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Social commentary in hard-boiled detective fiction: Seeing the world through the eyes of Marlowe and Millhone.

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**SOCIAL COMMENTARY IN HARD-BOILED DETECTIVE FICTION:
SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES
OF MARLOWE AND MILLHONE**

A Thesis

Presented to the
Department of English
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Lisa A. Cook

December 1997

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

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Abstract

This study examines how the genre of hard-boiled detective fiction has been and continues to be a unique medium for social commentary and an exploration of human nature. The study focuses on two novelists, Raymond Chandler, considered by critics to be the godfather of the genre, and Sue Grafton, a contemporary novelist. I have chosen to research two very different authors of this genre to explain that despite the diversity of the novelists and the age in which they wrote, they both use the techniques of the hard-boiled detective novel to mirror their perception of society. Both authors show that through the unique traits of the hard-boiled detective, they have created reliable narrators of the human condition, exploring the nature of everything from alcoholism and domestic violence, to crime, corruption, and the justice system, to sex, love, family, and friendship.

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Chapter 1 -- The Hard-Boiled Detective Novel

The hard-boiled detective novel, truly an American invention, became popular in the early part of the twentieth century under the skilled hands of the godfathers of the genre, Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. Characterized by its tough, colloquial language, violence, page-turning action, and social commentary, its hero, the loner gumshoe with his trench coat and hat, standing in a dark, seedy alley, cigarette dangling nonchalantly from his cynical mouth, a bottle of booze and a revolver in his pocket, valiantly searching for justice in a world gone bad, has become an American icon.

Some believe that the hard-boiled detective story was derived from the traditional story of detection and deduction made famous in Britain. These stories, a kind of gentleman's mystery, were often puzzles solved only with the esoteric knowledge and ratiocination of their amateur detectives. George Grella describes the typical British detective story in his essay "The Formal Detective Novel":

The typical detective story presents a group of people assembled at an isolated place -- usually an English country house -- who discover that one of their number has been

murdered. They summon the local constabulary, who are completely baffled; they find either no clues or entirely too many, everyone or no one has had the means, motive and opportunity to commit the crime, and nobody seems to be telling the truth. To the rescue comes an eccentric, intelligent, unofficial investigator who reviews the evidence, questions the suspects, constructs a fabric of proof, and in a dramatic final scene, names the culprit. (84)

Many critics agree with Grella's description of the traditional detective story; the stories, though amusing, were too unrealistic, contrived, sterile, and prissy to be accepted by an American readership unaccustomed to the strict class distinction and gentility found in the English novel. Chandler wrote that the problem with these stories was that they were "too little aware of what goes on in the world" ("Simple Art" 393). After all, postwar America had undergone many dramatic social changes, from the crime and corruption that accompanied prohibition, to the economic boom of the 1920s, to the wrath of poverty and unemployment of the depression, and the introduction of communism to America. It is difficult to imagine a man who has just survived the violence and death of war or the ravages of the Depression "connecting" with a little old lady who

solves murders while sipping tea in the English countryside.

Of course, there are exceptions to the pristine characters of the British puzzle mystery that Chandler writes against. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's complex Sherlock Holmes breaks these typical trademarks of the genteel mystery as does Dorothy L. Sayer's war hero, Lord Peter Wimsey. Perhaps these authors found the conventional British novel to be shallow and trite as they responded like Chandler by creating more realistic and psychologically complex characters.

Thus it was not from the conventional British puzzle story, but from this gap between British gentility and American reality that the hard-boiled detective story was born. Abandoning the pious British formula, the hard-boiled detective story paradoxically drew on its romantic and realistic literary traditions, creating a romantic hero on a quest for truth on the tough streets of urban America. Chandler emphasizes the realism that American writers incorporated into the detective novel: "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 with hand-wrought duelling pistols, curare, and tropical fish" ("Simple Art" 396).

It is through the hard-boiled genre that authors like Hammett and Chandler explored those themes of freedom,

equality and the search for self that are representative of American literature. Bernard A. Schopen writes that the novels of Hammett and Chandler are not really detective stories but novels "whose central characters are detectives and which employ the detective format for serious aesthetic and moral purposes" (175). He goes on to confirm that these stories are not derived from the puzzle story but from the "novels of Cooper and Twain, Crane and Hemingway and Fitzgerald" (175). Schopen points out that Joseph T. Shaw, the editor of the Black Mask, in which many of Hammett and Chandler's first stories appeared, deliberately turned away from the British puzzle story and strove to create a form that "emphasizes character and the problems inherent in human behavior" (177). Chandler summarizes this best with this analogy: "Hammett did not write detective stories at all, merely hard-boiled chronicles of mean streets with a perfunctory mystery element dropped in like the olive in a martini" ("Simple Art" 397).

There is a sterile, prim neatness in the telling of the formulaic British novel of detection. It is an awkward civility that deceives the reader into thinking that crime is always a rational, neat phenomenon, and that at the end of the novel, when the bad guys are caught, the reader is left in an orderly and safe world; whereas, the American hard-boiled novel takes its readers into a rough, dangerous

world where violence and death are not shielded from them, and at times at the end of the novel the reader is left uneasy by the outcome. Jeffrey Mahan also sees this difference between the two types of novels:

The hard-boiled story is different from the classical story of detection. . . in its assumptions about the world. The classical story brings an element of disruption into an otherwise orderly world. As the hard-boiled story progresses we discover that evil is increasingly revealed to be endemic and contagious. The natural state of the hard-boiled world is corrupt. . . .(90)

What is most obviously different between the British and American detective story is the detective. The American hero, the private-eye, is more like his romantic predecessors Huckleberry Finn and Natty Bumppo, than he is like Dr. Thorndyke or Hercule Poirot.¹ Unlike most of the British detectives who follow the rules of genteel society, the hard-boiled dick is a loner operating outside of society. Writers of the hard-boiled genre follow in the tradition of Cooper, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald, focusing on the issues of individual freedoms and making clear the point that law is not synonymous with justice.

Raymond Chandler describes the hard-boiled detective

in his famous essay "The Simple Art of Murder":

. . .down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He is the hero, he is everything. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor, by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it and certainly without saying it. . . .He is a relatively poor man, or he would not be a detective at all. He is a common man, or he could not go among common people. He has a sense of character or he would not know his job. He will take no man's money dishonestly and no man's insolence without a due and dispassionate revenge. He is a lonely man and his pride is that you will treat him as a proud man or be very sorry you ever saw him. He talks. . . with rude wit, a lively sense of the grotesque, a disgust for sham, and a contempt for pettiness. . . . He has a range of awareness that startles you, but it belongs to him by right, because it belongs to the world he lives in.

If there were enough like him, I think the

world would be a very safe place to live in,
and yet not too dull to be worth living in. (398)

Chandler's Philip Marlowe is considered the archetype of the hard-boiled detective. This middle-aged gumshoe operates on more than intellect. He is tough, street-wise, and has a keen moral sense, and like Leatherstocking is "proficient with his gun and seldom goes anywhere without it" (Grella, "Murder" 414). He is an idealist who is often disappointed by the people around him. He is a loner and has no family and few friends. He says of himself:

I'm a lone wolf, unmarried, getting middle-aged, and not rich. I've been in jail more than once and I don't do divorce business. I like liquor and women and chess and a few other things.

The cops don't like me too well, but I know a couple I get along with. I'm a native son, born in Santa Rosa, both parents dead, no brothers or sisters, and when I get knocked off in a dark alley sometime, if it happens, as it could to anyone in my business . . . nobody will feel that the bottom has dropped out of his or her life." (Goodbye 92).

His description is sarcastic, matter of fact and accurate. He modestly lists the basics, neglecting those

qualities that are so inherent in the PI persona that perhaps he is not even aware of them himself. He mentions that he has been in jail, but does not explain that he was incarcerated because he would not betray the trust of a friend. He lives strictly by the PI code, believing in honesty and loyalty above all else, and is often punished for his devotion. He would never betray a friend or client even if it means getting a little roughed up.

In order for the private-eye to remain loyal and still stay on the right side of the law, he has to master the technicalities that allow him to do his job in good conscience. In The Long Goodbye, Marlowe's friend Lennox shows up at Marlowe's house at five o'clock in the morning, with a gun in his hand, asking Marlowe to take him to the airport. Marlowe agrees to help his friend but warns him that:

if you have committed a crime or anything the law calls a crime -- a serious crime, I mean I can't be told about it. . . . if you have essential knowledge that such a crime has been committed, I can't be told about that either. . . . I have a living to earn, a license to protect. (29)

The private-eye, like the Leatherstocking archetype, has an innate sense of justice, trusting more in himself

than in the social institutions designed to protect him, and because he is a loner he must be tough and self-sufficient. Despite his loner image, the private-eye is often drawn into a world in which strange alliances are made. He befriends the underdogs, the drunks, the prostitutes, the helpless, the homeless, the "misunderstoods," and the outcasts of society, and because of his compassion and sense of honor he is a reliable narrator of the human condition.

One critic writes of Chandler's contribution to the hard-boiled detective novel:

Chandler . . . created the notion that the detective character could be more than just "a man coming through a doorway with a gun in his hand." He could also be a thoughtful, emotionally vulnerable, socially aware human being. The genre has been the better for it. (Skinner 15)

Fifty years later, there is another thoughtful, emotionally vulnerable, socially aware private-eye coming through the doorway, gun in hand, but this time there is something different about this dick -- she is a woman.

