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**Shifting the Genre: Female Hardboiled  
Detectives**

Bachelor's Diploma Thesis

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*I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently,  
using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.*

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Author's signature

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# 1 Introduction

The detective genre has been around for more than a century and it has become one of the most popular genres, whether in literature or in movies and television. In the last few decades, there has been a significant rise in crime TV shows or movies because they allow the viewers to escape from their lives and to experience something exciting and thrilling. As a matter of fact, the number of female investigators is rising too, whether they are policewomen (Stella Gibson in *The Fall*, Teresa Lisbon in *The Mentalist* or Kate Beckett in *The Castle*) or investigators (Veronica Mars, *Miss Congeniality* and *Gone Girl*). These women owe it to authors as Marcia Muller, who was the first woman to create an independent female investigator that was not defined by the achievements of her husband and children, but who put her career and herself first.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate, how the first three female authors of the hardboiled genre adjusted and changed the characteristics of the traditional male hardboiled fiction. The authors in question are Marcia Muller, who is considered to be the mother of the female hardboiled detective fiction, Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton, who were her close successors and are the most appraised authors of this genre. The analysis focuses on the first novel of each one of them, to show, how they individually tried to adjust the genre. The first question that needs to be asked, is whether it is possible to take this male dominated genre, alter the sex of the hero and still stay true to the conventions. Whether the female authors only try to imitate the male detectives or try to subvert the genre. The second question is, whether the authors went beyond the shift of the gender and tried to tackle some difficult problems, women and feminists were facing every day, such as gender discrimination, sexism or women breaking through the male dominated professions. To put it in other words, whether the authors use this genre to deal with some

important feminist issues, or created these novels because they saw an empty spot on a market.

The second chapter is devoted to the evolution of the hardboiled detective fiction. To point out, what the hardboiled subgenre is, there is a need to establish from what and why it has evolved. Therefore, I discuss the main characteristics of the traditional detective, based on Edgar Allan Poe's detective Auguste C. Dupin, and the conventions of the genre itself. The hardboiled detective fiction was, on one hand, created as a reaction to the classic eccentric genius detective, because the crimes were unrealistic and the stories were overly complicated and absurd and on the other hand, as a response to the Prohibition and the rising violence it had caused. Thus, Dashiell Hammett decided to establish a new type of a detective and in this chapter, I discuss his motivation and influences behind the creation of this new hero. I also analyze the major characteristic of the hardboiled detective, focusing on three major authors of this subgenre – Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Robert B. Parker. Raymond Chandler is the most popular author of this subgenre and he added a number of crucial features to the hardboiled detective with his investigator Philip Marlowe. Decades later came a renewal of this genre and the most significant author was Robert B. Parker with his detective Spenser. Both of these successors of Hammett are investigated and their additions to the genre examined. It is necessary to point out what the traditional hardboiled detectives were like, to show, how the female authors adjusted the conventions.

In the third chapter, I summarize the history of female detectives, who were written by female authors. Of course, there were female detectives long before Marcia Muller's detective Sharon McCone and even Agatha Christie's Miss Jane Marple, but not until Marcia Muller, Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton, there were female detectives in their thirties, who were self-sufficient and tough just as any hardboiled male detective and for whom the

investigating was the source of their income. Subsequently, in this chapter, I focus on the three female authors, whose books are examined in the analysis – Marcia Muller, Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton. Each one of them has a specific background and experiences that led them to creation of such strong female characters. I study these authors and their motivation to immerse in a predominantly male world.

The fourth chapter is the analysis of three books: *Edwin of the Iron Shoes* (1977) by Marcia Muller, *Indemnity Only* (1982) by Sara Paretsky and *“A” is for Alibi* (1982) by Sue Grafton. I found that these authors are not as much examined as for their male counterparts, especially Marcia Muller, whose series is not as well established as the series of Paretsky and Grafton. I chose the first novel of every author to examine how they decided to alter the conventions. I study whether they try to uphold the masculinity and toughness of the male detectives or if they try to portray a feminine woman that can make it in a traditionally male profession. I investigate several major themes of the traditional male hardboiled fiction and whether the female authors adjusted them or followed the conventions.

## 2 History of Men's Hardboiled Detective Fiction

The beginning of the detective fiction as a literary genre dates to 1841, when Edgar Allan Poe published his first short story "Murders in the Rue Morgue", in which he introduced the detective Auguste C. Dupin (Gates 17). He established and shaped the conventions of the detective fiction, becoming a massive influence on the most significant authors of this genre, such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie. For instance, Doyle acknowledged Poe's work as groundbreaking by stating: "Where was the detective story until Poe breathed the breath of life into it?" (qtd. in Paul 33). Much of the detective fiction after Poe's, follows his lead and builds on his established characteristics of the mystery stories. The features of Poe's pattern are such as "a brilliant but eccentric amateur detective, his trusty but somewhat pedestrian companion and chronicler, an even more pedestrian police force, and an intricate and bizarre crime" (Kelleghan 303). The investigation is supposed to be a complex puzzle and a battle of wits between the reader and the detective. The competition of who can solve it first is "achieved through a complex series of logical deductions drawn by the scientific detective from an equally complex series of subtle clues" (Kelleghan 303). This pattern was followed also by Doyle and many others and it was adapted by the subsequent subgenres, including the hardboiled detective fiction.

The Golden Age of detective fiction came some decades after Poe and Doyle. The 1920's were represented by two, substantially different crime genres. On one hand, there was a subgenre called the whodunit, which is still one of the most popular today. As the title suggests, this type of a mystery focuses on finding the criminal, usually a murderer, and is full of suspense and clues that are supposed to distract the detective from the real perpetrator of the crime. The whodunits rose to fame thanks to the eccentric detectives such as Hercules Poirot - Agatha Christie's short, heavy and, one might say, arrogant and

bizarre Belgian investigator with perfect waxed mustache, walking cane and polished spats, who catches the murderers, similarly to Holmes or Dupin, by only using his exceptional genius mind.

On the other hand, there was a different type of detective stories, more masculine, violent and rough, called a hardboiled mystery. According to *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Mystery* by Clark and Charles, the authors of this genre “became known as hardboiled because, in writing about their fictional private-eye detectives, these authors strove to reflect the gritty day-to-day realities of life in the 1930s” (7). The detectives were described as “rough, tough guys who had their own code of honor and were the complete opposite of the civilized sleuths” (Clark and Charles 7). This represented a significant shift from Auguste Dupin or Sherlock Holmes, detectives that rely only upon their deduction skills and certainly not on their physique or sturdiness.

The hardboiled heroes are masculine and tough and possess not only the brain but also the beauty and brawn. John Scaggs claims that hardboiled fiction found its home in the US, in a contrast to the whodunits that were mostly written by British authors, because of three substantial reasons: firstly, they represent the adaptation of “the romanticism of the Western into a modern urban setting” and therefore most of the early stories are set in California, secondly, “the American vernacular” is a crucial characteristic of the PIs, making their language tough and masculine, and thirdly in the 1920’s, because of the Prohibition, the crimes “were increasingly becoming a part of the everyday world” and therefore the frequent violence became one of the main themes of the hardboiled stories (57). While the whodunits concentrate on finding the murderer, in the hardboiled genre the focus is on the investigation itself, during which the PIs usually uncover a greater scheme or conspiracy.

The pioneer of this genre was Carroll John Daly, who was largely inspired by westerns and cowboys and according to Rollyson, Daly created “the crude prototype” of the hardboiled hero, but since his “plotlines were not particularly clever nor was he skilled at creating dialogue that had the flavor of genuine human discourse” they are not as critically appraised as the works of his successors Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler (454-455). Since Daly did not have authentic experiences with physical violence, he drew on his knowledge of westerns and their representation of violence. Early hardboiled short stories, including Daly’s, were mostly published in the so-called pulp magazines, which as Scaggs explains, were “inexpensive, weekly publications with lurid and garish covers intended to catch the attention of a reading public” (56). The hardboiled short stories were first introduced in the pulp magazine *Black Mask*, which also published one of the first mysteries of Carroll John Daly (“Three Gun Terry” in 1923), Dashiell Hammett (“Arson Plus” in 1923) and Raymond Chandler (“Blackmailers Don’t Shoot” in 1933).

## **2.1 Male Representatives of the Hardboiled Genre: Hammett,**

### **Chandler and Parker**

Dashiell Hammett (1894), who created the popular realistic detective and established the traditional ingredients for the hardboiled genre, wrote these stories as a response to the classical style of mysteries. Since he found the crimes unrealistic and bizarre, he set out to re-define the detective genre to one that would portray authentic criminals, with plausible motives, crimes and murders that were not just made up to serve as puzzles for the detective. As Raymond Chandler stated about his forerunner, “Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse; and with the means at hand, not handwrought dueling pistols, curare and tropical

fish” (“The Simple Art of Murder”). Hammett worked as an operative for the Pinkerton Detective Agency for eight years, which was the first job Hammett was excited about because it challenged him intellectually (Cline 17). As Kelleghan points out in her analysis, this occupation later on “provided him with the background for his realistic detective”, therefore he could credibly portray the detective techniques in his writing (302). This experience also inspired him to write crime fiction in the first place, when he realized that the popular mystery stories are unrealistic, mainly absurd and full of overly complicated storylines.

