case. Once again, the power of a greater cause keeps Millhone from losing dominance as a detective by lying.

Millhone does directly confront the police with lies, not the safe mixture of lies and truth that Warshawski uses. In *A Is For Alibi*, Millhone lies to Lieutenant Con Dolan of homicide about being in Las Vegas and her role in the investigation of Sharon Napier’s murder (198). Initially Dolan does not believe Millhone, but later he is convinced of her sincerity when she offers to make her statement legal and truthful in the eyes of the law. Through a careful mix of truth and lies Millhone retains her power to distract the police from investigating her statement. Here, Millhone adds credence to her statements using lies and relying upon Dolan’s respect for the legal system. If Dolan were to press Millhone to make a legal statement and discover she had lied, she would lose her power as a detective, and she would also lose her connections in the police department. Instead, Millhone uses the integrity associated with the legal system to her

favor. She is offering to go through the legal confession/validation process, reminiscent of Foucault. Where lawyers and Dolan assume the truth, Millhone gives a lie. Millhone's ploy is another version of the proletarian tactic of using lies to protect agendas from mainstream interference.

In some respects, Millhone's lying is much like Marlowe's. Millhone lies on casual levels to strangers and on professional levels to suspects, individuals she is interrogating, and the police. While Marlowe lies to advance his investigation and for small jokes, it is Millhone who lies as a part of her character. In *O Is For Outlaw*, Millhone tells her landlord and longtime friend, Henry, about her investigation of her ex-husband's old internal affairs investigation and of how he currently came to be in a coma. She reveals how she lied to gain access to his apartment and search for information. Henry feels this behavior was deceitful and not like Millhone at all. In a discussion with a disapproving Henry, Millhone tells him: "You know what? This *is* like me. This is exactly who I am: a liar and a thief. You want to know something else? I don't feel bad about it. I'm completely unrepentant. More than that. I like it. It makes me feel alive" (168).

The threat to Millhone's authority comes from the thrill of power she gets from lying. While Millhone is crossing the same boundaries criminals cross, she runs the risk of falling prey to the same corruption that leads criminals astray. This possible corruption is the threat she shares with the 1930s proletarian writers. The activities of the proletarian movement were not always seen as being in accordance with the law, leaving proletarians open to allegations of criminal behavior and threatening the progress of their cause. What saves Millhone from being exiled to the powerlessness of the criminal is her dedication to finding out the truth behind the

injustice and correcting it. This commitment to truth keeps Millhone on the redeeming side of power and authority and allows her to indulge in lying.

Muller's McCone uses lies as a tool the least, but she still employs them. She, like Warshawski and Millhone, lies to people she meets in the line of an investigation so she will not raise suspicions about her true goals. In *Listen to the Silence*, Millhone lies to locals about who she is, Sharon Ripinsky, and why she wants to speak with Jimmy D, a potential information source. She tells those she meets that Jimmy was supposed to meet her and her husband in the afternoon to show them a house (Muller 264). In this way, McCone creates a friendly approachable image and manages to keep her intentions secret. She, like proletarians, understands that letting others know intentions too soon can hamper progress. McCone's lies allow her to control the pace of her investigation as well as the information related to her investigation.

With a similar purpose McCone lies to Adah and Renshaw in *A Wild and Lonely Place*. She misleads them about her actions on the case and the information she has gathered about the bomber. McCone's main goal in lying to her friend and temporary working "partner" is to maintain control over the investigation. If McCone reveals what she knows to Adah, then the police will take over, and McCone will lose her chance to help Habiba, a child caught in the middle. McCone lies to Renshaw because she does not trust his business ethics. Keeping both Adah and Renshaw in the dark allows McCone to maintain control of the investigation. She, like Warshawski, Millhone, and women proletarian characters, understands that too much sharing with mainstream society can destroy her agenda.

Lies go far in power circles. Warshawski, Millhone, and McCone create a delicate balance for political reformers and feminist hard-boiled detectives. They pride themselves on

their values and dedication to pursuing justice for their clients. But they often engage in questionable practices, like lying, to maintain their power. Feminist hard-boiled detective writers and women proletarian authors saw the power in both revelation and obfuscation. Where Marlowe and Spade lie to criminals, feminist hard-boiled detectives are prone to lie to anyone whom they see as a threat to their investigation.