The most obvious change both in detective fiction and society over the last fifty years has been the role of women. No longer are women the helpless victims waiting for a man to save them, but they are the ones doing the

saving. Women are now seen as equals and what better medium to send this message than the hard-boiled detective novel?

One such novelist who has found success in the hard-boiled genre is Sue Grafton.^a Grafton, a self-proclaimed "feminist from way back" (Taylor 11) has taken those characteristics that have made the hard-boiled detective so endearing and has created a tough-talking private-eye of her own in her character Kinsey Millhone. Grafton says in an interview with Rosemary Herbert, "I enjoy competition; I like to test myself in an arena such as hard-boiled private-eye fiction, . . . to get in there and knock elbows with those guys whom I greatly admire" (qtd. in Current Biography Yearbook 223).

Her character Kinsey Millhone is true to the hard-boiled tradition. Orphaned as a child, she, like Marlowe, has few friends and no family. She is a loner, an outsider, struggling to survive in a corrupt world. Like Marlowe she is tough but compassionate, often trapped between the law and the truth. She is capable and caring and can take a punch as well as the next guy, and when the chips are down she still maintains her self-effacing wit. Millhone describes herself to the reader:

I do have friends, but I don't entertain. If I have any hobbies at all, they consist of cleaning my little semiautomatic and reading

up on evidential documents. I'm not exactly a bundle of laughs, but I do pay my bills, keep a little money tucked away, and provide myself with medical insurance to cover the hazards of my trade. I like my life as it is, though I try not to boast overmuch about the fact. About every six or eight months, I run into a man who astounds me sexually, but between escapades, I'm celibate, which I don't think is any big deal. After two unsuccessful marriages, I find myself keeping my guard up, along with my underpants. ("C" 11)

Millhone lives by the same code of honor and loyalty that governs Marlowe, and both are overpowered by an innate need to find the truth, no matter what the personal sacrifice. In this scene from Farewell, My Lovely, Marlowe is reflecting on his life after being beaten, drugged, lied to, and imprisoned in a mental hospital: "I needed a drink, I needed a lot of life insurance, I needed a vacation, I needed a home in the country. What I had was a coat, a hat and a gun. I put them on and went out of the room" (202). This scene is representative of the life of a private-eye. The reader feels his frustration, his weariness, his desire to forget the whole case, but he can not, because his curiosity always gets the best of

him.

Often times this quest for the truth starts off as simple nosiness. At the beginning of Farewell, My Lovely, Marlowe is looking for a wayward husband, but is distracted by a rather large, colorfully dressed fellow who walks into a bar across the street. A moment later he watches as another man is thrown out the door and onto the sidewalk. Marlowe walks over to the doors and thinks to himself, "It wasn't any of my business. So I pushed them [the doors] open and looked in" (2). Marlowe's meddling causes him to walk right into the middle of a homicide case: "Nothing made it my business except curiosity. But strictly speaking, I hadn't had any business in a month. Even a no-charge job was a change" (15).

Millhone also has this innate need to find the truth. She describes why she can not quit looking for the answers even after she has been fired in "L is for Lawless:"

I wasn't being paid to do anything. So why not let it drop?

Because it's contrary to my nature. . . .I'm like a little terrier when it comes to the truth. I have to stick my nose down the hole and dig until I find out what's in there. Sometimes I get bitten, but that's the chance I'm usually willing to take. (68)

Her determination pays off, and she moves closer to the truth as the pieces start to fall into place. When one of the suspects asks her why she does not quit, especially since she is not even getting paid, she replies, "I have a hunch, and I'd like to find out if I'm right. In my line of work, it's good practice" ("L" 74).

Later in the novel, after she has spent nearly a thousand dollars of her own money, almost been killed in a fire, been kidnapped at gunpoint, and finally has the opportunity to escape she decides to stick around because, "Having come this far, I had to see it through" ("L" 302). Of course her decision to stay and see it through turns out to be detrimental to her well-being, yet in exchange for her injuries she learns a little more about human behavior. Looking back on the assignment she thinks:

. . . it all seemed so innocent. I swear there's no way I could have guessed what was coming down. I came this close to death and, perhaps worse (for my fellow dental phobics), within a hairbreadth of having my two front teeth knocked out. Currently I'm sporting a knot on my head that's the size of a fist. And all this for a job for which I didn't even get paid! ("L" 1)

Unlike the ratiocinative British detective, the hard-boiled private-eye's job is usually more physical

than intellectual, so she must have physical strength and stamina. In the course of a case the dick is often beaten up, blown up, shot at, doped up, knocked unconscious, run off the road, and tied up. Millhone says that the reason she runs every day is "the recollection of the times when I've had to run for my life" ("H" 19).

The hard-boiled private-eye has to be tough to survive on the mean streets of America, and Millhone has the same toughness that made Marlowe so appealing. Millhone responds to her good friend Jonah about being shot on her last case: "A mere .22, which hardly counts. I got beat up too, and that's what hurt. I don't know how guys put up with that shit,' I said. I rubbed at the bridge of my nose ruefully. 'Broke my schnoz'" ("C" 179). And on a more recent case Millhone, tired of being stalked by a hit man, refuses to play the role of victim: ". . .let's figure out some way to kill his ass. I hate chickenshit guys trying to shoot me. Let's get him first" ("G" 168).

Of course no matter what the danger the brave detective always covers his or her pain with sarcastic flippancy. Grella notes that "Their insults and wisecracks are the badge of their courage" ("Murder" 414). Often times it is the cynical observations, sarcastic ruminations, figurative language and one-liners that make the private-eye's narrative so authentic and appealing.

In The Big Sleep Marlowe snappily describes a man walking out of an illicit pornography store: "People who spend their money for second-hand sex jags are as nervous as dowagers who can't find the rest room" (97). He is equally sarcastic as he describes Carmen Sternwood, "She was puzzled. She was thinking. I could see, even on that short acquaintance, that thinking was always going to be a bother to her" (Big 6). Lest readers think that the hard-boiled detective novel is a medium for sexist putdowns, Millhone counters Carmen's stupidity with her description of Bucky Lee in "L is for Lawless: "the way he was looking at me made me want to knock on his head and ask if anyone was home" (9-10). Millhone's observations are often sarcastic and sometimes grotesque as when she describes John Daggett's strange appearance at his funeral: "His features had a flattened appearance, which I suspected was a side effect of the autopsy process. Peel somebody's face back and it's hard to line it all up again" ("D" 93).

If wisecracks and sarcasm are the badge of their courage, then their seedy office is the badge of their honesty. Living in a tiny apartment and working out of a shabby office, the private-eye has little to show for his life's work. Aside from poverty there are many perils of being self-employed. After years of being shot at, beaten up and blown up, Millhone says, "I pay my disability

insurance before I even pay my rent" ("F" 3). Often times the quest for the truth is at odds with getting paid, and the saying that "money is the root of all evil" has never been more true than in the detective novel.

The nature of the private-eye business often puts the detective in contact with some rather unsavory characters. In "D" is for Deadbeat Alvin Limardo asks Millhone to deliver a cashier's check for \$25,000 to a fifteen-year-old boy. It sounds like a simple, honest enough assignment; however, Millhone is irate to discover that her client's retainer check is as phony as his name: "the bum tried to stiff me for my fee. When you're self-employed, you can't afford to let these things slide. Word gets out and first thing you know, everybody thinks you can be had" (1).

Though, or perhaps because the hard-boiled dick is poor himself, he is often drawn to the vulnerable and unhappy and frequently works without a fee to help the little guy. As a side-bar to the missing persons case in The Lady in the Lake, Marlowe tries to solve the murder of a corrupt doctor's wife. The victim's father says, "If you get him . . . call back with a bill" (166). Marlowe, seeing that the man had suffered enough, replies that there would not be any bill. Similarly, in The Little Sister Marlowe cuts his rates in half for Orfamay Quest,

a young girl from Kansas who has come to the big city to find her missing brother; however, twenty dollars is little compensation for the number of times he gets whacked in the head. Marlowe reflects on life as a private-eye: "There's not much money in it. There's a lot of grief. But there's a lot of fun too. And there's always a chance of a big case" (Farewell 106).

In contrast to the unfortunate victims that Marlowe helps, he is often called to the aid of the very wealthy who are repeatedly under the impression that their money can buy anything, including people. They are disappointed to find that the private-eye can not be corrupted by money, no matter how dire his or her circumstance. Marlowe says, "I'm a poor man, but I pay my own way. And it's not quite as soft a way as you would like" (Farewell 190).

When Mr. Kingsley, a potential client asks Marlowe if he did all kinds of detective work, Marlowe replies, "Not all kinds. Only the fairly honest kinds" (Lady 9).

Later in the novel when it appears that Kingsley's wife has murdered her lover, Kingsley offers Marlow \$500 to hide the murder weapon. Marlowe replies, "I can't cover up a murder, even for a ten-dollar bonus" (123). In the end Marlowe adheres to the PI's code of ethics, refuses to take the money, and ultimately clears Kingsley's wife, and does so with a clear conscience.

Grafton's Millhone also adheres to the same code. In "L" is for Lawless she recovers some stolen money for a client, only to discover that the money was stolen to begin with. Even though the money was stolen in a bank heist some 40 years before, she does not lose sight of her principles despite the robber's attempts to rationalize keeping the money:

"It's been forty years since we cleaned out that vault. . . . Most customers are dead, so even if I wanted to play straight, who would I return the money to? The state of Kentucky? to what end? I spent my life in jail for that dough, and I earned every cent."

