

## "I don't know a lot of rude words": Herbst, Paretsky, and Grafton's Struggle to Master the Tough Guy Voice

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### ABSTRACT

The proletarian literature of the 1930s and traditional 1930s era hard-boiled detective fiction are literary siblings. Both genres came of age in popular publications. Both genres deal with establishing order. Both genres use the "tough guy" voice. This voice was a no-nonsense powerful tool used to highlight the gritty realism of blue collar life. This style of writing quickly became a central component for both genres. Embedded in the term "tough guy voice" is masculine identity. This is the voice for the active underdog male hero. Writing in genres for women is an on-going challenge given the expectation of gender implied in the narrative voice. For the contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective and the 1930's women proletarian protagonist to be taken seriously in their respective tough guy genres, they must show the same verbal acumen as the male characters who built the genres.

At the core of each genre, the expectation that tough guys remain tough guys is an issue that stretches beyond the time frame of 1930s and 1940s to contemporary iterations of the genres. The gendered transition from male protagonist to female protagonist requires authors like Josephine Herbst, Sara Paretsky, and Sue Grafton to engage in a series of dynamic manipulations verbal and textual manipulations. Both sets of authors created protagonists that faced the threat of being dismissed due to their gender, traditional family roles, and conflicts with authority. The authors dealt with these threats using very similar strategies, to varying levels of success. Paretsky and Grafton's heroines win verbal battles by showing mastery of the voice and the other voices in the texts. At the core of this struggle is the protagonists' ability to maintain the power of professing.

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The phrase "What is the password?" is designed to protect the treasured secrets of childhood organizations, web pages, and network security and to underscore society's emphasis on separating those who are qualified, knowledgeable, trusted members of the group from interlopers whose presence may only undermine the established rules and codes used to create boundaries and order. The wrong utterance, the bleak hesitation of an unsure phrase, or the simple inability to keep up with the code denies the unwanted and unworthy membership in the club. As we mature, the terminology of our fields becomes the secret code of professionalism, replacing simplistic passwords, preserving the simplistic principles of inclusion and exclusion. McNay (1993) reveals that dialogues and verbal power structures are a vital part of mainstream society's governing system that affects an individual's ability to create a psychologically specific gender, race, socioeconomic class, and ethical identities. Society depends upon the socialized use of language. Terminology and catch phrases fill our conversations and create the sound of power, while hiding the fury of ignorance. The fascination with the restrictive aspects of language is also deeply embedded in literature. Codes provide the reader with a false sense of security. Like all codes, these can be "cracked," stolen by outsiders and imposters to manipulate. The expectation that the mastery of socialized language codes equals knowledge and competency is the same in literature as in conversations. These communications, with their inclusion and exclusion, are a focal point for the tough guy voice, which provides the backbone for the masculine hard-boiled detective and proletarian genres. For the contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective and the 1930's women proletarian protagonist to be taken seriously in their respective tough guy

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genres of the hard-boiled detective genre and proletarian literature, they must show the same verbal acumen as the male characters who built the genres.

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

... as terse and idiomatic as the news headlines, radio bulletins, and newsreels which reported the events of the Thirties: the St. Valentine's Day Massacre; labor strife; speakeasy raids; lynchings; the shooting of Legs Diamond; the Lindbergh kidnapping; . . .—events described in Henry Morton Robinson's *Fantastic Interim* (Harcourt Brace, 1943) and, in relation to literary and other popular culture elements, in Leo Gurko's *Angry Decade* (Dodd, Mead, 1947).  
(Madden, 1979)