7.7 Interpretation and Disclosure

What emerges from the feminist hard-boiled texts is a careful balance of secrecy, sharing, and lies designed to protect the feminist hard-boiled detective's role as detective, the client she represents, and the causes she believes in advancing. Her tactics are similar to those practiced by the characters of women proletarian writers of the 1930s. These women knew how the brutal scrutiny of mainstream society could destroy their political causes and families. They valued secrecy as a means for collecting their strength and working toward strikes in a manner that would not be revealed to the mainstream until it was too late to stop them. They also understood that the mainstream silenced truths it did not want the general populous to hear. The power of revelation is the power of voice for women proletarian writers. This realization is a lesson that feminist hard-boiled detectives learned well.

Where the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective uses knowledge to maintain mainstream order, the feminist hard-boiled detective uses knowledge to create an alternative order. Warshawski, Millhone, and Muller withhold information from authority figures who threaten to stop their investigations. They feel the power of the group and call upon others to help them with their causes. They lie to protect themselves and their causes from the harsh immobilization that examination from mainstream society can bring them. In the end, what they

have created is a continuation of strong women's proletarian traditions concerning knowledge, power, and protection.

Chapter Eight: Feminist Hard-Boiled Detective Writers Carrying on the Tradition of Protest

The skill of writing is to create a context in which other people can think.

Edwin Schlossberg, 1977

Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton, and Marcia Muller create hard-boiled feminist detectives that attempt to transform their society. Feminist hard-boiled detective fiction is a powerful meld of traditional masculine genre as created by Chandler, Hammett, and Cain and political protest, similar to what is found in women's proletarian writing from the 1930s and 1940s. In the feminist version of the hard-boiled genre, political agendas, the protest of social hierarchies, and the promotion of social change are at center of the work.

Hard-boiled detective fiction and proletarian literature share vital genre characteristics. Proletarian novels by their nature address social and political "wrongs." In taking up the proletarian genre, women proletarian writers, such as Herbst and Brody, have introduced new levels of protest that center on the power and powerlessness of women. The similarities between the proletarian genre and the hard-boiled genre are what have allowed writers of feminist hard-boiled detective fiction to infuse their novels with new levels of protest. This new protest often undermines the traditional hard-boiled genre's demands and traditions while utilizing tools of protest found in women's proletarian writing. Herbst and Brody have used the same techniques for subversion that Paretsky, Grafton, and Muller use to keep their protagonists from becoming drag versions of masculine heroes. Herbst, Brody, Paretsky, Grafton, and Muller created characters that continue to look at American society's failings and advocate social change.

The tenuous battle between reality and vision plays out on many different levels in feminist hard-boiled detective fiction. As discussed in Chapter One, a detective's ability to use language to successfully interact with other characters, as well as to communicate her agenda, is

paramount to the text. The tough guy hard-boiled detective, especially as written by Raymond Chandler, set the linguistic criteria, while proletarian characters, such as Herbst's Victoria, emphasized the importance of using the party jargon to communicate the plight of the oppressed working class. In both genres words create the boundaries of alliances, knowledge, and power. Feminist hard-boiled detectives show their police counterparts their knowledge by using official terminology correctly and by displaying their familiarity with legal procedures.

Like proletarians, feminist hard-boiled detectives realize that their words help others identify them as members of a group, and they are able to talk in ways that show they are sympathetic to witnesses and victims, yet are still in control of the conversations. They can produce sympathetic phrases or verbal bullying that forces suspects to disclose previous hidden facts. The linguistic control they display shows their ability to manipulate social institutions and power structures to further their own agendas. This manipulation goes one step further than what 1930s proletarian women writers created in their attempts to exploit the power of language.