"It's still a crime," I said politely, not wanting to seem quarrelsome. (187)

Self-employment does have its good points. For Marlowe, who used to work in the District Attorney's office, and for Millhone, who used to be a cop, being a private investigator keeps them out of the bureaucratic world that stifled their integrity and intelligence. Being out on their own gives them the freedom to choose what kind of work they will do and whom they will work for. Millhone shows that she is not going to sacrifice her independence or integrity by jumping through hoops just to please a client. When California Fidelity Insurance brings in Gordon

Titus, an efficiency expert, Millhone ends up sacrificing her California Fidelity office space to maintain her personal freedom:

I wasn't going to play this game. Screw him.
. . . "I don't see why I have to put up with this bureaucratic bullshit. I don't work for you. I'm an independent contractor. You don't like what I do, hire somebody else." ("H" 25-26).

The detective in the hard-boiled detective novel is searching for much more than "whodunit." He is on a quest for truth, and written in between the lines of murder, missing persons, and blackmail is an audit of society. Concealed between the clues and car chases is an examination of human behavior.

Grafton in an interview with Bruce Taylor for Armchair Detective says, "I think the private eye has always functioned literally as a private eye -- as an observer and as someone who comments on society and on family relationships and on the state of justice" (qtd. in Current Biography Yearbook 223).

Because the detective is a "private eye," the hard-boiled detective novel is a unique medium in American literature for the study of human nature and society. The hero is drawn into the story on the pretense of solving a crime, but while on the case he finds himself learning

more about human motivation and behavior. The author employs the conventions of the hard-boiled detective novel such as the tough colloquial language, first-person narrative, page-turning action, violence, and the poor but honest gumshoe, to give authenticity to his/her social commentary. This is true of the novels of Raymond Chandler whose career spans the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, and Sue Grafton whose career began in the late 1980s and continues to thrive today. One will see that despite the gender and generational differences of these two writers, they both use the American hard-boiled detective story as an effective medium to comment on society, family, relationships and the state of justice in America.

Chapter 2 -- Society

"I view the mystery novel as a vantage point from which to observe the world we live in. What I hope to do is engage in a kind of truth-telling about what I see" (Grafton qtd. in Taylor 12).

Grafton, like Chandler has used the hard-boiled detective novel as a tool to explore and comment on the world in which we live in. By infusing important social issues into their detective stories, they not only lend realism to their genre but create a multi-dimensional story that serves a greater purpose than to just entertain their readers. Both Grafton and Chandler effectively use the hard-boiled detective novel as a means to explore the plight of the individual and society. Intertwined with the murder and the mayhem, the blackmail and burglary, and the death and deceit is a thought-provoking account of life in American society. By incorporating such social issues as alcoholism, discrimination, racism, sexism, feminism, poverty, wealth, domestic violence, child abuse, drug abuse, prostitution, pornography, politics, suicide, and depression, the writer coerces the reader into an internal investigation of the issues.

However, Chandler and Grafton are able to give a social

commentary without giving the impression that they are using the detective novel as a medium to bombard the reader with their political ideologies; both Chandler and Grafton use a more subtle approach. In fact the reader, like the detectives, is often left vaguely unsettled and undecided because in the real world the line between right and wrong and good and bad is not always as clear as some would like us to believe. Grafton writes that she doesn't "feel it's the job of a mystery writer to convert anyone to anything"; she says "I try to keep politics out of it. I try to keep Sue Grafton out of it." However, she goes on to say, "Indirectly, we're all infusing our work with our personal viewpoints" (qtd. in Taylor 12). What makes the detective a unique agent for social commentary is that because of the profession he or she is exposed to all levels of society, all ethnic groups, and all income levels; and if there is one thing to learn from the detective novel, it is that despite the disparities that exist in American society, the wants, needs, motivations, and internal struggles of the individual are often very much the same.

One such social issue which transcends economic and ethnic barriers is alcoholism. Alcohol is everywhere. From ads on television, in magazines and on billboards, to movies and television shows, to the three-martini business lunch, to weddings and every feasible social

occasion, alcohol is a large part of the American life-style, and this life-style is reflected in the detective novel. Marlowe and Millhone both drink, and like millions of people they might have a drink to unwind after a hard day. As a matter of fact, there is not a case that goes by, for either detective, that does not mention alcohol. Marlowe's "office bottle," and Millhone's glass of wine are as prominent props in the novels as their guns.

Many of the characters the detectives encounter are drinkers. They range from social drinkers to fall-down, vomit-reeking drunks. Alcohol and alcoholism is a predominant theme in Chandler's books. After all, Chandler's first novel The Big Sleep was published in 1939 just six years after Prohibition was repealed. The aftermath of what is considered America's greatest social and political disaster is reflected in Chandler's novels, and much of the organized crime that Chandler writes about including police corruption and government payoffs stem from Prohibition. Chandler and Grafton each have a novel that centers around alcoholism and its ramifications, Chandler's The Long Goodbye (perhaps his best novel) and Grafton's "D" is for Deadbeat.

Because Chandler himself was a heavy drinker, many of his descriptions are especially poignant. In The Long

Goodbye Marlowe observes a drunk customer while waiting for a prospective client in a bar:

There was a sad fellow over on a bar stool talking to the bartender, who was polishing a glass and listening with that plastic smile people wear when they are trying not to scream. The customer was middle-aged, handsomely dressed, and drunk. He wanted to talk and he couldn't have stopped even if he hadn't really wanted to talk. He was polite and friendly and when I heard him he didn't seem to slur his words much, but you knew that he got up on the bottle and only let go of it when he fell asleep at night. He would be like that for the rest of his life and that was what his life was. You would never know how he got that way because even if he told you it would not be the truth. At the very best a distorted memory of the truth as he knew it. There is a sad man like that in every quiet bar in the world. (88)

The Long Goodbye explores alcoholism through the eyes of the wealthy. The novel's opening brings to mind images of the wild parties in Fitzgeralds's The Great Gatsby and shows Marlowe's humanity as he comes to the aid of a drunk man who is literally dumped by his girlfriend after

he confesses to being a pauper:

The first time I laid eyes on Terry Lennox he was drunk in a Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith outside the terrace of The Dancers. The parking lot attendant had brought the car out and he was still holding the door open because Terry Lennox's left foot was still dangling outside, as if he had forgotten he had one. . . .

There was a girl beside him. Her hair was a lovely shade of dark red and she had a distant smile on her lips and over her shoulders she had a blue mink that almost made the Rolls-Royce look like just another automobile. It didn't quite. Nothing can. . . .

The drunk promptly slid off the seat and landed on the blacktop on the seat of his pants. So I went over and dropped my nickel. I guess it's always a mistake to interfere with a drunk. Even if he knows and likes you he is always liable to haul off and poke you in the teeth. I got him under the arms and got him up on his feet.

"Thank you so very much," he said politely.

The girl slid under the wheel. "He gets so goddam English when he's loaded," she said in a stainless-steel voice. "Thanks for catching

him."

"I'll get him in the back of the car," I said.

"I'm terribly sorry. I'm late for an engagement." She let the clutch in and the Rolls started to glide. "He's just a lost dog," she added with a cool smile. "Perhaps you can find a home for him. He's housebroken--more or less."

And the Rolls ticked down the entrance driveway onto Sunset Boulevard, made a right turn, and was gone. . . . And I was still holding the man up and he was now sound asleep. (3-5)

Later in the novel Marlowe runs into Lennox again. He has obviously recovered from his hard times and has even reunited with his wealthy ex-wife. Marlowe skeptically questions the marriage, reminding Lennox that his wife had said she didn't like drunks. Lennox replies, "She meant drunks without money. With money they are just heavy drinkers. If they vomit in the lanai, that's for the butler to handle" (21).

Marlowe also encounters another drunk in the novel, Roger Wade. Wade is a famous novelist with a reputation as a violent drunk. Marlowe is brought on the case to protect Mrs. Wade after Roger throws her down the stairs in a drunken fit. While observing Wade and his wife at a cocktail party Marlowe reflects on the difference between

a social drinker and an alcoholic:

There's a big difference. A man who drinks too much on occasion is still the same man as he was sober. An alcoholic, a real alcoholic, is not the same man at all. You can't predict anything about him for sure except that he will be someone you never met before. (181)

Grafton, in "D" is for Deadbeat, approaches alcoholism from the other end of the economic scale. Her detective, Millhone, is hired by John Daggett, a chronic drunk, a wife beater, a polygamist, an ex-con, a man who killed five people, including two children in a drunk driving accident, and obviously the deadbeat referred to in the title, to deliver a \$25,000 check to a fifteen-year-old boy, Tony Gahan.

Tony's parents and little sister were among those killed in the accident, and Daggett is hoping to ease his conscience with the \$25,000, but no amount of money is going to compensate Tony for all he has lost. When Millhone meets Tony she finds him to be a bright young man plagued with migraines and unable to cope in a world that is unjust enough to so savagely take away a boy's family. Tony's not the only one whose life is destroyed by Daggett's alcoholism, two other families lost their loved ones in the accident. Billy and Coral Polokowski lost their

brother, and Wayne and Marilyn Smith lost their five-year-old daughter. The victims turn to suspects when Daggett turns up dead, and Millhone is certain one of them has murdered him.