This no-nonsense voice was raised to high art by Chandler in the hard-boiled detective fiction genre. It is the voice of unvarnished fact. The style of the tough guy voice is usually first-person, rich in slang and jargon, and marked with objectivity and detachment. It is a style that reflects a jaded yet inventive outlook on life that is filled with metaphors and comparisons. Chandler's comparisons provide an excellent illustration of this: "But their faces were as threadbare as a bookkeeper's office coat" (Chandler, 1969). The tough guy's voice uses common images when making comparisons, often referring to people and places associated with the working class and aspects of a harder existence. This is a voice whose assertions the reader can trust; the voice of newsreels and fact. The deceptively plain tough guy voice is thick with markers of everyday life and struggle which gains empathy from the audience. 1930's proletarian writer Josephine Herbst carefully constructs language and power relationships in her novel, *Rope of gold*. Her character of Victoria deftly avoids marginalization by proving herself more linguistically competent to present the ideas of the Left in way that is sympathetic and inspiring. Victoria becomes a witness and recorder of the struggle of the working class. It is her words that will go on to paint the picture of strife. Similarly, contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective fiction authors find themselves facing the same battle as Herbst. Paretzky and Grafton must craft believable authoritative female protagonists in a genre designed to showcase masculinity. It is through their construction of the tough guy voice they establish their characters' authority in the text.

Proletarian writers saw the power of socialized language and worked to incorporate their views on politics into their version of truth. Both Walter Rideout's *The Radical novel in the United States, 1900-1954: some interrelations of literature and society* and Barbara Foley's *Radical representations: politics and form in U.S. fiction, 1939-1941* document the importance of using what proletarian writers saw as the language of the worker as that language unfolded in the debates within *New Masses*. One of the writers Foley (1993) sees as aptly displaying the importance of language is Josephine Herbst. In *Rope of gold*, Herbst disrupts the narrative with fictional newspaper columns that tell of the struggle of the proletarian movement. The short sentences of the newspaper articles provide a clear contrast between the political struggles of the working class and the struggles of the protagonists, Jonathan and Victoria, as they balance familial demands with their drive to make America better for the working class. These moments when Herbst uses mock newsprint clarify the themes of the text and connect the characters to the reality of that time. Consequently, both proletarian literature and hard-boiled detective fiction adopted the tough guy style for its realism and connection to the working class. Rabinowitz (1991) theorizes that this reliance upon the tough guy voice forced women writers of the 1930s to either adopt the masculine rhetoric of the radical novel, as created by proletarian leaders like Mike Gold, or to focus on the female body and the traditionally domestic spheres. This places the women proletarian writers of the 1930s in a delicate position. To use the voice of the tough guy writer implies an either/or association. Either you are out on the streets dealing with the gritty realism or you are in the kitchen watching your family erode. It was Josephine Herbst who found a third option. Her work is a balance of authoritative voice and feminine gender identity. Unexpectedly, Herbst's dilemma and approach is similar to what the contemporary Feminist hard-boiled detective authors find themselves faced with in terms of establishing their authority and using the power of the tough guy voice while keeping their protagonists' gender identities and political views at the forefront of the texts.

## **2. The Party line and Cop Talk**

For Foucault, discourse and power are deeply intertwined. Foucault theorizes that power goes beyond repression and instead produces a "form of knowledge" (1980). The sharing of knowledge is another primary power function of linguistic code. The construction of knowledge or truth invokes social power structures, social memberships, and creates understanding (Foucault, 1980). While Foucault has a dynamic

view of the subject, critics such as McNay (1993) point out that he did not take gender roles into adequate consideration. When the gender differences are introduced, power constraints and limitations become more complex. McNay's work raises the idea that women may have different uses for powerful language than men (1993). In Foucault's complex structure of sharing information, there is then room for different levels of information sharing, including withholding parts of information, and creating multiple identities based on gender performance and social memberships.