After his service in the World War I., he planned to return to his job at the agency, but due to pulmonary tuberculosis he caught in the frontline was not able to continue (Cline 6). Therefore, during his stay at a sanatorium, he threw himself into reading and writing. When he came home, because of his illness he was not able to find any job and decided to focus on his writing. After several publications in the Black Mask magazine, in 1929, he published his first novel with his nameless detective in the Continental Op series<sup>1</sup>, which is comprised “of lost values, forgotten faiths, and corrupt institutions, where justice and order cannot be maintained” (Cline 14). This detective became an immediate success, not only in the US but worldwide. His second detective fiction series featuring detective Sam Spade received a wider recognition, mostly because of the numerous Hollywood adaptations. Due to his illness, Hammett left his family and relocated to Hollywood, where he thrived as a screenwriter at Paramount Pictures. As a result of his six-month imprisonment for political reasons in 1951, his books were pulled off the shelves and he continued to be treated as a suspected Communist until his death (Rollyson 846).

Hammett resolved to question and modify the classical conventions and turn it into more realistic ones in his stories. He himself compared his detective Sam Spade to Sherlock

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<sup>1</sup> Later the detective will be referenced as Op to avoid confusion.

Holmes, stating that the aim for his type of detective is “to be a hard and shifty fellow, able to take care of himself in any situation, able to get the best of anybody he comes in contact with, whether criminal, innocent by-stander, or client” (Phillips 5). Unlike Holmes, Op uses neither his deduction skills nor his reasoning abilities to solve the crimes, but he depends on his physique. As an employee of the Continental Detective Agency, he “relies on methodical routine, long hours, and action to get results” (Rollyson 1949). He does not have a colorful life with friends and family. Barely anything is revealed about his origins, hobbies or interests because he practically has none. His life is his work: “I don’t know anything else, don’t enjoy anything else, don’t want to know or enjoy anything else” (qtd. in Rollyson 847). He is a lone wolf that does not trust anyone and does not strive for company. As a contrast to the classical formula, he does not even have the traditional sidekick such as Holmes’ Dr. John Watson and Poirot’s Captain Hastings. Hammett’s detective cooperates with the law enforcement and usually abides by their rules and methods. Hammett’s successors, however, do not follow this characteristic. Their detectives usually use unlawful methods and therefore try to stay away from the police as much as possible. Some of them, as for instance Chandler’s P.I. Philip Marlowe left the police because of corruption of the force. Although Hammett also tries to address the corruption in his stories, when he creates “a deeply corrupt [society] ... which will not be redeemed or even much changed after the particular set of crimes being investigated is solved” (306). Corruption is a common theme in the hardboiled detective stories, whether it concerns the law enforcement, wealthy businessman or the entire establishment.

Another established feature of Hammett’s fiction is the first-person narrative, which is crucial for the hardboiled stories as it provides an opportunity to look for the clues and solve the crime together with the private investigator. The reason behind this shift from the traditional third-person narration to the main hero narrating the story is that

the reader can identify with the detective and it provides the reader with his motives, thought process and the detailed investigation, for the detective to be more trustworthy and credible. Since the clues lay in the details, hardboiled authors pay attention to the precise description of the surroundings, sometimes even poetic ones, to create the narrative the most realistic. This type of narration is also supposed to reveal the hero's emotions and feelings since he usually hides it behind his tough detached exterior.

One of the most well-known writers of the hardboiled genre and a successor of Dashiell Hammett is Raymond Chandler (1888). At a young age, he decided to become a writer and started to work for newspapers and compose poetry. This experience is pronounced in his poetic descriptions of surroundings and the use of language in his novels. Subsequently, similarly to Hammett, he was a soldier in the World War I. and therefore had a firsthand experience with the violence and brutality that men are capable of (Rollyson 312). Years later he returned to writing, but his time the topic of his writing was hardboiled detective fiction and his first short story was published in 1933 in the *Black Mask* magazine, starring the detective Philip Marlowe. His publications were renowned and he earned two Edgar Allan Poe Awards from the Mystery Writers of America. After his achievements in writing mystery novels, he went to conquer the Hollywood, where he worked as a screenwriter for Paramount Studios, similarly to Hammett. These two authors were substantial contributors to the creation and the popularity of the film noir. As a matter of fact, for two of the screenplays, *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *The Blue Dahlia* (1946), Chandler was nominated for the Academy Award.

Marlowe became a representative of the private-eye subgenre of the mystery novels. With the creation of Marlowe, Chandler envisioned to invent “a new kind of detective hero, not simply a lantern-jawed tough guy with quick fists” (Kelleghan 119). He did not want to only match Hammett, he planned to exceed and extend his established

features. Although, the hero of his stories holds “the classic distrust of authority figures ..., he is a complex man with his own code of conduct, a tough guy with a conscience, a hard-edged realist who is also an idealistic romantic” (Clark and Charles 43). Chandler incorporated features of the classical tough, but romantic heroes – the knights that were brave and honorable. As Kelleghan states in her analysis of Raymond Chandler, “[r]eferences and allusions to the world of chivalry are sprinkled liberally throughout the Marlowe novels” (119). By the inclusion of these features, Chandler intended to humanize and romanticize Hammett’s hardboiled hero. As a truly honorable knight, Marlowe avoids the female company, even though as an exceedingly attractive male, he struggles to keep himself pure, nonetheless, he manages to dedicate his life to his work. Another knightly attribute in Marlowe is that he is “scrupulously honest in his financial dealings, taking only as much money as he has earned and often returning fees he thinks are excessive or compromising” (Rollyson 284). His moral code does not allow him to swindle people out of money or to keep rewards that he did not rightfully earn. He is also exceptionally loyal to his clients, even if the price is his suffering. Probably the most significant distinction from previous mystery novels is Chandler’s attempt: “to balance the view of the police in detective fiction” since, in the traditional hardboiled fiction, the police represents the competition for the police (Kelleghan 121). Chandler points out that the policemen are people too and therefore he gives them more space to explain themselves and their motivation behind breaking their honesty and becoming a part of the corrupted society, as in the novel *Farewell My Lovely*, where Lieutenant Galbraith clarifies for Marlowe that “Cops don’t go crooked for money. Not always, not even often. They get caught in the system... A guy can’t stay honest if he wants to... He gets chiseled out of his pants if he does” (Chandler 749). Occasionally the villains do not become evil because they want to, but as a result of blackmail or leveraging. They do not

have a choice in some unlawful manners unless they do not want them or their families to get hurt. Chandler also determines that these pernicious policemen are part of the reason, why there is need for such men as Marlowe.

Features so distinctive and innovative of Chandler that even Hammett tried to imitate them were his wisecracks, black humor and sarcasm. Marlowe has his witty remarks ready at all times, whether it is during an attack, to soften the dramatic scenes, for descriptions or an expression of Marlowe's unique view of women, as for instance "[s]he's a charming middle-aged lady with a face like a bucket of mud and if she has washed her hair since Coolidge's second term, I'll eat my spare tyre, rim and all" (Chandler 793). Chandler uses this type of comments to provide the reader with some entertaining and amusing parts and to lighten the tough and violent atmosphere of the stories. Since Chandler wrote also a lot of poetry, his narrative is full of detailed and poetic descriptions of the surroundings, in contrast to Hammett, whose narrative paid more attention to the characters and the investigation. Chandler had more natural talent for writing and therefore next to his stories Hammett's narrative came off a bit clumsy and hard.

Later on, in the 1970's, after the police procedural subgenre, came a renewal and modernization of the hard-boiled detectives. The private-eye is "a solitary figure", although they usually have at least a sidekick and they also have some kind of "judicial or law enforcement background" (Clark and Charles 42). The representative of the modern hard-boiled detective stories is Robert B. Parker (1932). With both mentioned hardboiled authors, he shares one significant experience – all of them had been a part of a substantial war for the US. For Chandler and Hammett, it was the First World War and for Parker the Korean War, where he served for two years. It gave them the tough, masculine firsthand experience, which they could draw from in their writings. One of the authors he focused on in his research as a doctoral student of English was Raymond Chandler. Parker stated in

an interview that he “was trying, at the beginning, to recreate Philip Marlowe” (Galson 165). He borrowed the main qualities of Marlowe’s identity and built on them with his own character Spenser. In 1973, he published his first Spenser novel called *The Godwulf Manuscript* and based on his Spenser stories was created a TV show *Spenser: For Hire* that ran for three years. Except for Spenser, Parker also created two other detective characters, Jesse Stone and Sunny Randall, the other one being a female private-eye, which he created after the breakthrough of female P.I.s.

His gumshoe became a significant representative of the hardboiled detectives. Since he used detectives of Hammett and Chandler as a template for Spenser, he shares many characteristics with them, such as toughness, courage and determination. His writing also includes many characteristics of postmodern writing such as fatal ending of the hero, or at least a great trauma, individuality, satire and cynicism and criticism of the establishment. The most distinct modification is that although Spenser is a loner at his core, in a manner of the previous traditional hardboiled detectives, later in the series he develops multiple relationships, the most significant with Susan Silverman and Hawk. Hawk joins Spenser in the third book of the series and becomes his partner, sidekick and best friend. They share the “unstated bond... as men who have taken each other’s measure and found themselves equal in every respect” (Kelleghan 496). They have absolute trust in each other but besides work share no intimacies. Throughout the series, Parker also manages to explore the specific problems that come with male-female relationships, specifically between a traditional tough guy and a modern liberated female with a career - Susan Silverman. Usually, the women encountered through traditional hardboiled fiction are femme fatales, women who lure men to danger and their damnation. Even though Spenser is in an inferior position, subdued to a woman, he is by his choice in a devoted relationship and as a

romanticized hero, he waits for her until she is ready to commit. This type of relationship is certainly rare in hardboiled genre, especially the committed gumshoe.