Millhone's values are challenged as she thinks about the case:

Usually the morality of homicide seems clear to me. Whatever the shortcomings of the victim, murder is wrong and the penalties levied against the perpetrator had better be substantial to balance out the gravity of the crime. In this case, that seemed like a simplistic point of view. It was Daggett who had caused the world to tilt on its axis. Because of him, five people had died, so that his death, whatever the instrument, was swinging the planet upright again, restoring a moral order of sorts. (102)

The case proves unsettling to Millhone who is hired by Daggett's daughter Barbara to find her father's killer. While interviewing Marilyn Smith, the mother of the dead five-year-old, Millhone says that she is sorry to have to dredge up the memories of the fatal accident. Marilyn is thrilled at the news of Daggett's demise and understandingly bitter about her daughter's death. She responds that what is worse than losing a child is

"Knowing there's a man out there doing a few months in jail for 'vehicular manslaughter' when he murdered five people. Do you know how many times he got picked up for drunk driving before that accident? Fifteen. He paid a few fines. He got his hand smacked. . . ." She broke off, then changed her tone. "Oh hell. What difference does it make? Nothing changes anyway and it never ends." ("D" 100-101)

Daggett destroyed more lives with his alcoholism than just those affected by the accident. Grafton, whose mother and father both "suffered from alcoholism" (Current Biography 220) gives a brief commentary on how alcoholism affects the family, especially the aftermath alcoholism has on the grown children of alcoholics. She describes how alcoholism destroys families as his daughter Barbara confides to Millhone about the consequences of her father's alcoholism had on her life:

"I think of him every time I have a drink. I think of him if I decide not to have a drink. If I even meet a man who drinks or if I see a bum on the street or smell bourbon, his face is the first thing that comes to mind. Oh God, and if I'm around someone who's had too much, I can't stand it. I disconnect. My life is

filled with reminders of him. His apologies and his phony, wheedling charm, his boo-hooing when the booze got to him. The times he fell, the times he got put in jail, the times he spent every dime we had." ("D" 49)

Alcoholism, a deadly disease in itself, often exacerbates other family problems and results in domestic violence. Domestic violence, like alcoholism, affects all levels of society. Despite the fact that most people used to believe that domestic violence was just a problem of the poor and uneducated, current media attention, such as the O.J. Simpson trial, shows that domestic violence is not an isolated problem among the poor but also occurs among the rich and famous. Perhaps Chandler was ahead of his time by incorporating the Wades' story of domestic violence into The Long Goodbye. He shows that the wealthy, beautiful, and intellectual are not immune to the most horrible kind of violence. Domestic violence is perhaps the cruelest of all crimes. It is one thing to be mugged by a total stranger, but to be hurt and abused by someone who loves you has to be a far more devastating pain.

Grafton explores domestic violence in many of her books. In "D" is for Deadbeat, as Millhone questions Lovella, Daggett's common-law wife, the signs of abuse are obvious. As Millhone stares at Lovella's blackened

eyes and swollen lip, she asks, "Why don't you leave?" ("D" 16) as she tries to understand why a woman would stay with a man who beat her. Lovella replies, "Because he'd come after me is why . . . He'd kill me without giving it a second thought. Same thing if I called the cops. Talk back to that man and he'll punch your teeth down your throat" (16). Millhone tries to talk her into going to a women's shelter, but Lovella dismisses the idea. When Daggett turns up dead, Lovella is yet another suspect Millhone adds to her list.

In another novel, "L" is for Lawless, Grafton broaches the subject of domestic violence again. In this case Millhone has been hired to recover some stolen money. When she finds the culprit and the stolen money, she is unsettled by the circumstances of the theft. The thief, a young woman, stole the money so that she could run away from her abusive boyfriend. The woman tries to explain to Millhone why she took the money:

"I didn't have any choice. I've been to shelters for battered women. Twice, I've hidden out with friends. Somehow he always finds me and brings me back. Now he makes sure I don't get close to anyone. I have to account for my every minute. He won't let me work. He won't let me have a nickel of my own. When I saw this coming up,

I knew it was the only chance I'd ever have.
I thought if I just had money. If I just had
a way to get away from him. . . . " ("L" 182)

Millhone still unable to understand what draws women to abusive men, reflects that "Too many women mistake a man's hostility for wit and his silence for depth" ("L" 194).

Though the hard-boiled detective novel shows that many social issues like alcoholism and domestic violence transcend economic levels, it also shows that many of society's problems are caused by the inequality between the classes.

Both Chandler and Grafton give detailed descriptions of the homes of their wealthiest clients. They describe large mansions with rolling lawns tucked into the California hills. They describe the superfluous possessions that the well-to-do can not do without. Theirs is a world of beautiful people, in beautiful clothes, who drive beautiful cars and are waited on by chauffeurs, gardeners, maids, and butlers. However, in their descriptions of the wealthy they are clearly outsiders. George Grella explains that in the hard-boiled detective novel "The affluent are so often responsible for social problems that a quasi-Marxist distrust of the wealthy becomes a minor motif; the rich are merely gangsters who have managed to escape punishment"

("Murder" 419). Chandler's description of the wealthy support this theory. In his novels the rich are usually spoiled, rude, and corrupt, ranging from the superficial and shallow Vivian Regan and her psychotically self-absorbed sister Carmen Sternwood in The Big Sleep to the promiscuous kleptomaniac Mrs. Kingsley in The Lady in the Lake. The message is that the rich are not to be trusted because as one of Marlowe's friends, Bernie Ohls, says, "There ain't no clean way to make a hundred million bucks" (Goodbye 277).

Millhone is equally skeptical of the rich. This skepticism is often reflected in her sarcastic descriptions. In "I" is for Innocent she makes fun of the waste, extravagance and pettiness of the wealthy:

It's been my observation that the rich like to subdivide into the haves and the have-mores. What's the point in achieving status if you can't still be compared favorably with someone else in your peer group? Just because the wealthy band together doesn't mean they've relinquished their desire to be judged superior. (74)

Chandler and Grafton report the disparity that exists in American society by contrasting the posh California mansions with life on the streets. Marlowe describes the landscape as one of his cases takes him to a poor section

of the city:

They are all rooming houses now, their parquetry floors are scratched and worn through the once glossy finish and the wide sweeping staircases are dark with time and with cheap varnish laid on over generations of dirt. In the tall rooms haggard landladies bicker with shifty tenants. On the wide cool front porches, reaching their cracked shoes into the sun, and staring at nothing, sit the old men with faces like lost battles.

In and around the old houses there are flyblown restaurants and Italian fruitstands and cheap apartment houses and little candy stores where you can buy even nastier things than their candy. And there are ratty hotels where nobody except people named Smith and Jones sign the register and where the night clerk is half watchdog and half pander.

Out of the apartment houses come women who should be young but have faces like stale beer; men with pulled-down hats and quick eyes that look the street over behind the cupped hand that shields the match flame; worn intellectuals with cigarette coughs and no money in the bank; fly

cops with granite faces and unwavering eyes; cokies and coke peddlers; people who look like nothing in particular and know it, and once in a while even men that actually go to work. But they come out early, when the wide cracked sidewalks are empty and still have dew on them.

(High Window 70-71)

When an undercover assignment takes Millhone into LA gang territory, she reflects on the violence and the poverty of the streets:

Violence is a form of theater that only the disenfranchised can afford. Admission is cheap. The bill of fare is an ever-changing drama of life and death, drugs and stick-ups, drive-bys, retaliations, the fearfulness of mothers who look on in anguish from the sidelines. As often as not, it's the bystanders who fall prey to the spray of random bullets. ("H" 132).

Of course Millhone, powerless to change the state of the world, tries to disguise her somber mood with sarcasm as she comments on a group of Hispanics wearing hairnets: "Personally, I've never understood how wearing a hairnet ever came to symbolize the baddest of the bad asses on the street" ("H" 133).

Millhone describes the harsh realities of poverty

as one of her cases takes her to a seedy California bar while tailing a suspect:

There were no yuppies, no preppies, no slumming execs, no middle-class, white-bread college types. This was a hard-core pickup place for bikers and hamburger hookers, who'd screw anyone for a meal. Bar fights and knifings were taken as a matter of course, uniformed beat cops strolling through so often they were assumed to be customers. ("H" 53)

Prostitution and pornography are often routes that impoverished women choose to take to end poverty. In a world where women have yet to be considered equal and where they are often paid less for doing the same job, the lure of fast money makes prostitution and pornography viable choices that women make in order to break free of poverty.

In "K" is for Killer Millhone explores the dangerous world of prostitution while searching for a hooker's killer. She forms a close friendship with Danielle, a prostitute and friend of the murdered woman. Danielle tries to describe the lure of prostitution. She explains that money equals independence, and if you have money no guy can ever treat you badly (88). When Millhone tries to persuade her to find a less dangerous way to make a living, Danielle responds, "Your job is dangerous the same as mine,

with only half the pay" (89).

Millhone finds out that not only was Lorna, the murdered woman a prostitute she was also into pornography. Millhone expresses her opinion of pornography as she is forced to watch one of Lorna's movies while is looking for clues to her killer:

I do not take lightly the degradation of human beings, especially when it's done solely for the financial gain of others. I've heard it said that the pornography industry is larger than the record and the film industries combined, staggering sums of money changing hands in the name of sex. At least this video had little violence and no scenes involving children or animals of any kind. ("K" 22)

The police are at a dead end with the investigation and are not even sure that Lorna was murdered. Lt. Dolan the detective on the case, tries to explain the police department's position:

You know these little gals. The life they live is so damn dangerous. Night after night, connecting up with strangers. Get in a car and you have to be aware it might be the last ride you ever take. And they see us as the enemy. I don't know why they do it. They're not stupid.

("K" 74)

Millhone replies, "They're desperate" (74).