For proletarian writers, language and its use was at the center of a heated debate. The literary proletarian movement of the 1930s is marked by a sharp divide between a demand for a literary aesthetic and a need for functionality in the literature. This debate over use and function of language would ultimately play out in the pages of *New masses* (Foley, 1993). It was vital for the movement to take up the voice of the working class to show that as party they understood the plights the working class faced. Implicit gendering of the working class concept at this time is male. For many of the writers producing a novel was a battle to represent the working class and still be revolutionary in scope and vision. Foley explains that writers such as Grace Lumpkin and Clara Weatherwax were urged by leaders of the Left to "not sound too much like women—or at least the wrong kinds of women" (1993). In consequence, Lumpkin and Weatherwax created carefully crafted works that promoted the party agenda, exposed the plight of the worker, and revealed the powerful presence of women in the text as well as in the political movement. Lumpkin, Weatherwax, and Herbst utilize Leftist party jargon as well as society's jargon to bring their work to the reader. Herbst's *Rope of gold* uses party terminology several ways. Herbst's Jonathan makes a speech to his affluent family that is filled with calls for action to help poor farmers, "Last year we demanded a moratorium of debts ... This year we demand cancellation. . . . next year we shall demand confiscation" (Herbst, 1939). Jonathan, the young and eager political reformer, is the most obvious platform for political expression in Herbst's work. However, he is also not the revolutionary proletarian figure of the text. Jonathan's world is filled with lofty ideas that fail to inspire his audience. One could attribute Jonathan's failure to instill a change in his family to their unwillingness to see beyond the material comforts of their social standing. There is a breakdown on a linguistic level. Jonathan's father is unable to comprehend the "rigamarole" (Herbst, 1939). The ideas are too foreign to comprehend. The failure is more complex. Before Jonathan gives his speech, Victoria recalls him reading Eliot's *The Wasteland*. She recalls lines from "Gerontion" just before Jonathan speaks (Herbst, 1939). On one level, Victoria could be foreshadowing Jonathan's failure to reach his family. On another level, Herbst's inclusion of these lines is indicative of the larger aesthetics versus political agenda debate regarding proletarian literature at the center of which was language. Writers were charged with being practical and visionary. Consequently, Jonathan who is talking in a pragmatic and political manner fails, as his speech cannot be comprehended by his well-educated upper class family. The master of language in this novel is Victoria.

Victoria is a more subtle tool for Herbst's agenda. In the text, Herbst inserts newspaper style editorials from different perspectives. These small pieces all center on the plight of the worker from different perspectives. "In Abraham's bosom: Washington D.C. 1932" the speaker is a worker reflecting on the depression and the idea of America as a promised land. This is a tired, bitter, educated, and oddly hopeful voice looking for a better life (Herbst, 1939). While the message remains in line with Herbst's political agenda, the tone is different. It has the feel of a letter to an editor. This third person is confirming what Victoria and Jonathan know. There must be change. Later in the text Herbst includes pieces like "Lady, shoes are beautiful: Cuba 1935" with an uneducated speaker whose words are rife with dialectical markers and slang. He is wondering who will get a dead worker's shoes (Herbst, 1939). It is a brutal piece of internal dialog, far from Victoria and Jonathan's polished thoughts and speeches. These first-person accounts are powerful contrasts that grab the tough guy voice and create brutal pictures of working life. These pieces play upon the respect and value given to those who have lived through strife. It is this power of profession that Victoria later seizes in the novel, as she moves from party worker to documenting the struggles of workers in Cuba. She becomes the one who has witnessed and speaks. She is the mastery of the tough voice of realism. Her eyes show more than the battle between workers and oppressors. Herbst makes sure Victoria includes aspects of the home as well. Victoria's sympathetic perspective shows children in need and questions the power of a society that allows children to suffer. When Herbst controls the tough guy voice, she transforms it into a political commentary that documents the plights of both traditional masculine and feminine spheres.

While hard-boiled detective fiction came of age at the same time as proletarian literature, for the detective the tough guy voice encompasses the scientific terminology of criminal investigation. Crime and victim then belong to the world of clinical, manageable science. While the traditional masculine hard-boiled detective

did not fit in well with the police department, he did have a common speech pattern, understanding the terms and using them to glean information from authorities. In *Farewell, my lovely*, Chandler's Marlowe is questioned by Detective-Lieutenant Nulty. Marlowe uses slang, police jargon, and logical observation to win over Detective-Lieutenant Nulty's momentary trust. Nulty accuses Marlowe of "riding him." Marlowe responds, "I'm not trying to ride anybody" (1969). Marlowe's correct use of the slang term assures Nulty that Marlowe understands not only what Nulty was implying, but that he and Marlowe share a common vernacular based on street exposure. When Nulty looks through police records for a suspect, he allows Marlowe to bring up the possibility of checking parole records (Chandler, 1969). By talking about the parole records, Marlowe establishes his familiarity with the proper procedure and governing rules that are a part of Nulty's professional world. This professional respect leads to Nulty charging Marlowe with finding the missing Velma. In a few short pages, Marlowe's display of expertise as a detective allows the police detective to see him as a valuable tool, rather than an obstacle to solving the mystery.

