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The image of women in Robert B. Parker's Spenser novels

Harper, Donna Waller, D.A.

Middle Tennessee State University, 1992

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**300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106**

The Image of Women in Robert B. Parker's Spenser Novels

Donna Waller Harper

**A dissertation presented to the
Graduate Faculty of Middle Tennessee State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctorate of Arts**

December 1992


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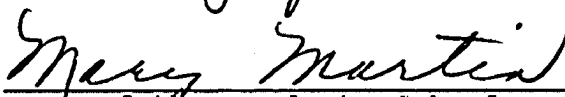
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Abstract

The Image of Women in Robert B. Parker's Spenser Novels

Donna Waller Harper

The hard-boiled mystery novel of the 1940s set a standard by which mystery novels were to be judged for years to come, but the advent of the women's movement in the 1960s caused a different perspective to be used for the judgment of women's roles. In the early hard-boiled mystery novels of writers like Dashiell Hammett, Mickey Spillane, and Erle Stanley Gardner, the treatment of women was very stereotypical; female characters fell into the dichotomy of either the good girl or the bad girl. After the advent of the women's liberation movement, the portrayal of women in the hard-boiled mystery changed substantially. Writers like Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald began portrayals of women which produced multi-dimensional characters.

These changes wrought by writers like Chandler and Macdonald paved the way for the writing of Robert B. Parker. Parker in his Spenser series has come to depend on the characterization of women. Parker's portrayal covers the female from her role as housewife and mother to her role as prostitute and pawn of the male society in which she lives. Parker was also one of the first mystery writers to create a long-term relationship for his detective. The advances made by Parker made possible the work of other writers and seemed consistent with the sympathetic portrayal of women as

Donna Waller Harper

evidenced by writers of the female hard-boiled mystery novel.

Parker's portrayal of his female characters is a steady progressive move from the writings of the early hard-boiled writers, but his portrayals mirror the writings of contemporaries like Ed McBain and John D. MacDonald. The sympathetic, multi-dimensional portrayal of women also mirrors the move of women from the home place of the 1940s and 1950s to the workplace and universities of the 1970s on.

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I wish also to thank my supervisors in the Metropolitan-Nashville School System. Dr. Riley Elliott and Mr. Charlie Pope were always supportive and helpful in arranging my class. Thanks to Alan Kaplan and Lenore Crutchfield who listened to endless conversations about the research and who offered advice and support.

Most of all, I would like to thank my parents, Gene and Louise Waller, who taught me the value of an education and who encouraged my reading of mysteries. This project would not have been possible without the love and patience of my children, Kimberly and Jacob, who sacrificed vacations and other family projects so that I could become Dr. Mom.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
I. The Critics Have Said	1
II. An Overview of Detectives and Their Women . .	14
III. Predecessors of Parker	42
IV. Spenser's Clients	72
V. Spenser's Love Life	122
VI. Parker's Contemporaries	161
VII. Mysteries and Women	195
Works Cited	203

Chapter I

The Critics Have Said

In general, readers of mystery fiction give little thought as to why they look to mystery fiction. Some of the readers are looking for plot and an opportunity to pit their minds with the detective in solving the murder. Some read the novels for the purpose of soaking the local color of the English parlor mystery or the local color of the gritty hard-boiled American mystery. A true aficionado may read all types of mysteries indiscriminately in an effort to enjoy the genre. The mystery has expanded as a genre so that now readers and critics alike may be hard-pressed as to how the genre should be classified. Readers may have to search under the guise of suspense, thrillers, mysteries, or detective fiction.

Book stores have been forced to expand their selections of mystery novels from half-shelves to double, sometimes triple the space. Academic conferences which include attention to the mystery genre abound at virtually every popular culture conference which features sessions devoted entirely to detective fiction, and many go as far as to have sessions devoted to particular authors or particular themes of the genre. Courses have sprung up in the colleges and universities on detective fiction.

Keeping pace with the interests in mystery fiction is the work of the critics. The subject of mystery fiction has become a popular subject for critics and critical studies. One of the earliest works to be devoted to the subject of the genre was the work of Willard Huntington Wright (aka. S. S. Van Dine), who wrote The Great Detective Stories: A Chronological Anthology (1928). In the course of this text, Wright made an appeal that readers and critics of the mystery should not analyze the genre by the same standards that are used for other literature (6). Wright went on to say that setting is important to the story (7). Wright's work is not a scholarly study of the genre, but he does analyze--superficially--the reasons for the success of mystery stories.