Images of the dead woman haunt Millhone. She compares pornography and homicide:

In some ways, it's hard to know which is more sordid, the pornography of sex or the pornography of homicide. Both speak of violence, the broken and debased, the humiliations to which we subject one another in the heat of passion. Some forms of sex are as cold-blooded as murder, some kinds of murder as titillating to the perpetrator as a sexual encounter." ("K" 77)

Politics and the bureaucracy of government are also topics of commentary in the hard-boiled detective novel. In The Long Goodbye Marlowe describes what it takes to get elected as he relates the story of career politician Sheriff Petersen:

Once in a while, come election time, some misguided politician would try to get Sheriff Petersen's job, and would be apt to call him things like The Guy With The Built-In Profile or The Ham That Smokes Itself, but it didn't get him anywhere. Sheriff Petersen just went right on getting re-elected, a living testimonial to the fact that you can hold an important public

office forever in our country with no qualifications for it but a clean nose, a photogenic face, and a closed mouth. If on top of that you look good on a horse, you are unbeatable. (268)

Bureaucratic hassles and government red tape are often the PI's worst enemy. While trying to follow the paper trail of a person suspected of insurance fraud, Millhone is thwarted by a civilian clerk at the county sheriff's department. One would think that since the goal of both Millhone and the Sheriff's department is to "catch the bad guys," the clerk would have been accommodating; however, the clerk, unwilling to help Millhone in her investigation, replies to Millhone's inquiries with the usual bureaucratic jargon: "We're not allowed to divulge that information. The Department of Justice has very strict guidelines" and "We can't give out that information" ("H" 30). Millhone decides that "It never pays to deal with the flyweights of the world. They take far too much pleasure in thwarting you at every turn" ("H" 30-31).

Discrimination is another social issue examined in detective fiction. The writers make it clear that it is shameful that in a country that was created on the concept of individual freedom so much time and effort has been wasted to prevent certain people from enjoying these

freedoms based on the color of their skin, ethnic background, gender, religion, economic status, or age.

Chandler addresses the problem of discrimination in his novel Farewell, My Lovely. Discrimination was far more blatant in Chandler's era than it is today. After Marlowe witnesses the murder of a black businessman, he is questioned by the police. Nulty, the policeman assigned the murder is complaining about being assigned such a degrading case: "Shines. Another shine killing. That's what I rate after eighteen years in this man's police department. No pix, no space, not even four lines in the want-ad section" (12). Later Marlowe is infuriated that the police have given up on looking for the murderer after just a few days. Marlowe says, "'Well, all he did was kill a Negro,' I said. 'I guess that's only a misdemeanor'" (99). Marlowe, disgusted by their apathy, decides to look for the killer on his own.

Occasionally, however, Chandler is guilty of reinforcing many of the stereotypes that lead to discrimination. Often his depiction of women is degrading and superficial. Many of his female characters are the two-dimensional, stereotypical damsel in distress, or else the conniving, manipulative woman who uses her charms to get men to do what she wants. But remember the era in which his works were written. Women, especially women

without money, were afforded few rights. As sexist as it might seem at times, Chandler's writing accurately depicts the treatment of women in the 1930s and 40s.

Despite many of the social reforms in the last half of the century, discrimination still exists today. Grafton, like Chandler, also examines discrimination in society by portraying an eclectic cast of characters, but most of her commentary is on the treatment of women. Grafton addresses discrimination by going against stereotypes and by using her sardonic wit as a weapon against the exploitation of women. In "D" is for Deadbeat Millhone comments on the uniform a cocktail waitress is wearing:

She was dressed like a boatswain except that her high-cut white pants were spandex and her buns hung out the back. I wondered how long uniforms like that would last if the night manager was required to squeeze his hairy fanny into one. (183)

Perhaps what makes Millhone's character so believable is that she realistically addresses the differences between the sexes and those limitations on her career as a private eye:

One of my old cohorts used to claim that men are the only suitable candidates for surveillance work because they can sit in a parked car and

pee discreetly into a tennis-ball can, thus avoiding unnecessary absences. I was losing interest in Marcia Threadgill and in truth, I had to pee like crazy, so I put the binoculars away and found the nearest service station.

. . . ("A" 26-27)

In "G" is for Gumshoe, Millhone is working on a missing persons case. When she finds the missing woman the client asks Millhone to "babysit" the old lady. Millhone agrees but thinks to herself:

What really bugged me was the suspicion that nobody would have even suggested that a boy detective do likewise. . . .Why does everybody assume women are so nurturing? My maternal instincts were extinguished by my Betsy Wetsy doll. Every time she peed in her little flannel didies, I could feel my temper climb. I quit feeding her and that cured it, but it did make me wonder, even at the age of six, how suited I was for motherhood. (61-62)

In "M" is for Malice Millhone almost lets the killer get away because she was blinded by the same sexist stereotypes that she complains about in others:

I tried to remember what I knew of her and realized just how little it was. She was

approaching forty. She was overweight. She made no effort to enhance her personal appearance. Given cultural standards, she'd made herself invisible. Ours is a society in which slimness and beauty are equated with status, where youth and charm are rewarded and remembered with admiration. Let a woman be drab or slightly overweight and the collective eye slides right by, forgetting afterward. Claire Maddison had achieved the ultimate disguise. . . . (294)

Grafton also uses the detective novel to break through the stereotypes of age discrimination. Most people think of the elderly much in the same way as Chandler describes the frail, wheelchair-bound General Sternwood in his classic The Big Sleep. Marlowe describes the General's frailty as he hires Marlowe to help him get rid of a blackmailer: "The General spoke again, slowly, using his strength as carefully as an out-of-work showgirl uses her last good pair of stockings" (10). In contrast one of Grafton's recurring characters is octogenarian Henry Pitts. Millhone says of Henry:

I never think of him as elderly, though he'd celebrated his eighty-second birthday on Valentine's Day, the week before. He's tall and lean, with a narrow face, and blue eyes the

color of gas jets. He's got a shock of soft white hair that he wears brushed to one side, good teeth (all his), a year-round tan. His overriding intelligence is tempered with warmth, and his curiosity hasn't diminished a whit with age. . . . If I had to find fault with him, I suppose I'd have to cite his gullibility, and a tendency to be passive when he ought to take a stand and fight. In some ways, I see myself as his protector, a notion that might amuse him, as he probably sees himself as mine. ("F" 10-11)

Perhaps Grafton's most liberating description of the elderly happens when Millhone and three others are being held at gun point by a violent thief. Helen, an elderly woman, seems to be mumbling and out of sorts and in her terror falls against the dining room table; however, the reader sees that her frailty is merely a ploy as she pulls a "twelve-gauge-side-by side shotgun with twenty-six inch barrels" from a rack underneath the kitchen table and shows the gunman who's boss ("L"266).

Society is a disappointment to the gumshoe. George Grella explains why the private-eye has to remain separate from the society it is trying to protect:

Though the detective is compelled to work in this chaotic and sinful society, he does not

share its values; instead, he is always in conflict with or in flight from civilization. He finds no fruitful human relationship possible; his condemnation or rejection of other human beings unites him with the alienated and the lost of American fiction--Ahab, Huck Finn, Nick Adams, Joe Christmas, Holden Caulfield. The private eye observes a moral wasteland and, with no "territory" to flee to (unlike Huck Finn), he retreats into himself. ("Murder" 419)

Chapter 3 -- Relationships

Except for cases that clearly involve a homicidal maniac, the police like to believe murders are committed by those we know and love, and most of the time they're right--a chilling thought when you sit down to dinner with a family of five. All those potential killers passing their plates. ("A" 6)

Millhone sarcastically comments on why she keeps her distance from people. Aside from the possible homicidal implications, Millhone and Marlowe are loners for many reasons. As Grella suggests, in their quest for the truth they must isolate themselves from society or risk being drawn into the corrupt society they are fighting. Charles Nicol writes that the "hard boiled dick is a loner by definition; he can be widowed, divorced, or simply abandoned, but he can't have a family--that would be too much of an investment for a shrewd investor to make in a worthless world" (64).

Not much is known of Marlowe's background. Though he is often searching for the wayward husband, a lost brother, or a missing wife, there is never any mention of Marlowe's own family.

Millhone like Marlowe has no family. Her parents

were killed in a freak car accident when she was five. She was raised by a maiden aunt who also has died. The closest thing to family she has is her landlord Henry Pitts. After her apartment is destroyed in a bomb blast, Millhone is forced to move in with Henry, and must reevaluate her independent lifestyle:

My parents had been killed in a car wreck when I was five. In the absence of real family, I'd simply done without. Now, apparently, old dependencies had surfaced. I knew what that meant. This man was eighty-two. Who knew how long he'd live? Just about the time I let myself get attached to him, he'd drop dead. Ha, ha, the jokes on you, again. ("F" 14)

Millhone begins to feel smothered by Henry's attention and concern. She is irate when he says to her,

You need a keeper. I've said so for months. You don't have a clue how to take care of yourself. You eat junk. Get beat up. Place gets blown to bits. I told you to get a dog, but you refuse. So now you got me, and if you ask me, it serves you right. ("F" 14)

She is saved from Henry's dotting care when her current case takes her out of town and gives her the space she craves. In "F" is for Fugitive a father hires Millhone

to find his fugitive son who has been accused of murder. While searching for the son, Millhone is exposed to a family rife with unhappiness and dysfunction. She tries to understand the family's problems and comments,

To have a son accused of murder is the same as being accused of a crime oneself--parental failure of the direst sort. Unfair though it may be, there is always that unspoken question: What did these people do to turn this once innocent child into a cold-blooded killer of another human being? ("F" 75-76)