Another break from the tradition poses the way Spenser handles his spare time. With Op, Spade or Marlowe, the reader gets very little information about their background and in the stories, they spend every minute on the case until they've solved it. Even though Spenser also devotes most of his time to the investigation, during the series one gets significant insight into his past and hobbies. His toughness and masculinity is explained by Spenser's involvement with boxing. He often jogs or goes to the gym to stay fit and swift. As a contrast to his rugged exterior, there are "[o]ther memorable elements in Spenser's personality ... his love of literature, music, and good food and his skills as a health-conscious gourmet cook" (Kelleghan 497). Unlike previous gumshoes, Spenser pays attention to culture and takes care of his body, which Parker uses to humanize his detective and to portray him more realistically, not just as an investigating machine, but as a person with a life and a background.

One of the most distinct features of Spenser is satire and cynicism. Similarly to Marlowe, he uses his witty comments to highlight the absurdity or severity of given situation. As his novels demonstrate, being a private eye can be highly dangerous at times and Spenser handles risky and life-threatening situations with a great deal of cynicism, wit and playfulness. "I could tell he was impressed by the gun in my hand. The only thing that would have scared him more would have been if I threatened to flog him with a dandelion" (Parker 55). He uses these comments to mock and downplay the seriousness of the situations and to undermine the authority. In the novel Spenser often makes fun of police officers: "Yates said, '... What the hell are you doing here?'" and Spenser responded, "I was selling Girl Scout cookies door to door and they told us to be persistent..." (Parker 81). He does not take them seriously because he thinks he is substantially more intelligent

than they are. Not only he has to solve the crimes for them, but afterwards, he must describe the turn of events to the policemen. By his satirical comments, it's evident how little he thinks of the law enforcement and he also uses his wit and sarcasm for social commentary.

### 3 History of Women's Hardboiled Detective Fiction

When it comes to a pioneer among women hardboiled authors, the most referred to is certainly Marcia Muller. Several of her fellow writers, such as Sue Grafton or Sara Paretsky, state her name as an inspiration. She rejects such claims and insists that she “had little to do with other people entering the field” and she was “just trying to make a living” (qtd. in Lindsay 181). However, she managed to set an example for another generation of female hardboiled authors. Be that as it may, she certainly was not the first female writer of detective fiction with a main character a female investigator. Of course, there were several characters of female investigators preceding the English Queens of Crime era, but they were written by men, though as Regenold notes, “these early female detectives were created to generate sales and not to exemplify the emancipation of women” (3).

Anna Katharine Green was not only the first American female author of the detective fiction, but generally the first author of a full-length publication in the detective genre in America, when she published her first mystery novel in 1878. Her books were very popular, but with the arrival of Dashiell Hammett in 1929 she got overshadowed (Gates 17-18). At first, she wrote about a male detective, but in three novels she included a character of a nosy female assistant Miss Butterworth, who unofficially helped him with the cases. Subsequently, she created a young female sleuth Violet Strange, who first appeared in *The Golden Slipper and Other Problems* (1915) and became a prelude to such girl detectives as Nancy Drew by Carolyn Keene, who became an American cultural icon since the 1930's.

During the Golden Age era, which coincided with the time of the Suffragette Movement, there were several female authors of female detective fiction. The most successful in this era was Agatha Christie, whose other creation besides Hercules Poirot

was Miss Jane Marple, an English spinster, who is not a professional detective, rather an occasional consultant. Another female author of a spinster sleuth style was Patricia Wentworth, who created a series with an eccentric heroine called Miss Maud Silver (Regenold 4). During the Golden Age, Christie and Wentworth were the most significant female authors of the mystery fiction, but their novels were written in the whodunit subgenre.

As far as hardboiled female authors go, according to Kathleen Gregory Klein in *The Woman Detective*, “[w]omen appeared throughout the thirties as hard-boiled detectives in the pulps but are not found in sustained, full-length works” (147). The transition between the spinsters and the tough female hardboiled detectives represents a character Gale Gallagher, who was created by a married couple Will Oursler and Margaret Scott in 1947 in a novel *I Found Him Dead*. As Klein points out, she is profoundly attached to her family, too naïve and feminine to be considered a hardboiled detective (Klein, *The Woman Detective* 131, 250).

An unjustly forgotten female detective is Mary Carner by Zelda F. Popkin and this independent-minded female investigator appears in five novels (1938-1942). She is not the traditional hardboiled loner, but even though she had a husband and children, she refused to quit her career and she became a working mother, which was unconventional at that time, especially since she works as an investigator.

Before Muller’s publications there was a British female author P.D. James who wrote about a female investigator, but in her first novel *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (1972), as the title suggests she did not use her main character to empower women, rather to show that this type of a job is inappropriate for them. As Muller explains in an interview, “[w]omen in mystery fiction were largely confined to little old lady snoops — amateur sleuths — who are nurses, teachers, whatever,” or, in the case of Nancy Drew or Violet

Stranger children (Barco). They were either some elderly ladies or quite young girls, until Muller and her followers created female private-eyes in their thirties.

### **3.1 Female Representatives of the Hardboiled Genre: Muller, Paretsky and Grafton**

In comparison with Paretsky and Grafton, there is substantially less material about Marcia Muller (1944), since she is not as critically appraised as them. There is only one book that specifically analyzes her female detective - *Marcia Muller and the Female Private Eye: Essays on the Novels That Defined a Subgenre* by Alexander N. Howe and Christine A. Jackson published in 2008. She has been truly fond of reading mystery novels since she was a child, not to mention she wrote her first novel when she was twelve years old. During her studies of English at the University of Michigan, her professor of creative writing told her “she would never be a writer because she had nothing to say”, therefore she instead opted for career in journalism (“About Marcia”). At the end of the 1960’s she discovered the world of hardboiled mystery fiction and became infatuated with it. In an interview on her official website she claims that her fascination with this genre came “from a number of peripheral brushes with violent events in my formative years: my orthodontist shot and killed his wife and child; a friend's mother was fatally stabbed by her husband; a plane carrying another friend's father was blown up by a bomb; my next-door neighbor in my college dormitory killed herself” (“About Marcia”). Even though she did not experience any of the violent actions herself, she was certainly affected by them and she wrote her books to make sense of these events.

When she settled in California with her first husband in the early 1970’s she was unable to find a job, because, as she explains in an interview “[she] was a terrible journalist. Whenever [she] interviewed somebody boring, [she would] fictionalize the situation, put words in the person’s mouth, make things more interesting” (“About Marcia”). Therefore,

Muller chose to stay at home and write instead using her vivid imagination to create a powerful female character in the genre of hardboiled fiction. She gives her major influences the works of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett and Ross MacDonal (Peters 29).

Muller had a difficult time to sell her female hardboiled detective, but “[a]fter three manuscripts and five years of rejection” she managed to get her first novel *Edwin of the Iron Shoes* (1977), featuring her female private-eye Sharon McCone, published (“About Marcia”). Since then, she wrote more than 30 novels with McCone, two other mystery series, and co-wrote crime novels with her second husband Bill Pronzini, also a crime fiction author.

Sara Paretsky (1947) was the only girl in a household of five children. Both of her parents were highly educated and active in a fight for social justice, but as parents they were quite absent. Paretsky represented a mother figure for her younger brothers from an early age. Paretsky points this out in her autobiography, stating that her younger brothers “didn’t know what the word ‘sister’ meant—they didn’t know that was [her]: they thought they had two mothers” (*Writing in an Age of Silence* 21).

As they got older, while her brothers got to borrow the car and go to the town, she had to stay at home and clean, cook or bake. She had no friend or confidant and therefore she turned to reading books, such as *Little Women* or mystery novels. She also started to write as an escape from reality. As Paretsky explains in her autobiography, “during the fifties ... girls often saw limited horizons in their future” (*Writing* 9). Her parents were willing to borrow money for her brother’s university education, but they not only refused to pay for her education, but also, they did not allow her to leave Kansas, even if she would support herself.

In 1969, when she was accepted to the University of Chicago for a graduate program, her “father told [her] not to be surprised if [she] failed, since it was a first-rate

school and [hers] was a second-rate mind” (*Writing* 11). It seems that both of her parents used every opportunity to remind her of her place and social inferiority. During her childhood, she was disparaged by her parents and shown that women in the fifties were not supposed to achieve any academic acknowledgments, they were supposed to be housewives and take care of the house and the family. This attitude was not what one would expect from such liberal academics, who actively fought for Black emancipation, but who were still unable to detach themselves from the patriarchal model of society.

During her BA studies at the University of Kansas, Paretzky left to volunteer in a program that was part of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago, where the summer of 1966 segregation was still deeply rooted. Even Martin Luther King was in Chicago that summer to “help Chicago’s black community figure out a way to tackle Chicago’s terrible history of housing, education, and pay inequities” (*Writing* 30). That summer changed Paretzky’s view of the world and she gained a sense that change and transformation of the US is possible and she felt the need to be a part of it. Above all, it “made [her] aware of the issues of voice and voicelessness” (*Writing* 38). The theme of “voicelessness” dominates her writing, because it represents the liberation from her difficult childhood and oppressiveness of her parents.