Warshawski's use of jargon with police officers gives her a competency with them that allows her to decipher the literal codes that mark their language. Her connection to the police as a cop's daughter allows her access to the slang and interior of the police world. She can use what she knows to interact with police officers on equal ground. In *Bitter medicine*, Warshawski talks with Detective Rawlings about police action against a pro-life group picketing a free clinic that performs abortions: "So what happens now?" I said bitterly. 'A few disorderly conducts, several disturbing the peace—low bail—no prosecution' " (1987). Warshawski's ability to accurately list the charges against the crowd, and her realistic view of how much weight those charges will hold when brought to hearings, shows Officer Rawlings that she understands how the system works. She shares his insider knowledge of the limited effectiveness these charges will have against the protesters. Similarly, Warshawski's degree in law allows her access to court terms. She can use her legal background to decipher official court and police documents. She can claim the power of the tough guy voice through her first person experience, much in the same way Herbst's Victoria does.

Paretsky's Warshawski must also deal with the difficulty of being a female in a role that was traditionally designed for a male. This gender switch manifests when Warshawski deals with those members of authority who have a personal connection to her. Officer Bobby Mallory, an old friend of Warshawski's father, often tries to keep the inquisitive Warshawski out of "police business." One way he does this is by refusing to share information with her. In *Deadlock*, he tries to keep information from Warshawski concerning the death of her ex-hockey player cousin Boom-Boom Warshawski, by associating her with the role of grieving family victim: "He looked at me sternly. 'Do you really need to know that [the exact manner of Boom-Boom's death], Vicki? I know you think you're tough, but you'll be happier remembering Boom-Boom the way he was on ice' " (Paretsky, 1984). Mallory's use of "Vicki" is a signal to Warshawski that he sees her more as the daughter of an old friend than as a professional on the case. This unprofessional categorization is underscored by his refusal to share exact details and by his questioning of her "toughness." As Butler (1990) explains in *Gender trouble*, part of the establishment of gender roles comes through ritualized, contextual interactions, both physical and verbal. Through his use of her first name, Mallory is refusing Warshawski access to the ritualized interaction of police officer and detective. His verbal intercourse forces Warshawski into the powerless role of grieving woman. Warshawski's investigation into Boom-Boom's life before he was killed places her back into the role of detective. Naming and knowledge define Warshawski's relationship with the police, community, and her family. Warshawski struggles to have her authority as a feminist detective recognized and, to some extent, validated by the police through her insistent use of her last name and her precise use of terminology.

Grafton's Millhone uses cop talk to decode as well. In *B is for burglar*, Millhone often decodes numerical phrases in police dialogues: "Miss Millhone, this is Patrolman Benedict of the Santa Teresa Police Department. We've been called on a 594 at 2097 Via Madrina, apartment 1. . . I [Millhone] raised up on one elbow . . . '594?' . . . 'Malicious mischief?'" (Grafton, 1985). Millhone's quick decoding of 594 establishes her familiarity with police procedure gained from her background as a police officer and her experience as a detective. The ability to understand the codes affords her some respect among police officers. The same way Herbst's Victoria is able to demonstrate her political savvy to other proletariats by using the correct party terms. It allows her to construct her role of detective as a competent professional who is familiar with the terminology.