In the end the killer turns out to be the family's daughter, Ann, and not the son. In her article "The Feminist Counter-Tradition in Crime: Cross, Grafton, Paretsky, and Wilson," Maureen Reddy explores how societal institutions, such as the family, are oppressive and damaging because of the unrealistic expectations that they put on women. She explains the devastating effects of these expectations as the cause of Ann's murdering spree in "F" is for Fugitive:

Grafton's criminal is also a victim: a daughter in a family that, like the wider society, most values sons and a plain woman in a world in which pleasing men is the crucial test of femininity and the surest road to social success. (179)

Ann ends up killing three women, lets her brother take the blame for the first murder, and plans on killing Millhone to cover up the discovery, all so that she can "possess the man she desires" (179). Reddy explains that this need for approval by men stems from an unsuccessful relationship with her father. She says Grafton's novel

suggests that being an unrewarded good daughter and an ordinary "old maid" literally made Ann crazy. By accepting dominant social values instead of recognizing their falseness and repudiating them, Ann colludes in her own victimization, with this collusion graphically represented at the novel's end when Ann, struggling with her father for a gun, actually shoots off her own foot. Ann blames her father for her crimes--"You were never there for me. . . .you were never there." (179-180)

By the novel's end Millhone comes to see how precious her friendship with Henry is and begins to re-think her relationship with him: "He may be the closest thing to a father I'll ever have. . . . I think I'll enjoy him for the time we have left, whatever that may be. He's only eighty-two, and God knows, my life is more hazardous than his" (261).

In the tenth novel of the series "J" is for Judgement,

Millhone finds out that she does have relatives on her mother's side of the family. As it turns out, her mother was estranged from her family with the exception of her sister who raised Millhone after her death, because her parents had not approved of her husband. Millhone is stunned by the news that she is not an orphan after all: "I could see in a flash what a strange pleasure I'd taken in being related to no one. . . . I regarded myself an outsider, a loner, which suited me to perfection" ("J" 142). One would think that Millhone would be thrilled to discover that she was not alone in the world, but the private-eye prides herself on her independence. For her, like Marlowe, being a loner is very much a part of her identity, and she is unsettled at the prospect of belonging to a family:

I'd suddenly gained an entire family, cause for rejoicing if you happen to believe the ladies' magazines. In reality, I felt as if someone had just stolen everything I held dear, a common theme in all the books you read on burglary and theft. ("J" 174)

Millhone shows the vulnerability that comes when you let yourself get close to people even if they are family:

Since my aunt's death some ten years ago, I'd made my peace with my solitary state.

I'd learned about my "long-lost" relatives in the course of an investigation the year before, and so far, I'd managed to keep them at arm's length. Just because they wanted a relationship didn't obligate me. I'll admit I might have been a little crabby on the subject, but I couldn't help myself. I'm thirty-five years old and my orphanhood suits me. Besides, when you're "adopted" at my age, how do you know they won't become disillusioned and reject you again? ("L" 27)

She continues this struggle with family as she turns down an offer of Thanksgiving with her new-found family:

"I have no experience with family, so it's not anything I miss. . . .I hope this doesn't sound rude, but we've done all right without each other so far. . . .I'm not into groups and I'm not all that crazy about being pushed," I said. . . ."Frankly, at this point, I prefer my independence."

"That's bullshit. I don't believe you. We'd all like to think we're independent, but no one lives in isolation. This is family. You can't repudiate kinship. It's a fact of life. You're one of us whether you like it or not."

"Tasha, let's just put it out there as long as we're at it. There aren't going to be any warm, gooey family scenes. It's not in the cards. We're not going to gather around the piano for any old-fashioned sing-alongs." ("L" 29)

Her cousin Tasha tries to get her to understand how sorry the family is for her grandmother's estrangement but that it is time to move on and get passed it. Millhone responds, "Except that I've been marked for life and I've got two dead marriages to prove it. I'm willing to accept that. What I'm not willing to do is smooth it all over just to make her feel good" ("L" 31).

Her loner life-style does not just apply to family relationships but romantic ones as well. She explains, "I like being alone and I suspect my independence suits me better than it should" ("C" 1). She compares her modern ideas of independence and self-sufficiency with Sufi, a single, middle-aged woman that she meets in "C" is for Corpse. When Millhone goes to question Sufi at her house, she is shocked by the run-down appearance of the house:

From the look of it, Sufi's was still a single-family dwelling, but it had a shabby air. Maybe, like many single women her age, she'd reached that point where the absence of a man translates out to dripping faucets and rain

gutters in need of repair. A single woman my age would haul out a crescent wrench or shinny up the down spout, feeling that odd joyousness that comes with self-sufficiency. (143-144)

Despite her modern, feminist attitude, occasionally she doubts her independent life-style. She says,

Being single can be confusing. On the one hand, you sometimes yearn for the simple comfort of companionship; someone to discuss your day with, someone with whom you can celebrate a raise or tax refund, someone who'll commiserate when you're down with a cold. On the other hand, once you get used to being alone (in other words, having everything your way), you have to wonder why you'd ever take on the aggravation of a relationship. ("M" 42)

For Millhone, like Marlowe, her profession has exposed her to the dark side of human nature. With her usual sardonic wit, she tries to explain how love so easily turns to murder. She says:

Murders are, so often, domestic affairs. Alcohol is a factor in more than sixty percent. Thirty percent of the weapons in these murders are knives, which, after all, antedate gunpowder and don't have to be registered. As a matter

of convenience, the kitchen is a favored location for crimes of passion these days. You can sit there with your loved ones, grabbing beers out of the fridge, adding ice to your Scotch. Once your spouse makes a smart remark, the stakes can escalate until you reach for the knife rack and win the argument. ("G" 242)

Marlowe has also seen the dark side of love. In The Big Sleep, Carmen Sternwood's obsession with Rusty Regan turns fatal after he rejects her advances. Marlowe explains to her sister that Carmen tried to kill him for the same reason:

Night before last when I got home she was in my apartment. She'd kidded the manager into letting her in to wait for me. She was in my bed--naked. I threw her out on her ear. I guess maybe Regan did the same thing to her some time. But you can't do that to Carmen. (187)

Similarly, in The Lady in the Lake Marlowe finds the body of a dead women in a mountain lake. In discussing the case with the local law, they speculate as to whether it was a murder or a suicide. The woman's husband had had an affair, and Marlowe contemplates the idea that maybe the woman killed herself but tried to make it look like a murder to frame her unfaithful husband. Patton, the

local cop, is skeptical saying, "Killing yourself and fixing things so as somebody else would get accused of murdering you don't fit in with my simple ideas of human nature at all" (81). Marlowe, who has had more experience with the darker side of life replies "Then your ideas of human nature are too simple. . . . Because it has been done, and when it has been done, it has nearly always been done by a woman" (81).

In the first novel of Grafton's series, "A" is for Alibi, Millhone meets Charlie Scorsoni a lawyer peripherally related to a case and allows him to get a little too close. When she and Charlie get in a fight he asks her if she's ever heard of compromise in a relationship. She replies, "That's when you give away half the things you want. That's when you give the other guy half of what's rightfully yours. I've done that lots of times. It sucks" ("A" 176). With two divorces behind her, Millhone is reluctant to let men into her life. When she tries to end the relationship, he accuses her of using her investigation to keep him at arms length. After he leaves she thinks to herself:

This was not good, not cool. As a rule, I scrupulously avoid personal contact with anyone connected with a case. My sexual wrangling with Charlie was foolish, unprofessional, and in theory, possibly dangerous. In some little

nagging part of my head, it didn't feel right to me. . . . (177)

She goes on to analyze her behavior wondering if Charlie is right. Was she deliberately "sidestepping intimacy" and relegating "him to the role of 'possible suspect' in order to justify . . . [her] reluctance to take a risk?" (178). In the end she was right to trust her private eye instincts. She discovers that Charlie has murdered three women and is well on his way to murdering Millhone as he chases her down a deserted beach. Millhone is forced to hide in a garbage dumpster. As he lifts the lid to her hiding place, she sees a butcher knife with a ten-inch blade in his right hand. Unable to play the role of victim, Millhone blows him away (214).

In his article "'Reader, I Blew Him Away': Convention and Transgression in Sue Grafton," Peter J. Rabinowitz says of the last page of the novel, which is "on a separate page, in different typography--a brief and reflective Chandlerian coda, [is] where she recognizes her solitude and the fact that she can trust no one but herself" (327).

Similarly, Marlowe has let infatuation cloud his judgement. He also has been known to get involved with women related to a case such as Mrs. Grayle the oversexed client in Farewell, My Lovely. Marlowe was not thinking when he fell into her arms and was especially disgusted

with his behavior when Mrs. Grayle's elderly husband walked in on them. He says of his indiscretion, "I felt nasty, as if I had picked a poor man's pocket" (Farewell 114). Marlowe does not learn his lesson because in The Long Goodbye, he becomes attracted to Eileen Wade, the woman he is asked to protect from her drunken husband. Marlowe gets too close to Mrs. Wade and ultimately becomes a suspect when Mr. Wade unexpectedly dies.