At the beginning of the 1970’s, the second wave of feminism was gaining strength and Paretzky was inspired by all those “brave women taking risk” (*Writing* 58). At that time, she was reading Raymond Chandler’s mystery novels and noticed the roles women were ascribed in them, such as Carmen Sternwood in the novel *The Big Sleep* by Chandler, who as a traditional femme fatale uses her body to enchant and manipulate men. To express her feminist ideas, Paretzky chose “to write a crime novel. [She] wanted to create a woman who would turn the tables on the dominant views of women in fiction and in society” (*Writing*

60). She resolved that through books, her voice could be heard, but at that time she had almost no knowledge of writing the hardboiled mystery novels.

Meanwhile, Paretsky decided to take on another major in the University of Chicago, this time focusing on business, and after earning her degree she worked for several years in an insurance company. As Rollyson states in his book *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction* “[that] background is apparent in the insurance company-related plots and settings of her first three novels” (1389). The job provided her with a setting for her first novel and a means to make the novel authentic. She finished the manuscript for *Indemnity Only* in 1980, but she was not able to find a publisher for another two years (Beyad and Jabbari 27). In that time, two other women hardboiled authors were trying to publish their books, one being Marcia Muller, who wrote her second novel and the other one Sue Grafton, who finished her first book. Since this genre was male-dominated at that time, these three women had a tough time breaking through and finding someone willing to publish their books (*Writing* 70).

Nonetheless, Paretsky’s books became very popular, were published in translations worldwide and read by all generations. Her work had received an “enthusiastic reviews in quality newspapers and journals” (Kinsman 65). Since then there have been several critical studies of her work published by scholars such as Kathleen Gregory Klein, who wrote several chronicles of female detectives and acknowledges the impact of Paretsky in this genre. Until 2017, Paretsky wrote 18 novels in the series with the main heroines Warshawski.

Beside the enhancement of the hardboiled genre, Paretsky is a social activist, fighting for causes such as free speech, the Patriot act, or abortion-rights (Fricke 48). She is also a founder of Sisters in Crime (SinC), an organization that was established in 1986 that attempts to “increase the visibility and status of women writing in the mystery field with

reviewers, readers, and publishers” and that also deals with “graphic violence toward women in crime fiction and works to correct imbalances in the treatment of women” (Lindsay 199). When Paretsky began her series, she realized that in comparison with male hardboiled authors, she and her female colleagues were earning exceedingly less money and were also not as much reviewed (Kinsman 127, 170). She also noticed that female writers were not the only ones struggling, but there were also female reviewers, women in publishing and so on, who in comparison with their male counterparts had a problem to push through their writings and critical opinions. That is why Paretsky decided to establish SinC to fight against these inequalities.

Just as her colleagues, Sue Grafton (1940) came from a household filled with books, since both of her parents were voracious, educated readers and her father even wrote several mystery stories. With both parents being alcoholics, Grafton had to become independent from an early age. In her own words, her difficult childhood was a “perfect training for a writer”, because her parents’ absence made her free to do what she pleased and she “learn[ed] to observe people” (Strombo). After her BA studies, Grafton worked as a television writer, which she dreaded. In 1977, she “grew tired of the politics in Hollywood” and “began brainstorming ideas for a female hard-boiled private eye, in the tradition of Philip Marlowe or Sam Spade” (Lindsay 96). Equally to the male hardboiled authors such as Hammett and Chandler, Grafton worked in Hollywood, but for her it was quite unfulfilling experience. She was going through a bitter divorce and custody battle with her second husband and in her anger towards him, she started to fantasize about ways to kill him off (Strombo). She channeled this rage in her writing and created an alphabet series, beginning with “*A*” *Is for Alibi* in 1982, featuring the detective Kinsey Millhone, who, as a matter of fact deals with a spousal murder. This character is in many ways Grafton’s alter ego, as Grafton affirms that Kinsey Millhone is “thinner and younger and braver”

version of herself and thanks to her, she gets to “lead two lives” (Walton and Jones 184). Kinsey Milhone represents her darker side and they share witty, sassy and sometimes a bit rude attitude. Grafton did not receive positive critical reception, until her sixth novel “*F*” is for *Fugitive*, which “has been widely praised and commercially successful” (Lindsay 97). The series is at last coming to an end, with two more books to be published, the last one scheduled for 2019.

## 4 Comparison of the Female Hardboiled Detectives: Sharon McCone, V.I. Warshawski and Kinsey Millhone

Marcia Muller is recognized as the first female author of the female hardboiled detective and Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton were her close successors and they are the most critically appraised female authors of this subgenre, therefore, the analysis focuses on these three women. To show, how they tried to adjust the established features of the male hardboiled mystery fiction, I chose the first novel from each one of them. For Marcia Muller, it was *Edwin of the Iron Shoes* that was published in 1977 with a female detective Sharon McCone. Sara Paretsky's first novel is *Indemnity Only* (1982) that features a female investigator V.I. Warshawski and in the same year Sue Grafton published her first novel *"A" is for Alibi*, where she introduced her PI Kinsey Millhone. Each one of the authors uniquely took up the challenge of shifting the genre as I am going to demonstrate in this chapter.

### 4.1 A Breakdown of the Female Detectives

A significant feature of Hammett's detective Op was that his work was his life. He had no hobbies or interests other than investigating. Decades later emerged a hero that had a life besides his job – Robert Parker's Spenser. He did plenty of exercise to keep himself in shape, he was a foody that enjoyed cooking, he liked music and literature. He had plenty of activities, during which he could relax and get away from his tough work. As for the three female detectives Sharon McCone, V.I. Warshawski and Kinsey Millhone, they mostly resemble Op rather than Spenser. In the Muller's *Edwin of the Iron Shoes*, Sharon McCone spends day and night on the task, she even sleeps in the antique shop, where she is stocktaking the possession of the deceased, and has practically no life besides her work.

Kinsey Millhone and V.I. Warshawski differ only in one aspect from Sharon McCone, and that is exercising. Both of them jog almost every day to stay in shape. For Susie Student, this necessity to stay fit for V.I. Warshawski and Kinsey Millhone and the fact that both carry a gun and do not strain from using it “reasserts the masculine traits of the traditional hard-boiled detective” (5). In order to create the female hardboiled detectives, these authors had to adopt the traditional masculine features of the hardboiled genre. Masculinity is mostly connected with strength, dominance, rational behavior and activeness (Gates 13). As far as Warshawski and Millhone are concerned, they both meet the traditional male characteristics.

Before becoming a private investigator, Kinsey Millhone was a member of the Santa Theresa police force, where she acquired the proper training (Grafton 39). However, the fact that Millhone is even admitted to the police academy is rare since in the US “women comprised only 1 percent of federal agents and state/local police until 1972”, which was the year when the “federal legislation prohibited discrimination in law-enforcement hiring at all levels, and the percentage of women in police and government agencies slowly began to increase to 5 percent in 1980 and 9.1 percent in 1995” (Mizejewski 16). Even when they became a part of the force, women were mostly ascribed some clerical job, they were not allowed to go out to the field and were mostly attributed the lowest ranking (Price). As far as female investigators are concerned, most female private eyes are former cops or agents, and therefore they were a rarity. Thus, the female private investigators were not only uncommon in the literary form, but until the late twentieth century also in the real world, making these three female investigators a true feminist inspiration since they are breaking through a field predominated by men.

Kinsey Millhone undeniably fulfills the hardboiled role, when the masculinity is concerned. She is tough, strong and fit and she needs to be dominant in every situation. In

addition, she is not a stereotypical emotional woman. When the villain tries to manipulate and seduce her, she distances herself from him, because she rationally acknowledges he is still a suspect. She does not allow the fact that she is extremely attracted to him to cloud her judgment. However, by following all these male hardboiled features, Grafton's detective could be confused for a man. Many scholars believe that the female investigators resemble men to such a degree they can be perceived as male detectives in a drag (Walton and Jones 99). In my opinion, out of all three female detectives analyzed in this thesis, Millhone is the one that resembles a man the most as I am going to elaborate on later in the thesis.

V.I. Warshawski became a private investigator after quitting her job as a Public Defender, focusing her PI career on white-collar crimes. Even though she does not have much experience with the rough side of the PI field she compensates by being fit, strong and scrappy. Warshawski literally beats up a number of men on several occasions. She grew up in the South Side of Chicago, which is the dangerous part of the city, where she had to learn to defend herself (*IO* 51). When the two mafia gorillas come to take her to their boss, she is able to separate the ribs of the first guy and severely injure the second man's kidney, which their boss Earl Smeissen is not happy about: "You let a goddamn dame bust your ribs?" he yelled, his voice breaking to a squeak. "The money I pay you and you can't do a simple little job like fetch a goddamn broad?" (*IO* 40). Smeissen is reaffirming the stereotype that even though Warshawski has been a PI for a significant amount of time, he does not perceive her as a threat to his men, because she is a "goddamn broad". Although Warshawski gets significantly beaten up too, she demonstrates she is as capable as any man in this domain. This was quite exhilarating in an era when women were still in a subservient position. V.I. Warshawski proves her abilities at the end of the novel, when she single-handedly outfights three large men. She demonstrates her physical and mental strength and

dominance and that she is as capable as any male detective, or even more. However, Kathleen Klein does not perceive this toughness and independence as a positive feature of the female detective. In her opinion, “[e]ither feminism or the formula is at risk” (*The Woman Detective* 202). In other words, if the woman is a successful hardboiled detective, she cannot be a successful feminist, since the traditional formula is conflicting the feminist issues, because it is “based on a world whose sex/gender valuations reinforce male hegemony. Taking male behavior as the norm, the genre defines its parameters to exclude female characters, confidently rejecting them as inadequate women or inadequate detectives” (*The Woman Detective* 255). For her, feminism cannot be adequately portrayed in the hardboiled genre, since it is defined by masculinity and the female detectives usually turn out to be cross-dressing men.