Prior to the influx of work in the genre, Wilbur M. Frohock published his The Novel of Violence in America: 1920-1950 (1950). Ostensibly, Frohock is analyzing the works of Erskine Caldwell, William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, and Ernest Hemingway, but he does look at the works of James M. Cain. Cain's work seems superficially to be mystery or suspense, and both his Double Indemnity and The Postman Always Rings Twice have been brought to the silver screen. Frohock's point seems to be that violence as a powerful, sustained emotion may be a course of action taken by even a decent human being (203). Frohock's work has a minimal use to the study of the genre of mystery.

Of more importance to the readers and writers of mystery fiction is the work of David Madden who edited Tough Guy Writers of the Thirties (1968). This text included critical analyses of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. In his introduction to the text, Madden argued that the 1930s were a time of surface restlessness which allowed writers to exaggerate the real traits in American character (xxvi). Madden also suggested that the dream of the 1920s became the nightmare of the 1930s (xvii). Writers like Robert Edenbaum, Irving Malin, and Herbert Ruhm then looked at the writings of the genre. These critics made observations about the nature of the hard-boiled detective and his novel. Edenbaum saw the work of Hammett as being free of the burden of the past (81). He also thought that Hammett sought to demolish sentiment (87). Malin continued the observations on Hammett's Sam Spade by saying that Hammett undercut traditional values of heroism, quest, and romance by disguising the ideal in Spade as the cynic (106). Herbert Ruhm noted that Raymond Chandler saw society as corrupt, but not corrupting (177). Of course, the image of corruption is a strong one in both Hammett and Chandler. This text looked carefully at the purpose for that concept and the hopes of the future.

In 1968, Howard Haycraft revised his 1941 text, Murder for Pleasure: The Life and Times of the Detective Story. The Haycraft text is a superb chronological study of the

mystery story turned novel. Haycraft divides his text between American and English and methodically compiles the names and subject matter of the authors of both continents, their styles, and their successes. Haycraft passes judgment on the writers, their styles, and their stories. He includes a brief bibliography of the critics and a list of masters and their works. The only problem with Haycraft's text is that it is early and even the 1968 revision does not bring it up to date regarding the propensity of writers on the scene. Haycraft did, however, allow for some rules that readers of the mystery expected. He claimed that readers of the genre expected the author to play fair, to keep contrived eccentricities to a minimum, to use the real, not the artificial (248). He used as his example of readers becoming angered Agatha Christie's Who Killed Roger Ackroyd? in which he claims that readers felt cheated by Christie even though Haycraft claims that the clues were all evident for the observant reader. Haycraft's work set the stage for future critical studies of the genre.

The period of the 1970s was a time when writing about mystery fiction became more pronounced. In this decade came some definitive works in the course of mystery fiction. This is the decade of John G. Cawelti's work on formula fiction as well as some studies of the female detective. The decade began with Robert B. Parker, creator of Spenser, writing an unpublished dissertation on the mystery fiction

of Hammett, Chandler, and R. Macdonald. In his dissertation, The Violent Hero: A Wilderness Heritage and Urban Reality (1971), Parker claims that the old wilderness hero, like the detective of mystery fiction, must remain isolated in order to preserve a sense of moral integrity and traditional values (20). The hero realizes that civilization is a place of danger and a test of his earnestness (77). Society is also a peril for him (80). In order to deal with society, the hero must cope, withdraw, or oppose the society (3).

Ron Goulart published a study of hard-boiled detective fiction entitled Cheap Thrills: American Influential History of Pulp Magazines (1972). In the course of his work, Goulart offered some theories as to the rise of the pulp magazine and the hard-boiled detective when he said that the magazines were a reaction to the disillusionment of World War I (114). Goulart's study brings to bear the importance of people like Race Williams, Hammett's Continental Op, and the early pre-Marlowe works of Raymond Chandler. Goulart makes a cursory analysis of the detective hero and argues that the hard-boiled hero fills an adolescent need (26).

Within two years of the Goulart study of pulp magazines, Suzanne Ellery Greene published her sociology dissertation entitled Books for Pleasure: Popular Fiction 1914-1945 (1974). Greene does not concentrate entirely on detective fiction; instead she surveys the lists of books

which have made the best-seller lists. Many of these texts are the works of mystery writers like Agatha Christie, Ellery Queen, and Erle Stanley Gardner. Greene proposes that these texts are popular best-sellers because they abstract the fight between good and evil (101). She also feels that the emphasis on plot reveals a detective who is not interested in personal gain (108). She sums her theories up by saying that best-sellers, including the mystery genre, connect social ethics, show strong individuals who protect the weak, and convey a social point to the public (115). Greene's work provides an acceptable insight into the best-sellers and the reasons for their success.