Millhone's morality works on a sliding scale. Her use language is designed to manipulate other systems of order and power. Lieutenant Con Dolan threatens to arrest and question Millhone after he correctly guesses

that she was present at the crime scene of a Los Vegas murder. To protect her right to keep investigating the case without police interference, Millhone lies and goes on the offensive:

I could feel my temper flare. 'You want to read me my rights, Lieutenant Dolan? You want to hand me a certification of notification of my Constitutional rights? Because I'll read it and sign it if you like. And then I'll call my attorney, and when he gets down here, we can chat. How is that?' (Grafton, 1985)

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

What emerges from all three sets of texts is a pattern of each protagonist understanding the power of terminology and using that knowledge to cast herself in the role of an authority figure. Herbst's Victoria comes to command the power of first person witness and the authority of a reporter by recounting that experience. Warshawski and Millhone battle mainstream authority by showing their understanding of the law and legal terminology and using it to validate their roles in very different manners. When Warshawski comes close to being removed from power by Mallory, she moves past the personal ties to rely on her professional life to maintain her power. Millhone blatantly manipulates her insider police knowledge even when her claim to authority is questionable.

### 3. Vital Words: Witnesses and Suspects

Proletarian writers such as Josephine Herbst created character who held the powerful position of witness. In the role of witness, it is Victoria that has the ultimate power to craft the story and reality of the struggle. In *Rope of gold*, struggling field worker, Lino tells plight to Victoria:

He [Lino] just wanted it made plain to Victoria that the land was rightfully theirs. They were no outlaws. No bandits. The land had been given to them years ago for fighting in the war for freedom. They had paid taxes. They had done all the work. Then the sugar companies began trying to get hold of it. Some of the foolish ones took loans on the crops. They got themselves tangled up with the companies. Then the companies began trying to foreclose the land. They said it was theirs. Lino just wanted her to know and, through her, the world—and as he said this, his face grew terribly still, his lips firmed, and he looked at hers steadily as if entrusting her now with an important duty that she must by no means forsake—that they meant to keep their land or die. (Herbst, 1939)

Lino is revealing his story to Victoria. However, Herbst omits Lino's voice. The audience has only Victoria's summation. As Lino looks to Victoria to become the herald that makes his struggle known, it is evident she has already made this transformation, as his voice is gone and only Victoria's version is repeated. She is the witness that professes the reality. This concern with having the power to establish reality is at the core of contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective fiction. The proletarian genre and hard-boiled detective genre uses of the tough guy voice reflects a harsh reality that is jarring, and depending upon the reader's social class, vulgar.

In *B is for burglar*, Grafton's Millhone approaches Julia, and retired woman, about helping her find some information about a missing woman. Julia then tells Millhone, "I'm going to start reading Mickey Spillane just to keep in shape. I don't know a lot of rude words, you know" (1985). Julia is bringing up the stereotype that detectives are often strong men with crude vocabularies, a far cry from her status as an elderly retired lady who gets excited by her weekly game of bridge. This comparison demonstrates how different the feminist hard-boiled detective is from the masculine detective who set the expectations for the genre. Witnesses, clients, and bystanders have an expectation that detectives are tough talking, and sometimes vulgar, conversationalists. This expectation of lurid detail and blunt fact comes from the use of the tough guy

voice and a dependency upon an element of realism found in the hard-boiled detective genre, and in the 1930s proletarian literature.

Chandler and Hammett created excellent detectives who set the bar for providing unvarnished factual accounts of crimes such as murder and robbery; they do not tend to stray into vulgarity for vulgarity's sake. The association of the hard-boiled detective with vulgarity springs from their interactions with individuals of questionable occupations and low social status. Their use of the tough guy voice lends connotations of objectivity and authority to their observations (Madden, 1979). As Madden explains, the tough guy voice ". . . can dispense with all language that does not enable him [the hard-boiled detective] to govern the immediate moment" (1979). When Chandler's Philip Marlowe meets Mrs. Jessie Florin in *Farewell, my lovely*, he compares her easy consumption of bourbon to swallowing aspirin (1969). It is telling comparison that links alcohol and medication and passes a subtly judgment. In this comparison, Marlowe has connected Florin with vice and shadier aspects of life. It clearly denotes the difference between the two of them and associates Marlowe with virtue. By creating this separation, Marlowe shows himself to be above corruption in an objective place of power. He holds the power to make the judgment.