Other critics took a different approach to the issue of gender appropriation. For instance, Walton and Jones, who claim that the fact that female authors are using female detectives in the male dominated genre is already empowering, since it questions the traditional norms (96). The female detectives are “[f]ar from being passive victims trapped in generic conventions” as are the women in the male hardboiled novels, and the authors such as Muller, Paretsky and Grafton “engage with [the conventions] in order to counter them, and thus are able to exercise agency not in spite of their status as genre writers, but because of it” (Walton and Jones 96). These three female authors realized how sexist the hardboiled genre is and therefore decided to on one hand honor the norms by creating more masculine women, but on the other by changing the sex of the hero, they opened up a conversation about gender and the behavior that corresponds with it. They tried not to write a parody on the conventional hardboiled novels, but to challenge the genre by incorporating female perspective.

Sharon McCone significantly differs from Warshawski and Millhone, in terms of masculinity. Sharon is a former security guard at a department store, who currently works at “All Souls Cooperative, the San Francisco legal services plan” as an investigator, usually working on non-violent cases (Muller 3). She is neither active nor strong and the dominance is also disputable, since she not only states that the murder case is “a job for the police” and that “[t]hey’re certainly more capable than [she is]”, but during the entire novel she closely cooperates with the Lieutenant Gregory Marcus and does not mind if he takes the lead (Muller 11). Usually the hardboiled hero is certain that he is better than the police and takes every opportunity to show off his power and dominance. McCone acts as a stereotypical subservient woman that does not object to the man taking credit for her work. She is also not actually tough, namely when she is at a murder scene and she is trembling and almost hyperventilating, feeling queasy in the room with a dead body (Muller 165). As Muller tried to alter the hardboiled norms for a female readership, she reduced the masculinity of the detective. Since the toughness, dominance and violence are the major themes of the hardboiled genre, Muller took away the core features of the hero, making McCone more of a soft-boiled detective. At the same time, the male hardboiled heroes take pleasure in the fighting and demonstrating their strength and by minimizing the violence to occasions when it is necessary, Muller refuses to glorify it. She emphasizes that much of the investigation can be done by the power of the mind and not by physically threatening every suspect.

Even though there is exceedingly less violence in Muller’s novel, this rejection of violence for pleasure is shared by Paretsky and Grafton. Although all three of them own a gun, for them it is purely for the protection and they are all forced to use it in the ultimate battle. However, the authors included it to express the dissatisfaction with the overuse of violence in the hardboiled fiction. Since issues such as strength, intelligence and violence

are substantial to the hardboiled genre and the female authors deal with them with a critical distinction. Even though the female detectives fulfill their detective roles, people are not comfortable with such a different female behavior.

Dashiell Hammett decided to write about a private eye to realistically portray crimes and the violence itself. Therefore, he created a big, muscular, manly hero that from the first sight inspired fear. It is a challenging task to adjust these features, since women are usually physically smaller and weaker and considered to be more gentle and usually their appearance is not fearful. As crime fighters, the female detectives are involved in several violent actions, such as chases, attacks or shootings, which are the opposite of a female demeanor that is perceived acceptable by the society (Gates 36). To handle all the mentioned situations, they had to become masculine. However, by the implementation of the masculine features it puts in question the sexuality of the female detective. The fact is, that women, who are more masculine, are often stereotyped as lesbians, which in the cultural context means “not really female” (Mizejewski 10). According to Mizejewski, because of the cultural stereotype of lesbians, they are usually portrayed in literature as “so-called unnatural women who were aggressive, violent, or hostile to men” (10). Millhone and Warshawski come close to this description and therefore their sexuality is often questioned by the scholars. Paretzky points out the stereotypical connection of feminism and lesbianism, when students at the university campus have a conversation about an organization called University Women United (UWU). A young man remarks that it surprises him that even girls with boyfriends can become members of a feminist union. His female classmates are fed up by this stereotypical link and they exclaim that “[n]ot everyone in UWU is a lesbian” (IO 55). Since the women that were part of feminist organizations were often manly and they despised men and the patriarchy, males associated them with lesbians.

According to Ranta, in the traditional male hardboiled stories “homophobia is strongly present in the character of the heterosexual detective, and since the detective is the hero of the story, the ideal figure and the authoritative voice, his treatment of homosexuals as inferior and abnormal is considered right. Heterosexuality is, therefore, treated as the superior and ideal form of sexuality” (79). Since the homosexuality is perceived as inferior, these types of characters, similarly to the female characters in the conventional hardboiled fiction, were usually the criminals, the evil itself. Even though none of the three female authors addresses the issue of sexuality directly, they avoid the traditional homophobia. Since the fight for equality of the underprivileged, is fought both by women and homosexuals, these female authors are sensitive to these issues, but chose to fight one battle at a time. Although their female heterosexual detectives were shortly succeeded by lesbian investigators, this topic is too extensive to include in this thesis.

None of three female detectives is the traditional housewife; actually, when it comes to domesticity, they resemble their male counterparts more. For instance, V.I. Warshawski is certainly a messy person when it comes to cleaning, washing dishes or any other household chores. Though she is a good cook, she rarely eats home. It is typical for the PIs to eat out, because they are so wrapped up in the investigation they have no time to spare on a healthy diet. This significantly differs from the way Paretsky was brought up. She was taught that men are the intellectual ones and women the ones, who clean, cook and so on. Thus, Paretsky tries to show all the women with a similar childhood that it is acceptable to prioritize their life and career before an organized household and that they can defy the norm of an American housewife. This opposition of domesticity underlines the masculine traits these female detectives had to adopt to become realistic detectives. Even such a basic thing as a household defines the character of the detective. Women are usually the ones that make the house feel like home, but none of these women pays attention to their living

space. They have no plants, no pets around to keep them company. Their life is their work, similarly to the conventional hardboiled heroes. In order to create independent detectives, Muller, Paretsky and Grafton established women that do not care about ordinary life.

A significant feature of Millhone and Warshawski is their first name. Both have carefully chosen androgynous name to avoid gender prejudices. As the reader learns throughout the first novel *Indemnity Only*, Warshawski's initials V.I. stand for Victoria Iphigenia. She chose to go by her initials, when she was working as a Public Defender, since she realized "it was harder for male colleagues and opponents to patronize [her] if they didn't know [her] first name" (*IO* 113). One other variation of her name she does not despise is Vic, which is also gender-ambiguous. Even though she is an independent feminist, she chose to stay genderless when it comes to her name, because in her profession she has a hard time to establish her dominance. A woman is generally not expected to be in such a tough profession, which is made obvious from the first chapter, when a client walks into Warshawski's office expecting a man. The client is also questioning her capabilities since she is "a girl", to which Warshawski replies: "I'm a woman ... and I can look out for myself. If I couldn't, I wouldn't be in this kind of business. If things get heavy, I'll figure out a way to handle them--or go down trying. That's my problem, not yours" (*IO* 7). Throughout her life, Warshawski often encounters gender discrimination and sexism based on a prejudice against professional and ambitious women. She needs to constantly reaffirm her dominance around confident, self-assured men that always get their own way. Grafton went down a similar path, when she chose name Kinsey, which is also a male and a female name. As Walton points out in her article "Paretsky's V. I. as P. I.: Revising the Script and Recasting the Dick", the "name signals her opposition to a colonizing process, in that to name is to incorporate, to interpellate, to appropriate, and thus, to be named is to become a part of imperialist discourse" (qtd. in Student 9). This was

a conscious choice by Paretsky and Grafton to avoid a gender prejudice based on their names. Also by choosing an androgynous name and not some feminine name they partially blur the lines between genders.

In order to be perceived as socially acceptable women, the three female detectives had to adopt the feminine qualities. According to Gates, being feminine means “being weak, submissive, emotional, and passive” (13). However, this contradicts the masculine traits of the hardboiled fiction. Therefore Paretsky, Muller and Grafton had to come up with unconventional female detectives that do not support the idea of women in a subservient position. Gates argues that because they cannot fulfill the socially acceptable female role it means they failed as women. The traits they must adopt as detectives are unnatural, because they are either masculinized or lesbian, and therefore conflicting with the qualities of a woman (Gates 33). One can argue that the fact that they are not traditional women in the sense of femininity is what empowers them. They are not pressured to follow the societal demands and it certainly makes them more independent. Therefore, Walton and Jones perceive the female hardboiled novels as feminist as opposed to Klein, who states that Paretsky is the only author of a female detective, whose writing could be perceived as feminist (Ranta 4).