The most important study of popular fiction is John G. Cawelti's Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture (1976). Cawelti set as his goal the analysis of popular fiction. His work looked closely at the impact of the work, the needs met in the public, and the autonomy of the artists. He classified mystery fiction and concentrated on the work of both the English parlor mystery and the hard-boiled mystery. In the course of his analysis, he deals conclusively with the setting, plot, themes which were in the mysteries--both English parlor and hard-boiled American. Not only did Cawelti hope to analyze the components of the mystery, but he also conducted an in-depth search into the styles and themes of Dashiell Hammett,

Raymond Chandler, and Mickey Spillane. Despite the fact that Cawelti's work is two decades old, his text is still considered a landmark in the study of mystery fiction and formula fiction; his work also prompted others to begin the search for the clues of mystery fiction.

Gavin Lambert published his Dangerous Edge (1976), but his study of the genre is less intensive than Cawelti's. Lambert does, however, have a strong chapter on Raymond Chandler in which he attempts to portray Chandler's Philip Marlowe as an emotional exile with a strong sense of personal ethics (214). Lambert does not closely examine texts, nor in light of his publication in the same year as Cawelti does he offer any refreshing insight into the genre.

The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays (1976) by Howard Haycraft is a strong series of essays which preview the genre and individual works. The essays were balanced as both strongly supportive of the genre and strongly negative of the genre. In his "Ethics of the Mystery Novels," Anthony Boucher projected the theory that the totality of the mystery novel is a microcosm of life (387). This essay, which presents the strengths and powers of the genre, is countered by Edmund Wilson's "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" Wilson's essay is a personal diatribe against the genre, although he does claim to have enjoyed John D. Carr, but he places the importance of mystery fiction with the importance of addictive powers

of alcohol and drugs (396). This text cannot be considered as important to analysis as Cawelti's, but the essays are insightful looks at the genre.

Editor Otto Penzler published The Great Detectives: A Host of the World's Most Celebrated Sleuths Are Unmasked by Their Authors (1978). This text is in some ways frivolous except that the authors give some special consideration as to the motives they had and the ones they gave their detectives. Penzler was able to secure passages from Ngaio Marsh, Ross Macdonald, Ed McBain, and a variety of other writers from the mystery genre. The writers often gave insight into interpretation.

Since the advent of Cawelti, others have hastened to join the cadre writing about mystery or crime fiction. The 1980s saw an influx of criticism and texts on the genre. One of the earliest of the new breed was Edward Margolies whose Which Way Did He Go? The Private Investigator in Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Chester Himes, Ross Macdonald (1982). Margolies's look at these writers is intensive, analyzing themes, works, and advances made by each of the writers.

John D. Carr, the renowned writer of closed-room mysteries, edited The Craft of Crime: Conversations with Crime Writers (1983). As a writer of the genre himself, Carr's questions are insightful and fascinating. He queries Ed McBain about the 87th Precinct and his reaction to

readers and critics who believe that Carella is the hero-- McBain had spoken to the same issue in Penzler's work. Carr queries Robert B. Parker as to the relationship, or likeness, between his wife Joan and Spenser's girlfriend Susan. The text is an excellent key to the authors' varied meanings and the workings of crime novelists.

Great Detectives: A Century of the Best Mystery Stories from England and America (1984) is a look by David Willis McCullough at not only the writers, but the stories they have written. He is not particularly interested in in-depth analysis, but is more concerned with an overview of the writers and their texts. A tracing of analysis, genre, and importance is more likely found in mystery writer Julian Symons's text, Bloody Murder (1985). Symons is concerned with the tracing of the history of the genre, but his text also provides critiques of the authors and their texts. These critiques are frequently quite pithy and judgmental.