The hard-boiled detective's linguistic ability must be matched by a mastery of the physical demands of the role and genre. The hard-boiled detective must be able to defend him or herself from violent threats, and to complete the physical tasks of stakeouts, chases, and investigative footwork. Looking to women proletarian writers reveals some solutions to the problems women face meeting the physical demands of jobs most often identified as masculine. Equating appearance with professional ability is one means by which society creates gender categories. While clothing does not make the character, it does help the character perform her gender identity and fulfill professional expectations. Dressing is a device that feminist hard-boiled detective authors use to comment on the profession and their detectives' capabilities. The

feminist hard-boiled detective's ability to "look the part" is visible sign of credibility for the client and the reader.

The peril in the idea of the feminist hard-boiled detective fulfilling the physical aspects of the role lies in the possibility that the character will become a hollow drag figure. The character then becomes a parody of masculine traits while losing connections to the female gender. In such a case, the character fails to challenge ideas of gender stereotypes, politics, and professional performance. Feminist hard-boiled detective writers address issues of drag and their characters maintain their authority by underscoring the fact that they are women. These feminist hard-boiled detectives produce an order different from their male counterparts, and pursued styles of investigation that are in keeping with the group efforts valued in women's fiction. Feminist hard-boiled detective writers create characters that fulfill the role of detective successfully, not in spite of their gender, but because of it. Warshawski, Millhone, and Muller incorporate their body awareness into how they investigate cases, approach suspects, and deal with clients. The underlying awareness of gender seen in these texts also permeates the political messages found in the texts.

In chapter three, the hard-boiled detective's traditional blue-collar association is one genre tradition that is shown to have remained the same in feminist hard-boiled detective works as in masculine hard-boiled works and proletarian texts. The actual tie to the blue-collar socioeconomic class for the character of the hard-boiled detective is tenuous at best. From Chandler's Marlowe to Paretsky's Warshawski, hard-boiled detectives have a long tradition of being underpaid. Additionally, the physical aspects of the detective's role overshadow the fact that detection is primarily in an information-based business with strong white-collar connections. Often, the character of the hard-boiled detective has benefited from a white-collar background.

The detective's tie to blue-collar socioeconomic class is a choice. With this choice, there are some inherent difficulties that hard-boiled detective writers, and some proletarian authors, face in glamorizing the suffering.

The power and drawbacks of class association are issues central to proletarians. Since the inception of *Masses*, American proletarian leaders have wrestled with the question whether a writer outside of the proletarian class can speak for the worker without corrupting the message or disassociating the blue-collar voice from the blue-collar worker (Foley 87). Since the worker and the virile proletarian artist were masculine gendered ideas, the female intellectual and women proletarian writers often found themselves distanced from the working class to a greater degree than their male counterparts (Rabinowitz 34). The corrupting sway of filthy lucre and the indolence of the middle class were concepts that 1930s American proletarian writers were especially aware of. While feminists are aware of the perils in speaking for a class with which they are only loosely associated, the feminist hard-boiled detectives use this socioeconomic flexibility to full advantage. Paretsky, Grafton, and Muller create protagonists who are well trained and educated. While their family backgrounds are decisively blue-collar, these feminist detectives, like their masculine predecessors, utilize the benefits of a privileged background. Instead of using their dual status as a platform from which to create the illusion of objectivity, feminist hard-boiled detectives embrace their blue-collar associations. This association, in turn, gives them a political platform from which they can question mainstream society, while being upfront about their own economic biases, a pattern used in the proletarian tradition.

What arises out of this tradition of associating a "noble" profession with the blue-collar class is the threat of glamorizing poverty. Suddenly proletarian heroes and hard-boiled detectives are economic heroes who make a poor living. Poverty then becomes a badge of valor.

The glamorization of the starving protagonist threatens to eclipse the problems that the blue-collar class face. When this happens, the focus is removed from the social problems. Instead, those few noble protagonists, who could be making a better living, are seen as answering the needs of an entire class. It is an illusion that silences blue-collar concerns. Paretsky's Warshawski, Grafton's Millhone, and Muller's McCone battle this illusion by constantly drawing attention to the needs of the blue-collar class. The detectives continually emphasize that they make efforts on a case-by-case basis and in no way provide solutions to the entire problem.