Generally, women in a crime fiction are usually either the victims, the damsels in distress or the femme fatales/the seductress and in all cases the men are stunned by their beauty, a sexy body and a coquettish behavior. Thus, Paretsky, Grafton and Muller decided to redefine the role of women and not to portray them as pure sex objects. In *Hardboiled and High Heeled*, Mizejewski accentuates that in the hardboiled fiction “what the heroine looks like is relatively unimportant—unlike the traditional ‘woman’s story’ in which female beauty triggers the plotline. In both popular and highbrow literature of the past centuries, the woman has power or interest only insofar as she’s attractive to men” (30). In order to

make the female detectives more masculine and therefore more powerful, the authors decided to create these characters with little or no interest in fashion, makeup or hairstyles. As Pierleoni remarks in his interview with Sue Grafton, Kinsey Millhone is “famous for being the opposite of a fashionista”, to which Grafton responded with “[h]er ‘uniform’ is a turtleneck sweater, jeans and boots”. Kinsey Millhone does not think about how to style her hair, whether to put a makeup on or what to wear, because her looks is not what defines her. Kinsey refuses to dress up to impress men, to subdue to social standards. Mizejewski points out that Kinsey Millhone’s “power derives not from what she looks like”, her appearance does not affect the investigation and that is what is important for her (31). Grafton portrayed a woman, who thrives in a male dominated field, but at the same time does not have to be a traditionally beautiful heroine that manipulates her way to the top. Millhone does not have to pay attention to her looks, but still can be a heterosexual female that is purely more masculine. Grafton blurs the lines between sexes to a point that the gender of the detective does no longer play a role. Smith praises Grafton novels, which are “[g]ender-blind in a positive way, Grafton's novels de-masculinize hard-boiled detection by representing it simply as a job with Millhone simply the (female) person doing it” (81). The two other detectives are a bit more affected by the pressure of society to look and behave in more feminine ways.

Though Warshawski usually wears plain clothes, she has some pretty dresses, heels and makeup to show off her more traditionally feminine look, when the occasion asks for it. Unlike Kinsey Millhone, she does not avoid using her charm and looks to further her investigation. In his analysis of V.I. Warshawski, Rollyson explains that “Paretsky uses her heroine’s moments of false identity and disguise to comment on the traditional expectations of the female role”, providing an example that “if some men generally expect women to be less intelligent than Warshawski, she will impersonate a more foolish woman

to get some piece of vital information” (Rollyson 1391). She realizes that as an intelligent woman she could pose a threat to male egos and assumed superiority, therefore she realizes when her intellect could be more of a disadvantage and hides it. In the *Indemnity Only*, V.I. Warshawski dresses up for a meeting with Ralph Devereux, because she realizes he thinks it is a date and she knows he will be more willing to tell her some potentially crucial insider information of the insurance company if she flirts and plays along with his advances. The fact that she understands the potential of the situation empowers her and gives her the upper hand. She uses her femininity strategically to get what she wants. Some other feminine traits that Warshawski has is compassion and nurturing instincts, which she usually demonstrates when she is talking to Jill, but in all the other aspects she mostly resembles her male counterparts.

Sharon McCone is the most feminine out of all of them. Not in the way that she cares about her appearance, but she is significantly more weak, emotional and submissive. She is disgusted by the sight of a dead body, which proves her weakness in a tough situation; she is significantly emotionally involved with the case and with the suspects and she does not mind being dominated by her police consultant during the case. None of these traits help McCone in the investigations, as Paretsky’s nurturing of Jill that eventually helps her to find the necessary clues. Actually, the involvement with the Lieutenant Marcus puts her in danger at the end of the novel, when he does not help her in the final battle. When Marcia Muller tried to create the female hardboiled detective, she adjusted the toughness so it would fit a traditional female behavior. However, she changed the formula to such an extent, that her heroine became not particularly hardboiled.

As the only one out of the three female authors, Paretsky creates several strong and independent female characters, beside the female detective and even a women organization UWU. One of the self-reliant women is Lotty Herschel, a fierce doctor in her fifties,

described by V.I. Warshawski as a “brilliant London University medical student, maverick doctor, warm friend” (*IO* 86). She and Warshawski met while working for an abortion underground and now Herschel has her own clinic, which is “one of the cheapest in the city”, because she tries to offer her help to everyone in need (*IO* 53). She is on call 24/7 and because of her devotion to her job, she has no partner or kids. Even though she chose her career over family, she is happy and fulfilled. She opposes the conventions of a woman that is content with her domestic life and family, by choosing her work and her patients. Paretsky, Grafton and Muller all grew up in a “claustrophobic world of the suburban housewife of the 1950s” (Friedan qtd. in Gates 30). Paretsky managed to create a different type of a woman that is not constrained by the societal expectations.

A contrast to Paretsky herself is a fourteen years old Jill Thayer, the sister of the victim Peter Thayer. When Paretsky was in her age, she was an obedient daughter doing everything around the house and felt voiceless. Jill Thayer is not afraid to stand up to her family members and voice her opinions. Everyone in the Thayer family thinks of Jill as a spoiled brat, but actually among all of them she is most aware of the situation, calling out her rich family on their feigning, stating that all they “care about is how much money [they] make and what the neighbors will say” (*IO* 81). Even at her young age, Jill Thayer is emotionally more mature than her mother and older sister. Jill Thayer represents what Paretsky wishes she was like at her age. By including such a brave young character, Paretsky demonstrates that even girls do not have to feel voiceless as she did. By her feminist writing, she tries to empower all female generations.

What these three women have in common is the fact that they all are constantly reminded how gender inappropriate their job is. The utterances such as “I don’t like being badgered by little girls playing detective” (Muller 104), “You’re no more a detective than I am a ballet dancer” (*IO* 17) or “Being a detective is not a job for a girl like you” (*IO* 21) are

all uttered by man in order to put these female private eyes in their place. The men do not think that females are tough enough to handle such a rough career path and also not intelligent enough to figure out the crimes by themselves, as is for instance the case when Ralph Deveraux keeps trying to convince V.I. Warshawski to leave solving the case to the police: “Murder really is a police matter. And this group seems pretty wild for you to be mixed up with” (IO 46). These detectives are constantly insulted by names such as a girl, a broad or a bitch, by which the men try to demonstrate their dominance, though neither of them backs away, because as V.I. Warshawski explains “it is [her] job and ... [she] can’t give it to the police and run away” (IO 46). Although V.I. Warshawski is a daughter of a policeman she shares the typical hardboiled distrust in the law enforcement. On one hand, she cooperates with her father’s ex-partner Bobby Mallory, even though not entirely voluntarily, and she trusts that he is an honest cop, but on the other hand, throughout the novel she keeps uncovering the corruption in the force, such as revealed that the head of the Chicago police has connections to the mob. Thus “the corrupt nature of police procedure forces the hard-boiled detective to act on his own, following a code of justice that he knows to be righteous” (Patell 28). Despite the fact that Kinsey Millhone used to be a cop, she also refuses to work with the police and enacts her own moral code. Only McCone differs from them, because she thinks highly of the police, need to have their approval to work on the case and she even closely cooperates with a policeman. This is a significant shift from the traditional hardboiled hero, who has a deep distrust towards police and thinks he is the only one who can bring the criminal to justice.

## 4.2 The Lone Wolfs

In his private letters, Raymond Chandler states that the conventional hardboiled hero is a lone wolf that “never really has any private life” (qtd. in Pituková 144). In their effort to shift the genre into the women’s perspective, the female authors adjusted the loneliness

of their heroines. According to Maureen Reddy's study *Sisters in Crime*, "the female hero is shown both to relish her independence and to seek intimate connections with others" (qtd. in Regenold 25). This section explores, whether the three female detectives seek a connection with others as Reddy claims, or whether they retained the traditional male loner trait.

Unlike the male hardboiled detectives, who are loners and they avoid any type of relationships, Marcia Muller tries to challenge this convention by including some of the traditional features of a female behavior. Although McCone does not talk about any friends or previous relationships in the first novel of the series, she is quite close with her family. In the male hardboiled stories, the detectives rarely mention their upbringing and families, because they are usually orphans and in contrast, McCone has a big family that she is in a regular contact with. Therefore, it might seem that besides her family, she is a loner. However, unlike her male predecessors she "isn't a hard-boiled loner, the existential hero existing on the margin of society, even if she does spring from the likes of Hammett's Sam Spade, Chandler's Philip Marlowe" (Peters 29). She is a likable person, who easily connects with the people around her. She connects to such an extent that the major part of the plot is about her relationships. In *Silk Stalkings: When Women Write of Murder*, Susan Thompson and Victoria Nichols state that "women writers tend 'to focus less on the actual crime and more on the relationship of the characters involved in the case'" (Klein, *Women Times Three* 76). This is true in case of *Edwin of the Iron Shoes*, where McCone is either bonding with the people she is investigating or spending time with Lieutenant Marcus. The result is that the focus on the relationships takes away from the investigation. While McCone spends a significant amount of time on the relationships, she does not address any of the feminist issues in the novel. Elliott discusses in her essay, whether McCone even can be called a feminist in the first novel of the series, because even though she is aware of the women

discrimination, she does not actively pursue it. Klein provides a suiting explanation, when she states that “Sharon McCone might be best described as having feminist inclinations without explicitly defining herself that way” (Elliot 15). However, Elliot does not perceive this as a major issue, since in her opinion, McCone “faces societal problems and responds to them, not as a feminist, but as an actual American woman”, which makes her more relatable and her experiences more realistic (16). Elliot points out that there is another problem with McCone’s novel - her job as an All Souls Investigator. It can be regarded as a patriarchal structure with a confining and controlling function (16). McCone’s boss Hank Zahn is the one that orders her to come to the crime scene in the middle of the night and before pursuing the investigation she seeks his approval. Also during the novel, he acts as her mentor, when she comes to him for an advice, whether about the case or her frustration with the Lieutenant Marcus, who she cooperates with on the case and also gets romantically involved with. Marcus is another patriarchal figure in the novel. He constantly has sexist, racist and patronizing comments and also has remarks about her appearance and capabilities as an investigator. He calls her a papoose or a squaw, which are racial slurs and by which he is “underscoring [the] challenge of her competence and suitability for her profession” (Elliot 17). Zahn and Marcus both dominate McCone and she usually does not oppose them as a second wave feminist should. Though according to Plumber this changes over time with next novels, where McCone’ feminist awareness increases (Elliot 15). Later in the series she grows tired of the politics in the All Souls and establishes her own detective firm. With time, her independence grows and her femininity remains intact and she becomes more of a feminist detective than in the first novel.