College professor David Geherin has contributed often to the field of criticism of the mystery novel. Geherin's works, like those of Cawelti, approach the scholarly analysis of the genre and the writers. In his Sons of Sam Spade: The Private Eye Novel in the '70s (1980), he chooses several authors whom he believes to be emulators of Dashiell Hammett and his Sam Spade. In the course of the text, Geherin closely examines the author's advent to the genre; Geherin then examines the texts of the author, using a

chronological approach. This text is quite helpful to students of the genre by providing analysis of the texts. Geherin also wrote The American Private Eye: The Image in Fiction (1985). In this text, Geherin takes a chronological approach to the development of the genre. He examines writers from Carroll John Daly to Lawrence Sanders. His interests are to provide an insight into the author and the style of his detective. The work provides an excellent bibliography of primary sources, the novels of the writers, and secondary sources of the writers and the genre. Geherin also chose to specialize and has written a text on John D. MacDonald (1982).

The popularity of the genre has also prompted several reference style texts. Otto Penzler has edited Detectionary (1976) which is an encyclopedic listing of terms, characters, texts, and movies. This is an excellent resource and a good point of departure for those who need to begin research. Art Bourgeau has The Mystery Lovers' Companion (1986) which divides the genre into English, American, Thrillers, and Police Procedurals. Within each subtext is an alphabetical listing of authors (with an evaluation to style and importance); the author is likely to have his texts listed chronologically under his name with each text summarized in a sentence and evaluated with one to five daggers (five being the indication of an excellent text). Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor edited A

Catalog of Crime: Being a Reader's Guide to the Literature of Mystery, Detection and Related Genres (1989). Like Bourgeau's, this text takes an alphabetical look at writers and a selected few texts, but Barzun and Taylor also look closely at movies and real life crime. These reference texts are exhaustive in their research, but as with any text, a researcher will occasionally find some fact woefully absent.

Writers like Haycraft, Greene, and Carr made references to female writers, but generally, the female was absent from the texts of criticism. Edward Margolies does make a reference as to the role of women in the writings of Hammett, Chandler, Himes, and R. Macdonald. Few studies are available which concentrate on the women of the genre. One of the first available studies was Michelle Slung and her Crime on Her Mind (1975). Slung looks at the reason for the absence of women in the genre and predicts that the hard-boiled mystery prompted the decline of women in the genre (23). Kathleen G. Klein's The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre (1988) takes a close look at the new field of female hard-boiled detectives; hers is one of the first specialized texts about the new hard-boiled female detective. Elaine Budd wrote 13 Mistresses of Crime (1986). This text specializes in several writers of the genre and does not choose to specialize in English parlor or American hard-boiled, but it does offer useful critiques of the authors.

One of the most recent works is Maureen Reddy's Sisters in Crime (1988) which looks exclusively at the female detective. Reddy divides her attention among the amateur, the policewoman, and the hard-boiled private detective. She carefully examines certain novels, certain themes, and certain characters. Hers is a decidedly feminist approach, and she quickly lambasts those writers whom she feels unsupportive of feminist themes and developments.

Readers of the criticism of the genre will note that women are occasionally mentioned in their roles as writers, thus taking their places in the chronological development of the genre. Recent texts devote attention to the advent of a new style of female writers. Popular press like People magazine have looked at female writers and have marveled at the vast increase in the number of female writers. What has not been examined is the interaction of the genders. Except for brief references from time to time in texts, no writer has chosen to survey the treatment of women in the mystery genre. There has been no study as to why women are included, what the authors hope to show with the female character, and what the presence of the female character shows about the writer and the society in which, and about which, he writes.

This type of study is necessary in order to trace the role of women in the society of the text and in light of the author's response to societal pressures. Are writers

victims of the times? What purpose does the female character have in relationship to the plot? What does the female character show about the detective himself? What does the author knowingly show about society's and his views of women? Although not all of these questions are readily answerable in regards to every author, a survey of the impact of female characters is necessary. This study will trace the changes society has allowed women and men. Female characters and female writers have seen a steady increase in the genre. A study of this will prove insightful to the genre and useful in interpreting the styles of the writers who use female characters.

Chapter II

An Overview of Detectives and Their Women

Reading mysteries must be like observing art; readers--like viewers--may not be able to describe or explain the text, but they know what they like. Research into the genre finds critics and writers developing diverse definitions of the mystery. Art Bourgeau's The Mystery Lovers' Companion divides the mystery into four categories: English, American, Thrillers, and Police Procedurals. Editor Otto Penzler in Detectionary includes writers like Dashiell Hammett, Mickey Spillane, and Raymond Chandler, but also includes Bram Stoker's Dracula and the writings of Daphne du Maurier. Lovers of the genre seem willing to accept a definition of the genre so wide that it includes almost all fiction or fact-based stories that have suspense, that involves spies or secret agents, or that includes any type of mystery (so that some Gothic stories would also fit into the genre). Many readers, however, find themselves almost totally enmeshed in the work of detectives, though the definition of the detective may also be wide and all inclusive.