The concept of identifying with communities informs the political values of the detectives. In chapter four, community ties, family ties, and personal relationships are shown to play a prominent role in the feminist hard-boiled detective's identity. Embracing community as a way of forming identity is a trait the 1930s proletarian writers share with contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective writers. The proletarian choice of community is one of victimization, self-righteousness, and an odd powerlessness reminiscent of religious martyrs. These proletarian souls are not providing a strong voice of social change; rather, they use their marginalized status as a yardstick for measuring the radicalism of their beliefs, yet do little else to promote social change. This type of community tie is not the pattern the feminist hard-boiled detective follows. It would limit her ability to enact social change.

Feminist hard-boiled detective writers follow a model of community interaction that can also be found in 1930s women proletarian writings. Paretsky's Warshawski, Grafton's Millhone, and Muller's McCone are characters who use community identification as a formative influence upon their social views. This tactic is in direct opposition to the role taken by the traditional masculine hard-boiled detectives, who see such connections as threats to their alleged

objectivity. Protagonists created by Chandler, Hammett, and Cain are often threatened with a reduction of power by close ties.

The femme fatale tempts and haunts the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective with the promise of sexual fulfillment and loss of power. Cain's Huff in *Double Indemnity*, may not be a detective, but he provides a prime example of disempowerment. Huff gives in to the femme fatale and loses his professional standing, his peace of mind, and in the end, his life. The feminist hard-boiled detective constantly balances the need for personal ties with the need for professional integrity. The struggle for the feminist hard-boiled detective is to find a significant other who does not attempt to undermine her professionally, yet allows her emotional closeness. This continuing search often results in the feminist hard-boiled detective ending the relationship, rather than losing her position of professional authority and power.

Close friendships also provide powerful ties for Paretsky's Warshawski, Grafton's Millhone, and Muller's McCone. While Marlowe and Spade are the embodiment of the American idea of rugged individualism, contemporary feminist detectives understand the need for friendships to aid them in their personal and professional lives. Warshawski's Lotty, Millhone's Henry, and McCone's Hank provide the detectives with valuable sounding boards for ideas and empower them with voices of reassurance and reason when the protagonists are facing situations that threaten their lives and beliefs. Similar ties appear in 1930s women's proletarian literature. Brody's Molly and Ann in *Nobody Starves* share the burdens of factory work, unemployment, and family struggles as they try to survive in an increasing union-unfriendly atmosphere. These personal ties allow the feminist hard-boiled detective and the 1930s women proletarian heroine deep moments of introspection and self-awareness, as they try to deal with the professional and personal demands of their lives. Feminist hard-boiled detective writers create

complex relations that empower their detectives through a supportive community and threaten to disempower detectives through those same communal ties.

Chapter five investigates the notion that the professional role of the hard-boiled detective, regardless of gender, often includes the threat of violent conflicts. Sheldon Norman Grebstein, in “The Tough Hemmingway and His Hard-Boiled Children,” sees the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective’s ability to survive physical abuse and finish the case as a key criterion measuring professional capability and personal masculinity (23). The feminist hard-boiled detective must also display physical resilience in the face of violence, but she must overcome other obstacles of social perception and gender myths as well.

Where the tough guy was seen as masculine through his use of violence, the feminist hard-boiled detective must confront the social fear connected to the idea of a violent woman. A woman who does physical harm is a creature seen as uncontrollable and threatening to society, even if that violence is inflicted in self-defense (Jones 10). The aspect of the monster is one the feminist hard-boiled detective must confront, if she is to successfully deal with violent encounters in the course of the investigation.

The use of violence as a tool for the protagonist is one that 1930s proletarian literature does not use in positive and empowering ways. In proletarian circles, violence is the tool of the oppressor. The power of the protestor lies in victimhood. In Albert Halper’s *The Foundry*, the final outbreak of violence by the workers is a terrifying climactic event that results from the factory owners’ refusal to give the workers any voice within the established hierarchy. When the oppression becomes too much for the workers, their unarticulated rage erupts in violent conflict that does little to solve the situation and creates the image of them in an uncontrolled frenzy. For the proletariat, passivity, and to a certain extent victimhood, provide power.