V.I. Warshawski is a bit of a mix of nationalities. Her father was Polish, as her name suggests, and her mother ran from Italy because of the breakout of the World War II, since she had a Jewish ancestry (*Indemnity Only* 77). Warshawski is even referred to as the

“polish gal” and her name is often confusing for many, earning a disparaging nickname “Warchoski” (*IO* 222, 227). She has inherited several characteristics from her mother, such as an “olive coloring” or her “Italian ... drive” (*IO* 13, 36). As Regenold points out, “V.I. has a profound attachment to her parents” conversely to the male hardboiled heroes (28). Even though her mother died when Warshawski was a teenager, she looks up to her and treasures the memorabilia her mother left behind, such as Venetian glasses that symbolize her mother’s presence (*IO* 79). However, she had more in common with her father, since he was a Chicago police officer and he taught her how to shoot and she even inherited his gun when he died. When the relationship with her parents is concerned, she is not similar to her male predecessors, who never reminisce about their past and background. For Warshawski, the connection with her parents is profound and her background strongly influences her everyday life.

When Paretsky moved to Chicago, she realized that people in the city “define themselves by ... the little square foot of Europe they came from” (*Writing* 37). She herself does not strongly identify with her distant Polish ancestry, but rather projects her roots onto Warshawski, because it was the only ethnic experience she could convincingly write about (*Writing* 37). Paretsky explores the Chicagoans’ European roots also with other characters, such as Ralph Devereux with his “native Irish cockiness”, Lotty Herschel, who fled from Vienna from the Nazis or Sal, a stunning African American bartender, with whom no one dares to mess with (*IO* 28).

Grafton does not include any racial empowerment and though Muller creates her female investigator as a descent of the Shoshone tribe, Sharon McCone does not appear to be treated any differently than white people. As Howe and Jackson remark in their analysis of McCone, “Sharon’s supposed Indianness ... makes little difference in either her professional or her private life [and that] is perhaps the least believable element of the

series; only white people can afford the luxury of forgetting their own race and of believing that race does not matter” (41). In the conventional hardboiled stories, women along with homosexuals and minorities are marginalized characters or villains. Since women belong to the disadvantaged groups fighting for their equality, they are sensitive to other underprivileged people. Therefore, the female authors have tendency to include these minorities in their writing. However, Ranta emphasizes, that although the female detectives stand up for people of color, they do not realize how their whiteness benefits them during the investigations. They do not acknowledge the fact that even though they are disadvantaged when it comes to gender, the color of their skin is a significant privilege and as Kendell points out they should reflect upon it: “We need to understand that, as white women, we are given access to power and resources because of racial similarities to and our relationships with white men . . . While we certainly experience systemic discrimination as women, our skin color makes us less threatening to the group that holds institutional power” (qtd. in Ranta 56). Though unlike the male hardboiled authors, women do not portray white people as superior to others. Since Paretzky is a true believer that all races are supposed to be equal, she fights against racism not only in her novels, but also in real life. Although her first novel, *Indemnity Only*, does not discuss this issue in more detail, she certainly addresses it in later novels.

When concerning Warshawski’s relationships, she is not completely isolated from the society, as the male hardboiled heroes. She has one deep long-term friendships with Lotty Herschel. Herschel and Warshawski go way back and Herschel serves as her safe space and a confidant. In her analysis of Paretzky’s feminist detective, Linda S. Wells goes as far as attributing Lotty with a parental role: “Lotty serves as a maternal figure and a kindred spirit... [Warshawski] processes the effects of her work upon her psyche through conversations with Lotty. In this we see the intuitive understanding these two women have

of each other, as well as their ability to be critical of each other when the need arises” (qtd. in Regenold 29). Herschel herself expresses the maternal instinct towards Warshawski, when she states “Vic, be careful: you have no mother, but you are a daughter of my spirit. I should not like anything to happen to you” (*IO* 216). They are both strong, independent women that lean on each other, when life gets tough and since Lotty is a ‘carer’ at her core, she is always rushing to Warshawski’s side at need. Women have a need to connect and the relationship of these two women represents the bond females create.

An experience that Kinsey Millhone and V.I. Warshawski share is a failed marriage. Warshawski has been married once and Millhone twice. In *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity: Men, Women, and Politics in Modern Society*, Kenneth Clatterbaugh describes the traditional role of women in the following terms: “Women take care of men by doing their domestic labor, raising their children, and serving as their emotional and physical caretakers” (qtd. in Farré-Vidal 440-441). Neither Millhone nor Warshawski succeeded in their marriages and since they were independent and working in respectable professions they also did not have time for children. By not being able to preserve a marriage they failed as women. Paretsky was taught by her parents that women were supposed to take care of their house and family. If a woman chose a different path, specifically a career, she would be punished by loneliness. That seems to be the case with Millhone and Warshawski, since neither of them has a steady relationship, not only in the first novel, but also after several subsequent novels, both of them are still alone.

On one hand, Paretsky realizes that most men could have a tough time dealing with such a self-reliant woman, which she explains on the example of Warshawski’s ex-husband Dick. Warshawski clarifies that her independence at first captivated Dick, because he perceived it as a challenge, but he got tired of waiting for her to “settle down to being a housewife ... applauding him while he clawed his way up the ladder in the legal world” (*IO*

156-157). He was charmed by a woman that wanted to conquer men's world and fight for justice, but in the end, he still wanted a family and a stay-at-home wife. During the 1950's and 1960's, "it was acceptable for young women to work in certain professions [before marriage]. However, once they were married, which society expected women to do, it was assumed that the working women would quit their jobs to become homemakers and mothers" ("The Women's Rights Movement"). Paretsky criticizes the pursuit of a perfect life and a perfect family, because with that goal in mind women often forget to pursue their passion. In her autobiography, Paretsky recalls a female professor Emily Taylor that had a talk with her and her classmates about their life expectations and when most of them replied they want to be mothers and wives, the professor reminded them that "[t]he University is not investing resources in your education so you can stay home; we expect you to make a contribution to society. Your education matters for what you do with it, and what it does for you, not for some man and his unborn children" (*Writing* 26). Paretsky created a character that was not afraid to earn a degree in one of the most respected areas, the law, but also one that was not afraid to pursue a career in it. This is even more empowering, when one considers that "[m]ost women found it nearly impossible to break into traditionally male fields" ("The Women's Rights Movement"). Even women with degrees had a problem with finding a job, because the employers found them inadequate. Thanks to the second wave of the feminist movement, the 1970's changed this for the better. More women got admitted to the universities and acquired jobs in male dominated professional fields, such as law, medicine or the army. Warshawski represents this change and she is a symbol for plenty women to follow.

Out of these three female detectives, Kinsey Millhone is the most alike to her male predecessors, when it comes to being a solitary figure. She became an orphan, when she was five years old and she does not recall any other family. Not only that family wise she is

completely alone, but similarly to her male counterparts she does not feel the need to bring up her past. In the novel, Kinsey shares a complicated romantic relationship with Charlie Scorsoni, a former law firm partner of the victim Laurence Fife. For the purpose of providing this female hardboiled story with a femme fatale, or in this case a homme fatale, the gender roles become reversed. Charlie plays a role of the homme fatale that abounds with a dreamy appearance, such as “thick, sandy hair... solid jaw... blue eyes... muscular forearms” and a “dimple in his chin” (Grafton 19, 38). As Laura Mulvey argues, in the male hardboiled fiction, women are usually “displayed as sexual objects . . . she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire” (837). Grafton applies these features and ascribes this traditionally female role to a man. Charlie signifies a desire for her, a sexual object. He tries to manipulate her, as a femme fatale usually does. According to Pituková, “[t]he only way out for the detective ... is to suppress the sexual desire for this woman and hold strong to his professional and moral code. The conflict between those two is a lethal clash of individual desires which can result only in resignation, escape or bloodbath” (30). When Millhone finds out he is the murderer, she can either break her moral code and follow her sexual desire, or make him pay for what he had done. In case of *“A” is for Alibi*, the plot ends in a bloodbath, when Millhone shoot the homme fatale. Klein claims that Grafton included the relationship of Millhone and Scorsoni “to reassure readers of this strong woman’s traditional femininity” (205). Besides this relationship, Millhone has no other feminine traits to speak of. She is neither weak, caring, nor emotional. She failed her marriages, does not have any children or even pets or plants to take care of. In the conventional view of femininity, the only thing Millhone possesses is the relationship and even that she perceives only as a sexual desire. Grafton’s novel is feminist in the way that she blurs the line between genders. Her novel features a female detective that is as strong

and tough as any other male hardboiled detective. She shows that a woman can make it in a male dominated world, but only if she adjusts to their rules and the necessary behavior.

## 5 Conclusion

Marcia Muller, Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton took on the challenge to reinvent a male dominated genre with a female heroine. Each one of them created the female detective differently. They were left with a difficult choice, whether to go with the conventions of the male hardboiled fiction or create the hero more feminine.