Aside from the perils of their profession, Marlowe and Millhone comment on the average day-to-day problems that people face when they get involved in relationships. Millhone is reminded of her reckless, younger days when she wakes up in an unfamiliar hotel while on a case:

In the crazy days of my youth, before herpes and AIDS, I used to wake up occasionally in rooms like this one. There's a certain horror when you can't quite remember who's whistling so merrily behind the bathroom door. Often, when I found out, I couldn't help but question my taste in male companionship. It didn't take long to see morality as the quickest way to avoid self-loathing. ("L" 228)

Love and sex seem to be mysteries that she can not solve. Millhone says, "I'm always startled at what fools men and women make of themselves in the pursuit of sex"

("C" 62). She is skeptical of the ploys women use to catch a man. Her friend Vera offers the clueless Kinsey advice about men and sex. She says, "Never go to bed with a guy after a big meal. Your stomach will pooch out" ("G" 146). Millhone sagaciously replies "Why would I go to bed with a guy I can't have a big meal with first?" (146).

While working on a case Millhone meets Shana Timberlake, a woman grieving the death of her daughter whose only refuge seems to be in the arms of a man. Millhone says, "I've known women like that, who use their troubles as a reason to get laid, as if sex were a balm with healing properties" ("F" 65). Later she meets up with Shana Timberlake again. Millhone tired of Timberlake's self-pitying, self-destructive behavior, says,

Let's put it this way, Mrs. Timberlake. If I had a kid and somebody'd killed her, I wouldn't be drunk in the middle of the day. I'd be out pulling this town apart until I found out who did it. And then I'd manufacture some justice of my own if that's what it took. ("F" 107)

Marlowe is equally cynical about sex and relationships with women. The morning after Marlowe sends an offended Carmen Sternwood on her way he says, "You can have a hangover from other things than alcohol. I had one from women. Women made me sick" (Big Sleep 191). Perhaps

Marlowe is responsible for attracting this jaded type of woman. He has ample opportunity to be with a respectable woman in Farewell, My Lovely when he meets Anne Riordan. Anne, the daughter of a cop, is bright, witty, and beautiful. Marlowe recognizes her attributes when he says, "There's a nice girl. . . for a guy that's interested in a nice girl. . . . But I'm not" (117). He chooses the hard, cold woman in an effort to avoid commitment. Later when Randall, a cop working with Marlowe, comments that Anne has been helping on the case because she likes Marlowe, he responds,

"She's a nice girl. Not my type."

"You don't like them nice?"

". . . I like smooth shiny girls, hardboiled and loaded with sin."

"They take you to the cleaners," Randall said indifferently. (166).

Marlowe's cynicism about marriage shows when he and Randall are questioning the local busy body. She scolds Marlowe for being flip: "This here young man [Randall] don't seem to have no trouble keepin' his mouth in place." Marlowe sarcastically replies, "He's married. . . .He's had practice" (174). However, at the end of Playback, Chandler's last complete novel, Marlowe, disenchanted with his life and disgusted with the decline of civilization,

looks as if he is going to marry heiress Linda Loring.

Millhone too finds love, but hers is never long lasting. While listening to some old Johnny Mathis tunes with her friend Jonah, Millhone comments on how things have changed and how nothing is as simple as it used to be:

the lyrics suggested an era when falling in love wasn't complicated by herpes, fear of AIDS, multiple marriages, spousal support, feminism, the sexual revolution, the Bomb, the Pill, approval of one's therapist, or the specter of children on alternate weekends. ("D" 183-184)

In a moment of melancholy, Millhone explains, "The hard part about love is the hole it leaves when it's gone. . . which is the substance of every-country-and-western song you ever heard. . . " ("H" 19).

Chapter 4 -- The State of Justice

"The law isn't justice. It's a very imperfect mechanism. If you press exactly the right buttons and are also lucky, justice may show up in the answer'" (Goodbye 56).

No commentary on the state of society would be complete without exploring the system designed to protect it. The hard-boiled detective novel is an excellent medium for examining the state of justice, because the nature of the private-eye's work gives him a firsthand account of the inner-workings of the justice system, from the police, to the courts, to the criminals and their victims. Jeffrey H. Mahan explains in "The Hard-Boiled Detective in the Fallen World" that the hard-boiled detective is an outsider "who reveals the corruption of the world he inhabits" (93). Mahan believes it "is this alienation which allows him [the detective] to see what others hide from themselves" (93).

The private-eye is witness to the atrocities of the world, as he tries to understand the motivations that lead one person to take the life of another. Chandler in his famous essay "The Simple Art of Murder" describes the genesis of organized crime in America and shows how the

hard-boiled detective novel realistically reflects the world that he sees. Chandler contends that the world is not fair, not just, and that the motivations for crime are not always clear:

The realist in murder writes of a world in which gangsters can rule nations and almost rule cities, in which hotels and apartment houses and celebrated restaurants are owned by men who made their money out of brothels, in which a screen star can be the fingerman for a mob, and the nice man down the hall is a boss of the numbers racket; a world where a judge with a cellar full of bootleg liquor can send a man to jail for having a pint in his pocket, where the mayor of your town may have condoned murder as an instrument of money-making, where no man can walk down a dark street in safety because law and order are things we talk about but refrain from practising [sic]; a world where you may witness a hold-up in broad daylight and see who did it, but you will fade quickly back into the crowd rather than tell anyone, because the hold-up men may have friends with long guns, or the police may not like your testimony, and in any case the shyster for the defense will

be allowed to abuse and vilify you in open court, before a jury of selected morons, without any but the most perfunctory interference from a political judge.

It is not a very fragrant world, but it is the world you live in, and certain writers with tough minds and a cool spirit of detachment can make very interesting and even amusing patterns out of it. It is not funny that a man should be killed, but it is sometimes funny that he should be killed for so little, and that his death should be the coin of what we call civilization. (397-398)

Crime and corruption are as prevalent in Grafton's world as they are in Chandler's. Both writers explore the darker side of human motivations. Theirs is a world that is governed by greed, perverted by power, jaundiced with jealousy, and rabid with revenge.

The evils of greed, power, and jealousy are common themes in Chandler and Grafton's works and are often the motivations for murder. Helen Grayle murders two people to hide her past from her wealthy husband in Chandler's Farewell, My Lovely, and in The Little Sister Orfamay Quest is not beneath blackmailing her own sister to score some cash. In Grafton's "B" is for Burglar, Marty Grimes

is so jealous of her wealthy neighbor, Elaine Boldt, that she concocts an elaborate scheme to murder Elaine. She invites Elaine over to her house, bludgeons her to death with a board, sets the house on fire, and makes it look as if Marty has been the victim of random violence. Meanwhile the police are trying to find Marty's killer, as she assumes Elaine's identity and leaves town. In "I" is for Innocent wealthy Isabelle Barney is murdered the day after Christmas as her soon-to-be ex-husband fires a .38-caliber at her as she looks "through the peephole in her front door" (17). In "M" is for Malice it appears as if Guy Malek has been murdered to keep him from sharing an inheritance with his estranged brothers.

Aside from greed and the struggle for power, murder is often committed out of revenge. In Chandler's The Big Sleep Carmen Sternwood murders Rusty Regan because he has humiliated her by turning down her advances. Eileen Wade murders her unfaithful husband and his mistress in The Long Goodbye. In Grafton's "D" is for Deadbeat Tony Gahan dressed as a woman, lures John Daggett out in a boat, gets him liquored up, and tosses him overboard to avenge his family's death.

Often times it is the bad guy who has been put away seeking revenge against those who put him there. Jack Clemson, a Public Defender points to a stack of mail on

his desk and asks Millhone,

"Know what that is? Hate mail. Some guy got put away twenty-two years ago when I was a PD. He writes me every year from jail like it's something I did to him. Jesus. When I was in the AG's office, the AG did a survey of prisoners as to who they blamed for their conviction-- you know, 'why are you in prison and whose fault is it?' Nobody ever says, 'it's my fault . . .for being a jerk.' The number-one guy who gets blamed is their own lawyer. 'If I'da had a real lawyer instead of a PD, I'da got off.'" ("F" 151)

Millhone experiences this type of retaliation in "G" is for Gumshoe when a contract is put out on her life. It seems an ex-con she helped put away is out for revenge. The price is a mere \$1,500. Millhone comments on the frailty of human life:

In the movies, hit men are paid fifty to a hundred thou, possibly because an audience wants to believe human life is worth that. I suppose I should have been flattered I was included in the deal. A public defender, a DA, and a judge? Distinguished company for a small-town private eye like me. (17)

In "M" is for Malice Grafton shows that taking the law into your own hands is not the answer. When Claire Maddison gets hired as a nurse for the Malek family, she already has murder on her mind. She is going to kill the man who stole from her family, got her sister pregnant resulting in a fatal abortion, and ultimately drove her mother mad; unfortunately, she kills the wrong man. As for the career criminal who doesn't fall into the usual pattern of motivation, Millhone says, "Repeat offenders are motivated more by withdrawal symptoms than necessity" ("H" 65).

But why does the private-eye go on, when more death, violence, and corruption lay ahead? Millhone, while looking at the autopsy photos of Isabelle Barney admits, "It's hard to have faith in your fellow man when you're forced to look at some of his handiwork" ("I" 18). However, she feels she has a duty, a responsibility to find the truth. She says, "The victims of unsolved homicides I think of as the unruly dead: persons who reside in a limbo of their own, some state between life and death, restless, dissatisfied longing for release" ("K" 1-2). She asserts, "the dead are defenseless, and somebody in this world has to look out for them" ("D" 48).