Passivity is a threat to the feminist hard-boiled detective. Inaction removes the feminist hard-boiled detective from power. Conversely, being too aggressive also hampers the character of the feminist hard-boiled detective by associating her with the image of a “monster woman” (Jones 24). Men escape the association with violent monsters, because society sanctions their right to use violence to uphold certain forms of order and gives them immunity from any negative connotations (Friedman 67). The feminist hard-boiled detective writers must then battle the idea of the monster woman when their characters perform aggressive actions that society usually reserves for men. Often the feminist hard-boiled detective must act and act decisively, and violently, to preserve her role and her life. What emerges in contemporary feminist hard-boiled works is a mixture of violence and introspection, designed to keep the reader from being repelled by the image of a violent woman, while allowing the complexity and connotations of violence to be examined. Paretsky’s Warshawski, Grafton’s Millhone, and Muller’s McCone are shown in situations where their violent actions are deemed necessary. They must rationalize their use of violence and at times apologize to the reader for what they must do in the line of duty. What comes across is a viewpoint that demands the reader acknowledge the actions of the feminist hard-boiled detective and the fear connected to those actions. The detective’s continued meditation upon the actions allows the reader to come to terms with the events without feeling a sense of threat. This process is a mixture of the demand for dealing with the violence found in traditional masculine hard-boiled detective fiction and the need to examine the destructive and silencing power of violence as embodied in proletarian literature.

The most powerful aspect of hard-boiled detective fiction is revelation. The right to establish the dominant interpretation of events is a powerful privilege that feminist hard-boiled detective writers use to criticize society on personal and political levels. Revelation is

everything to both the hard-boiled detective and the proletarian, for it is far more complex than the telling of a hidden story. The interpretation creates the political core of the text that justifies the detective's continued espoused beliefs and worldview, which is then communicated to the reader. Paretsky's Warshawski, Grafton's Millhone, and Muller's McCone offer a final and official presentation of events that is tailored to support specific political preferences and social views, regardless of whether this view is the same as that promoted by mainstream society. Revelation is so powerful that hard-boiled detectives and proletarians put forth a concentrated effort to make sure that theirs is the defining voice.

As a practicing liar, the feminist hard-boiled detective must deal with problems. Feminist hard-boiled detectives are already engaged in perilous battle to retain their authority as detective, and it would appear that lying only heightens the risk of disempowerment for them. What Paretsky's Warshawski, Grafton's Millhone and Muller's McCone create with omissions and falsehoods is a web of secrecy, similar to the selective sharing of information found in proletarian writing of the 1930s and 1940s. As the working class often hid news of strikes from authority figures, so too does the feminist hard-boiled detective hide her activities from the police so that she may uncover information and secure the right to create her own interpretation of events at the end of the novel.

What emerges in feminist hard-boiled detective fiction is a politically charged commentary and protest that unconsciously draws on the traditions of 1930s women's proletarian writings and traditional masculine hard-boiled detective fiction. Paretsky, Grafton, and Muller have taken words, performance, community, socioeconomic violence, and the power of interpretation and interrogated the conventions of traditional masculine hard-boiled detective fiction. The feminist hard-boiled detective can thrive in this difficult and conflicted genre

because she does not meekly adhere to the conventions as created by Chandler, Hammett, and Cain. Instead, she questions those conventions and creates new social frameworks and strategies designed to protect her power and her politics. Feminist hard-boiled detective authors transform the traditionally masculine genre into one of protest by using strategies similar to those practiced by 1930s women proletarian writers like Josephine Herbst and Catherine Brody.

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Vita

Laura Ng was born in Hillsboro, Kentucky, in 1973. She received her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees from Morehead State University, where she taught composition as a graduate assistant and was an Upwards Bound dorm instructor. She also worked as an assistant coordinator for the Minority Teacher Education Program.

In 1997 she came to Louisiana State University, where she studied 20th Century American literature, gender theory, and British literature. She has long had an interest in popular culture, gender identity, and detective fiction.

In 2002, Ms. Ng moved to Kansas where she is currently the Director of the Learning Center at the University of Saint Mary in Leavenworth. She coordinates academic support for the University's programs and oversees a federal grant designed to help first generation students succeed in obtaining degrees.