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

The revelation of hidden information, via interrogation or confession, is the core of every mystery. Foucault cites confession as a powerful tool in society (Foucault, *History of sexuality*, 1978). The individual confesses transgressions to a priest or other social authority figure and is assimilated into the mainstream. Here, Foucault assumes that the transgressor in question has a driving need to be reintroduced into the mainstream. With criminals, and suspected criminals, in hard-boiled detective fiction, that is not always the case. Feminist hard-boiled detectives must prepare themselves to do linguistic battle with suspects to gain the necessary information to solve the mystery.

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

One of Warshawski's most notable linguistic battles with a suspect appears in *Deadlock*. Warshawski questions Boom-Boom's girlfriend, Paige. Warshawski suspects that Paige knows more about the events surrounding Boom-Boom's death than she is revealing. Warshawski has uncovered Paige's affair with Boom-Boom's boss, Mr. Grafalk. Warshawski breaks down Paige's claims of innocence by repeatedly asking her "How long have you been Grafalk's mistress?" and interjecting "Oh, Bullshit" (Paretsky, *Deadlock*, 1984). When Paige uses her upper-class status as an excuse to avoid answering Warshawski's accusation, by deeming them tacky, classless, and vulgar, Warshawski then explains that her past is too poor to understand Paige's fear of being penniless (Paretsky, *Deadlock*, 1984). Warshawski utilizes blunt terminology, mild swearing, and her blue-collar past to refuse Paige access to well-mannered denials of involvement. Paige's hesitation and upper-class conversational tactics to avoid discussing personal matters when her lover has just died are useless against Warshawski's impolite conversation and demands that Paige accounts for events. Warshawski's techniques draw Paige out of her well-bred conversational mode, causing Paige to provide the information Warshawski was looking for concerning Boom-Boom's final days. Warshawski is drawing upon the lower-class associations of the detective to force Paige into a field of conversation she has little experience in dealing with. Warshawski is constructing herself as a hard-boiled detective and, in doing so, is constructing Paige as a criminal.

Vulgar language is a tool Grafton's Millhone uses as well. She uses expletives and bodily references to show her tough side and manipulate confessions. When questioning society matron Nola Frakes about her alleged

affair with murder victim Bobby Callahan, Millhone resorts to using vulgar slang to startle Frakes out of polite denials:

So the kid had an *affair* with you Nola. That’s what. You got your tit in a wringer and the kid was helping you out. The *kid* was murdered because of you, ass eyes. Now, shall we quit bullshitting each other and get down to the business on this or shall I call Lieutenant Dolan down at Homicide and let him have a chat with you? (Grafton, *C*, 1986)

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

#### 4. In the Tradition: Reader as Witness

In the careful linguistic negotiations and battles going on in the works of Josephine Herbst, Sara Paretsky, and Sue Grafton, the ultimate battle lies in the power of the protagonists to sway the reader successfully. While these characters work very hard to maintain their authority in the text, it is ultimately the reader that must be the witness to all transgressions and amends. In Herbst’s *Rope of gold*, this task seems a bit daunting. While the reader follows Victoria and other characters through the novel, it ends with by Steve. Steve’s character has a very positive role as a political crusader in Herbst’s text. His last words are the only ones spoken as he watches National Guard members on the other side of a high iron gate (Herbst, 1939). Herbst’s use of third person is a break with the steady stream of first person narrative that usually makes up the tough guy voice. But Victoria’s place as herald is firmly cemented. Lester, another proletariat, has commented that she has published her articles about the sugar workers, and it is her accusation of hiding that spurs him into action. Her words still hold power even when she is not present. Having Steve as the focus for the ending serves two purposes. First, Herbst describes the on-going conflict as a war, with “Men shot men in war” (Herbst, 1939). Steve is a soldier on a field. Second, Steve’s is one of the most actively political figures in the text. His potential martyrdom is a terrible gift for cause. While he faces possible death at the hands of the National Guard, the reader can be assured that his struggle and the struggles of others will be recorded and carried on by heralds like Victoria.