Like Marlowe, Millhone is driven to find the truth, to try to make sense of it all. She observes, "I work

best when I'm armed with an unflinching view of reality, but the detachment is not without its dangers. Unplug yourself often and you risk losing touch with your feelings altogether" ("I" 18). She concedes that sometimes it is difficult knowing who to trust, but she is driven to find the truth. She asserts,

I've met killers--soft-spoken, pleasant, and courteous--whose psychological denial is so profound that their perpetration of a killing seems inconceivable. The dead are mute, but the living still have voice with which to protest their innocence. ("I" 18)

In the hard-boiled detective novel, the private-eye has a tumultuous relationship with the police. Though they both seem to be working toward the same end, restoring justice to society, there is often a lot of friction between the police and the private-eye. Private-eyes usually have a good understanding of police procedure because they often began their career working for the police; however, as Mahan explains, the detective feels impeded by the bureaucratic nature of the police and by the corruption that often exists in government agencies. Mahan writes,

The contrast between the independence of the hero and the limitations of the police is a convention of hard-boiled fiction. Commonly

the hard-boiled detective has been a policeman who has since left the force or been fired. Marlowe, for instance, worked for the district attorney [Millhone, for the police]. This amplifies the hard-boiled detective's moral independence. The legal system's limits, inadequacies and corruptions interfere with his search for a personal purity and a piece of justice, so that when we come to know him the hard-boiled detective has already left the force.

(93)

George Grella confirms this. He believes "The detective must work outside the law since its representatives demonstrate the decay of order. He works alone because he cannot compromise as the official detectives must; his faith lies in his own values" ("Murder" 419). It is because of the private-eye's high moral character that he can be relied on to give an accurate commentary on the state of justice.

Common themes in Chandler and Grafton's work include the bureaucracies that impede law enforcement officials and the legalities that keep criminals on the streets. They are impartial as they describe the good cops and lawyers as well as the bad. While working on a case Millhone says, "I'm the only person I know who doesn't

express routine contempt for all lawyers in the world. Just for the record, I like cops, too: anyone who stands between me and anarchy" ("J" 2). Later in her investigation she says, "The nice thing about cops--once they decide you're okay, there's nobody more generous" ("J" 134). Though Marlowe's relationship with the police is much more antagonistic, even he can find a nice word to say: "That's the trouble with cops. You're all set to hate their guts and then you meet one that goes human on you" (Goodbye 43).

Unfortunately, their commentary would not be complete without looking at the darker side of the justice system. Mahan writes,

In the beginning the detective finds corruption in the places one expects to find it, among the gangsters and petty criminals who prey on society. As the story progresses, the detective is forced to see that the problem is not simply a few bad people but the nature of the world. As he digs deeper, the corruption becomes more broadly based. The limitations of the police are seen, and then we may find that the police and the courts are corrupt. (95)

In The Long Goodbye Marlowe, convinced of Terry Lennox's innocence, goes to jail rather than betray his

friend who is suspected of murdering his wife. The police, unable to get Marlowe to cooperate, resort to violence.

He explains,

The homicide skipper that year was a Captain Gregorius, a type of copper that is getting rarer but by no means extinct, the kind that solves crimes with the bright light, the soft sap, the kick to the kidneys, the knee to the groin, the fist to the solar plexus, the night stick to the base of the spine. Six months later he was indicted for perjury before a grand jury, booted without trial, and later stamped to death by a big stallion on his ranch in Wyoming.

Right now I was his raw meat." (Goodbye 44)

For the naive reader this scene seems implausible. After all this is America. These things do not happen here. How can those who are supposed to serve and protect be capable of such violence? Unfortunately, Chandler's narrative mirrors police corruption that was prevalent in the 1940s and continues to reflect the corruption and brutality still making headlines today. For Marlowe his loyalty to his friend is worth any price. He takes Gregorius's abuse but says,

"No man likes to betray a friend but I wouldn't betray an enemy into your hands. . . You're an

incompetent. You don't know how to operate a simple investigation. I was balanced on a knife edge and you could have swung me either way. But you had to abuse me, throw coffee in my face, and use your fists on me when I was in a spot where all I could do was take it. From now on I wouldn't tell you the time by the clock on you own wall." (Goodbye 48)

When Gregorius calls Marlowe a cop-hater, he replies, "There are places where cops are not hated, Captain. But in those places you wouldn't be a cop" (Goodbye 48). In The High Window Marlowe, uncertain of the police department's loyalties, refuses to cooperate in a murder investigation. He says, "Until you guys own your own souls you don't own mine. . . Until you guys can be trusted every time. . .to seek the truth out. . . I have a right to listen to my own conscience" (120).

In "L" is for Lawless Ray describes what happened when he and his friend Johnny got picked up after a bank robbery back in the 1940s:

"The cops beat the shit out of him, trying to find out where he'd hidden the take, but he never would say. Ended up he confessed to the crime, but he never told anyone what happened to the money. The irony was, it was the cops; beating

a confession out of him that got his conviction thrown out." ("L" 178)

In Farewell, My Lovely Chandler tries to help the reader understand what makes a cop go crooked as Galbraith, a bad cop, tries to explain to Marlowe how he got that way: "Cops don't go crooked for money. Not always, not even often. They get caught in the system. . . .I got a wife and two kids and I do what the big shots say" (196). He goes on to say, "A guy can't stay honest if he wants to. . . . You gotta play the game dirty or you don't eat" (196).

In "H" is for Homicide Millhone runs into her childhood friend Jimmy Tate. She has heard rumors of Jimmy being suspended for skimming cash, and she tries to understand how a good cop could go bad. She says,

He was the kind of officer you wanted next to you any time there was trouble. In a pinch, he was absolutely fearless, oblivious of danger. . . .he was as dangerous as "they" were--the bank robbers, the dopers, gang members, snipers, all the lunatics who had it in for us law-and-order types. . . . I gathered he did things you didn't talk about later--things you pretended you hadn't seen because he saved your life and you owed him. ("H" 60)

During the course of an undercover investigation Millhone confronts Tate about the rumors. Tate tries to make her see that it was not something that he planned, that he just got swept along by circumstance. He rationalizes,

"I didn't cheat little old ladies out of their Social Security checks. These were fuckin' coke dealers--human garbage. The worst. The money wasn't even legal. . . . You have any idea what it's like to make a bust like that? You could have two hundred thousand--hell, half a million dollars--layin' on the table in these nice neat stacks. . . .It doesn't even seem real. It's like funny money. Props. . . .By the time it gets booked in, there's twenty thousand less. Who knows where it went? Who even gives a shit?"

("H" 69)

As part of her undercover assignment, Millhone reluctantly becomes a member of a gang running insurance fraud scams. As part of the scam, Millhone joins the gang in setting up accidents with unknowing marks. Millhone sees for herself how easy it is to get wrapped up in the crime and corruption when she sees how simple it is to make a profit:

What troubled me, aside from the fact that I

was whipping the hell out of my neck, was a worrisome little shift in my attitude. What idiots, I thought. People deserve anything that happens to them. I was beginning to believe it was all the mark's fault for being gullible and stupid, for not recognizing the game in progress, for being foolish enough to take our assurances at face value. I could feel that secret sense of superiority every con artist must have when the bait goes down and the victim snaps it up. Mentally, I had to shake myself off, though I suppose it never hurts to be reminded that none of us are that far away from larceny. ("H" 206)

Though most of Chandler's works take a hard stance in their depiction of law enforcement agents, in The Little Sister he allows the law give its side of the story as French, a homicide detective, responds to accusations of police corruption:

"We're coppers and everybody hates our guts. And as if we didn't have enough trouble, we have to have you. As if we didn't get pushed around enough by the guys in the corner offices, the City Hall gang, the day chief, the night chief, the Chamber of Commerce, His Honor the Mayor

in his paneled office four times as big as the three lousy rooms the whole homicide staff has to work out of. As if we didn't have to handle one hundred and fourteen homicides last year out of three rooms that don't have enough chairs for the whole duty squad to sit down in at once. We spend our lives turning over dirty underwear and sniffing rotten teeth. We go up dark stairways to get a gun punk with a skinful of hop and sometimes we don't get all the way up, and our wives wait dinner that night and all the other nights. We don't come home any more. And nights we do come home, we come home so goddam tired we can't eat or sleep or even read the lies the papers print about us. So we lie awake in the dark in a cheap house on a cheap street and listen to the drunks down the block having fun. And just about the time we drop off the phone rings and we get up and start all over again. Nothing we do is ever right, not ever. Not once. If we get a confession, we beat it out of the guy, they say, and some shyster calls us Gestapo in court and sneers at us when we muddle our grammar. If we make a mistake they put us back in uniform

on Skid Row and we spend the nice cool summer evenings picking drunks out of the gutter and being yelled at by whores and taking knives away from greaseballs in zoot suits. But all that ain't enough to make us entirely happy. We got to have you." (211-212)

The private-eye in the hard-boiled detective novel is on a quest for truth. He reports on his experience and provides an accurate commentary of society, human relationships, and the state of justice. He is a reliable narrator because he is governed by his own moral code, a code of honor, integrity, and loyalty above all else. The conventions of the hard-boiled detective novel such as the tough colloquial language, first-person narrative, page-turning action, violence, and cynical humor give authenticity to his report. He tells a dark story of a violent and corrupt world, yet he continues his search hoping that in his quest for truth evil will be eradicated and justice restored.

Notes

¹ For more on the hard-boiled detective novel and the American literary tradition, see Robert Brown Parker's dissertation: The Violent Hero, Wilderness Heritage and Urban Reality: A Study of the Private Eye in the Novels of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Ross MacDonald.

² Grafton was chosen rather than any of the other female detective fiction writers, such as Paretsky, Barnes or Cross, because she more closely embodies the tradition of Chandler in her series chronicling the exploits of the sarcastic loner, Kinsey Millhone, and because both authors have chosen California as the diverse and eclectic setting for their works.

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