With the advent of some of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories, the mystery story--eventually the mystery novel--began. This genre, as it developed, became very formulaic, so much so that it began to accept certain guidelines as being vital to the genre. There will be, for example, a

crime which may be anything from murder to blackmail to extortion. There will be a character whose job, hobby, or inclination will set him on a course to solve the crime. There will be the criminal who perpetuated the crime. This formula appears to be so simplistic as to cause speculation as to how the style could have generated any interest at all. Yet it has, and the durability and mutability of the genre have retained fans since its inception.

According to critics of the mystery genre, the readers of mystery fiction look forward to both the accepted formula of mystery and its variations. John G. Cawelti, in his Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture, believes that the mystery reader is looking for a strong story built around the heroic; this story should possess a desirable and rational conclusion (42). Cawelti had begun his study with the premise that the readers of formulaic fiction are looking for a bond between themselves and a superior (i.e., the detective) (18). Willard Huntington Wright had projected the idea in his text that readers of detective fiction find crime profoundly interesting and enjoy the mental reward of solving and competing with the detective to solve the crime (37, 8).

Looking at the formula for mystery fiction, the reader will find numerous variations in all its categories. The detective in mystery fiction will range from the policeman to the private investigator to an amateur or an innocent

bystander. The point of view may be either first or third person. Although the writers of the mystery may change plots and styles, the emphasis is almost always on the plot; character development becomes more important when the writer is creating a serial or repeating character.

Of course, the history of the genre has caused change in the focus of any one part of the formula. Readers of formula mystery will accept a degree of violence in the text, and certain other premises will be accepted as endemic. According to Cawelti, readers of mystery fiction expect a desirable, rational solution to the crime (43). The crime in the text should find a just end with a just punishment (43). Readers will accept many changes as long as they can adjust to the formula; they are willing, as Willard Huntington Wright explained, to accept neutral or colorless characters with a direct, simple, smooth style (8).

The style of the mystery fiction imposes certain rules on the writer of the genre, according to Howard Haycraft in his Murder for Pleasure: The Life and Times of the Detective Story. Readers expect the author in the text to play fair, to keep contrived eccentricities to a minimum, to use the real, not the artificial (248).

Readers of mystery fiction become very attached to the genre and even more strongly attached to its heroes, the detectives. Critics have written on why the detective

behaves as he does, why his choices are what they are, and how he responds to the society in which he lives. Robert B. Parker, creator of Spenser, wrote in his doctoral dissertation, "The Violent Hero: A Wilderness Heritage and Urban Reality," that the old wilderness hero, like the detective of mystery fiction, must remain isolated in order to preserve a sense of moral integrity and traditional values (20). Parker further argues that the hero (wilderness or urban) has three choices in dealing with society: he may adjust, he may withdraw, or he may oppose society (3). This hero recognizes that civilization is a place of danger and, therefore, a test of his earnestness (77). The hero always recognizes that society is a place of peril for him (80). Parker's reasoning seems to be in line with writers like Anthony Boucher who feel that the environment of a mystery novel creates a microcosm (389). This idea of Boucher develops a sense of totality for the hero and setting. Nicholas Blake echoes this idea, but claims that the heroes are unreal people in real situations or a real character in fantasy situations (402-03).

The idea of the hero of the mystery and his setting working as a microcosm allows for the premise that the hero's attitude toward his environment will take on the shadings of that microcosm. In accepting that premise, readers will recognize why certain types of characters have different interpretations depending on the setting in which

the story takes place. In other words, writers who set their stories in the 1940s will, because of the prevailing attitude of the time, be less inclined to present a liberated view of women or minorities; whereas, writers who set their stories in times after the sexual revolution will be allowed more leverage in their interpretations of their female characters.

The creation of the detective hero has seen such variance, yet has been paradoxically stable. When Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1848) created his mystery tales in 1841, he, too, followed a formula. No study of the mystery can be complete without an accounting of Poe, who is often hailed as the "Father of the Mystery Story." Dupin, like his successors, appeared to be an ordinary man with extraordinary powers of deduction. These reasoning powers, this logic or ratiocentrism, was the power behind Dupin's solving crimes. As a matter of fact, "Murders in the Rue Morgue" begins with an in-depth discussion of the powers of reasoning. The narrator tells the reader:

The faculty of re-solution is possibly much invigorated by mathematical, and especially by that highest branch of it which, unjustly, and merely on account of its retrograde operations, has been called, as if par excellence, analysis.