Sharon McCone is similar to her male predecessors only in two ways – one she has no interest or hobbies because she devotes herself to the case, she is investigating; the other is the fact that she is not particularly domestic nor interested in her appearance. Neither of these things suggests that McCone could be hardboiled. The strength and toughness are one of the major themes in the male hardboiled genre, yet Muller decided that if she were to create a female investigator, she certainly must be more feminine. At this Muller definitely succeeded, but by the decrease of masculinity and the severe increase of femininity, McCone becomes more of a soft-boiled hero. She is not particularly strong, she lets her emotions get the better of her and she certainly is submissive. She works in a job that can be regarded as a patriarchal structure, with her boss Hank Zahn at the top, who functions as her oppressor. She also gets submissive around Lt. Marcus, who frequently has sexist, racist and patronizing comments towards her, to which she rarely responds to. Although she is a descent of an Indian tribe, she does not tackle the issues it might cause during the investigation. The color of her skin does not seem to play a role in the novel at all. The problem with McCone does not entirely lie in the insufficiency of strength and rational behavior, but with the fact that changing the gender of the hero does not necessarily means the novel is a feminist piece of work. Even though McCone finds herself in situations that women in the 1970's were constantly dealing with, such as gender oppression, she does not reply to them. In her effort to combine masculine hardboiled

genre with a feminine woman, Muller ends up with a heroine that is an inadequate hardboiled detective and an inadequate feminist.

Kinsey Millhone is the exact opposite of McCone. She frequently jogs to keep in shape, she is strong and tough. She never lets her emotions take over, she is a completely rational being. She even has a genderless name. She is masculine to a point, where one must ask, if the genders were shifted in the story, would it be that much of a difference? No. Millhone is masculine to such an extent she actually could be a man in a drag as some scholars suggest. The story includes every major theme of the conventional male hardboiled fiction, such as toughness, distrust towards the police department and even a male femme fatale. However, by the creation of this independent and self-sufficient woman that is as an adequate detective as any male, Grafton blurs the lines between the genres. She creates such a strong heroine that the gender is no longer in question. Even though Grafton's feminist views do not go beyond the blurring of the gender line, she managed to create an independent character that is able to break through a predominantly male world.

As far as V.I. Warshawski is concerned, out of all three of them, she is a perfect combination of femininity and masculinity. On one hand, she is tough, strong and agile, similarly to the male hardboiled heroes. She is able to beat up several men during the novel by herself and she does not even have any major injuries. She demonstrates that she is as good, or even better than a male hardboiled detective. On the other hand, she acknowledges the fact that she is a woman and uses it to her advantage. Whether it means she has to dress up and flirt and manipulate her way to some vital information about her case or even impersonate a foolish girl, to disguise the fact she is far more intelligent, then that is what she needs to do. She also has some other feminine attributes, such as compassion or nurturing, both of which she demonstrates in the presence of the teenage

girl Jill. What she lacks in the masculinity, she compensates with her femininity. A common behavior in the male hardboiled detective fiction is demonstrating the superiority over people of color, homosexuals and women. Paretsky is aware of this customary practice, but as a person that belongs to one of the inferior groups, she is sensitive to their problems too. Although she does not tackle them in this novel, at least she does not act superior to them, because she is a white woman. She also tries to empower women, whether it is with strong female characters of all generations or by giving them a strong independent heroine to look up to. Warshawski is an educated woman that chose her career over her relationship and was able to pursue a career in one of the professional occupation – a law. She became a Public Defender to fight the injustice, but later she realized that the office was too corrupt and she wanted to enact her own justice, which she can, now she has her own detective office. Even though one might suggest she failed as a woman, because she was not able to preserve her marriage, but Paretsky uses this experience to criticize the pursuit of perfect life and perfect family, because women often forget to pursue what they are passionate about and end up home and unfulfilled. Paretsky was herself put in the position of housewife when she was young because her parents were not interested in parenting. She felt oppressed as the only girl in the household and through hardboiled detective fiction, she found her voice. As the only one of these three authors, she goes beyond shifting the genders. She uses these novels to voice her opinions about feminism, political situation in US and corruption. The novels are also her way of empowering all generations of women by the creation of strong, independent female detective.

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## 7 Resumé (English)

The thesis is composed of four chapters, each of them dealing with a different aspect of the hardboiled genre. The second chapter is devoted to the evolution of the detective fiction. I also analyze the major characteristics of the hardboiled detective, focusing on three major authors of this subgenre – Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Robert B. Parker. It is necessary to point out what the traditional hardboiled detectives were like, to show, how the female authors adjusted the conventions.

In the third chapter, I summarize the history of female detectives that was written by female authors. I also analyze the first three female authors of the hardboiled genre, Marcia Muller, Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton, who created female detectives in their thirties, who were self-sufficient and tough just as any hardboiled male detective and for whom the investigating was the source of their income.

The fourth chapter is the analysis of three books: *Edwin of the Iron Shoes* (1977) by Marcia Muller, *Indemnity Only* (1982) by Sara Paretsky and *“A” is for Alibi* (1982) by Sue Grafton. I chose the first novel of every author to examine how they decided to alter the conventions. The main aim of the thesis is to analyze whether the authors succeeded in creating the female hardboiled detectives and still were able to maintain the femininity or if they established masculine female detectives.

I reach a conclusion in the fifth chapter that only one of the authors was able to create a detective that upholds the hardboiled conventions and still keeps her femininity – Sara Paretsky’s V.I. Warshawski. Paretsky not only able to create a complex character, she also deals with several feminist issues in the novel and manages to empower all generations of women. The two other detectives are opposites, meaning that Sharon McCone is not a particularly hardboiled detective and Kinsey Millhone is as masculine as the male detectives,

but she lacks femininity and female behavior.

## 8 Resumé (Czech)

Práce se skládá ze čtyř kapitol, z nichž každá se zabývá jiným aspektem drsné školy. Druhá kapitola je věnována vývoji detektivek. Také analyzují hlavní charakteristiky detektiva drsné školy se zaměřením na tři hlavní autory tohoto žánru – Dashiella Hammetta, Raymonda Chandlera a Roberta B. Parkera. Je třeba zdůraznit, jaké jsou tradiční detektivové drsné školy, abychom bylo možný poukázat na to, jak autory tyto konvence upravily.

Ve třetí kapitole shrnuji historii ženských detektivů, která byli napsány ženskými autory. Také analyzují první tři ženské autorky drsné školy - Marcii Mullerovou, Saru Paretskou a Sue Graftonovou, kteří v třicátých letech vytvořili detektivky, které byly soběstačné, silné a neoblomné stejně jako jakýkoli mužský detektiv. Také to byli jedny z prvních detektivek, pro které tato práce byla zdroj jejich příjmu.

Čtvrtá kapitola se zabývá analýzou tří knih: *Edwin of the Iron Shoes* (1977) od Marcie Mullerové, *Indemnity Only* (1982) od Sary Paretské a *"A" pro Alibi* (1982) od Sue Graftonové. Vybrala jsem si první román každé autorky, abychom mohlo prozkoumat, jak se rozhodli změnit konvence. Hlavním cílem bakalářské práce je analyzovat, zda autoři uspěli v tvorbě ženských detektivek drsné školy, a přesto byli schopni zachovat ženskost nebo zda vytvořili mužný ženské detektivky.

V páté kapitole jsem dospěla k závěru, že jen jedna z autorek dokázala vytvořit detektivku, která zachovává konvence drsné školy a stále jsi zachovává svou ženskost - V.I. Warshawski od Sary Paretsky. Warshawski. Paretsky nejenže dokázala vytvořit komplexní postavu, ale také se zabývá několika feministickými otázkami a taky dokázala posílit všechny generace žen. Dvě ostatní detektivky jsou protikladní, což znamená, že Sharon

McCone není právě detektivem drsné školy a Kinsey Millhone je stejně mužná jako mužský detektivové, ale postrádá ženskost a ženské chování.

Hardboiled (or hard-boiled) fiction is a literary genre that shares some of its characters and settings with crime fiction (especially detective fiction and noir fiction). The genre's typical protagonist is a detective who witnesses the violence of organized crime that flourished during Prohibition (1920â€”1933) and its aftermath, while dealing with a legal system that has become as corrupt as the organized crime itself. Rendered cynical by this cycle of violence, the detectives of hardboiled fiction

Sub Genre > The Hardboiled Detective & Pulp Fiction. Comments Showing 1-49 of 49 (49 new) post a comment Â». date newest Â». message 1: by Julie (new). Nov 09, 2012 02:44PM. This discussion thread is for the fan of Hardboiled Detective novels. Feel free to add links, authors, more sub-genres to any discussion thread. This topic is for classic, vintage or current novels and can included pulp fiction.Â His Harry Bosch series has a fairly hard-boiled detective. The series began in the 1990's so I'm not sure if that's modern enough. reply | flag \*. While hard-boiled detective fiction shifts the focus from the solution of the problem to the search for that solution, and in doing so is able to address other topics, it remains centred on the idea of the detective restoring order in one way or another. Hard-boiled detectives do, in most cases, solve mysteries, even if their methods are more pragmatic than methodical. In the 1920s, hard-boiled detective fiction was considered a more realistic approach to crime and detection than the clue-puzzles of the classical form. Since the early 1970s, however, the idea that a single detective of any kin...Â The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre. Urbana and Chicago, Illinois, University of Illinois Press, 1988. Knight, Stephen.