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

Paretsky’s Warshawski creates this credibility by referring to classic detectives such as Sam Spade and Sherlock Holmes, and her to contemporary sisters like Grafton’s Millhone. These allusions are generally associated with her ‘failure’ at some task. With these meta-references, Paretsky creates an awareness of the genre tradition she is participating in and the expectations of the reader. On the one hand, the reader has specific expectations from the hard-boiled genre established in the works of Hammett and Chandler. The reader expects the detectives to uncover the hidden discourse behind the mystery, reestablish a social order to the text, and neatly present the information to the authorities. Paretsky’s reference to Marlowe’s success compared to Warshawski’s setbacks underscores the difference in the two worlds the detectives inhabit, socially and politically. Chandler’s Marlowe does not have to prove continually his worthiness to hold the position of detective. His right to question authority figures and criminals is not questioned. In

Warshawski's world, every conversation is a struggle to establish her role and explore the world around her. Paretsky's references make the reader, and Warshawski, question how well she fills her literary predecessor's shoes.

Paretsky tends to have Warshawski sing popular songs, show tunes, and make reference to folk stories like Briar Rabbit. This wide array of allusions shows Warshawski's extensive education. The song and folk story references are a code Warshawski shares directly with the reader. In *Deadlock*, when Warshawski begins to sing, "Things go better with Coca-Cola," the reader understands that the song represents the connection between the sabotage of the ship *Lucella* and shipping mogul Niels Grafalk's financial problems she has recently uncovered (1984). While other characters not privy to Warshawski's thought processes, case knowledge, or reasoning skills may find her singing out of place, the reader understands the song to be a marker of newfound understanding. Warshawski is singing a code to the reader and creating an exclusive connection between herself and the reader that marks both feminist hard-boiled detective and audience as privileged with select information.

Grafton's Millhone takes a more business-like approach in establishing her credibility with the reader. Each of Grafton's novels opens with a police report, outlining her identity and verifying that the following events are factual. Grafton's novels end with an epilogue where Millhone accounts for any loose ends and closes with "respectfully submitted" and then her name. This documentation adds an air of business-like legality to the works. Reinforcing this impression is Millhone's constant references to the date, time, and events taking place, giving the text a documentary feel. Millhone's focus on completing paperwork, logging her hours, submitting her bills, and working on more than one case at a time reinforces the paperwork intensive aspects of being a detective. The focus on business and filing add realistic details to the text, which make Millhone's claim to be a professional detective more realistic for the reader. The process Millhone details becomes the code shared between reader and feminist hard-boiled detective. Linguistically, the tough-guy first person narration is being used by Grafton's Millhone to mark boundaries of power and knowledge with the reader.

## **5. Language Mastery and Genre Mastery**

The tough guy voice found a place in both 1930s proletarian literature and hard-boiled fiction. But maintain the power and authority of a voice geared to be wielded by a male protagonist was a challenge for women proletarian writers' era who crafted female protagonists as well as contemporary feminist hard-boiled detective author who also present the reader with decisively female main characters. For Herbst the challenge comes in creating inspiring fiction while being the write kind of woman. Her Victoria manages to avoid being relegated to the traditional feminine sphere of the domestic, while establishing herself as the primary witness and story teller in the text. Herbst's work draws neatly intertwines multiple voices and variety of styles to promote the party's interests and secure Victoria's power to promote and discuss those ideas. While the masculine hard-boiled detective predecessors like Chandler --and society--mark off boundaries, roles, and power with linguistic fences, feminist hard-boiled detective writers employ tools of boundary crossing gleaned from their proletarian ancestor Herbst that help them usurp and subvert linguistic labor economies and turn the verbal power to their own ends. The traditional hard-boiled detective writers did need to show mastery of the code, but did not need to code switch or subvert the order as Proletarian writers. So the feminist hard-boiled detective authors take the mastery position of the father and subvert it to her needs through strategies found in the proletarian literature.

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

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