(Poe 3)

The powers of reflective intellect are then extolled as are the powers of memory and observation. The real basis of solution is always laid at the feet of analysis:

The analytical power should not be confounded with simple ingenuity; for while the analyst is necessarily ingenious, the ingenious man is often remarkably incapable of analysis. The constructive or combining power, by which ingenuity is usually manifested, and to which the phrenologists (I believe erroneously) have assigned a separate organ, supposing it a primitive faculty, has been so frequently seen in those intellect bordered otherwise upon idiocy, as to have attracted general observation among writers on morals. (Poe 5)

The reader is forced to recognize as the result of the narrative that this knowledge is what "Lies not so much in the validity of the inference as in the equality of the observation" (Poe 5).

In both the "Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Purloined Letter," Dupin solves the crimes by careful observation and deduction. Dupin's solutions are impressive in that he is able to take the same information given to the police and the readers and solve the crimes. Dupin also delves into the minds of the criminals. In "Murders in the Rue Morgue," he tries to think like the sailor who has lost

the "Orang Outang," and in "The Purloined Letter," he delves into the mind of the minister who had stolen the letter. Poe's desire to become enmeshed in psychology of the criminal can be likened to the work of Dostoyevsky who looked so closely into the criminal process with Raskolnikov.

Poe's detective stories began several traditions. He has the recurring detective in M. Auguste Dupin. His story is not elaborate. The narrative is all important. Poe has Dupin announce to the narrator or the police how he arrived at his solution to the crime. Dupin is not in competition with the police; he is merely able to achieve results when they have failed or when they have reached a wall in their observations. Poe does not, however, utilize women in any capacity in his detective stories. In "Murders in the Rue Morgue," Madame L'Esplanaye and her daughter are dead at the beginning of the story. Of course, Poe was emphasizing the theory of deductive reasoning rather than Dupin's relationship with anyone else.

Although this study will emphasize the role of the American writer and his treatment of women, a brief look must be taken at Arthur Conan Doyle's (1859-1930) Sherlock Holmes who, like Dupin, uses the powers of observation and reasoning. Holmes also uses the power of psychology in solving his cases. In his case entitled "Scandal in Bohemia," Holmes is able to apply his observation, his

reasoning, and his psychology and is still bested by a woman. Watson tells:

To Sherlock Holmes she is always the woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind. . . . And yet there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory. (11)

In the case, Holmes is supposed to recover a compromising portrait of the King of Bohemia. Holmes succeeds in using the psychology of human nature to find where Irene Adler had hidden the photograph; he secures entry to her house under disguise, but when he goes to call for the culmination of the case, Irene Adler had left the country and taken the photograph with her with assurances that the King has no reason to worry about her. Holmes asks for payment--when the King offers anything--only Irene's portrait. Watson admits "how the best plans of Mr. Sherlock Holmes were beaten by a woman's wit" (25). Although Holmes encounters several other women in the course of his cases, none is all as superior as Irene Adler, but at least, Doyle presented a strong woman who was able to outwit Sherlock Holmes.

Doyle, like Poe, created a serial detective who depended on deductive reasoning, whose stories are not elaborate, whose narrative was all important. Like Dupin, Holmes states his reasoning to the police or to Watson. Like Dupin, Holmes has more success solving crimes than do the police. Holmes, as a matter of fact, has disdain for the police. Yet the public is willing to accept a member of the police force as a detective. Many mystery writers have chosen as their forte a detective who works within the confines of the police department, thus allowing an easy reason as to why the person is so readily involved in the crime world.

Martha Grimes (ca. 1980) is an American-born author who chooses to use British pubs as the basis for her titles. Her policeman is Inspector Richard Jury who is assisted by his friend in the aristocracy, Melrose Plant. Jury is smart and usually solves the crimes himself. Grimes does include some valuable assistance by Plant and much unneeded assistance by Plant's Aunt Agatha, a most dislikable old woman who is stealing Plant's estate one piece at a time. Grimes also provides Jury with a landlady; Jury is ever-so-protective of her and her idiosyncrasies--she is forever seeing enemies lurking on the street. Since the inception of the series, Grimes has provided a love interest for Jury; the most acceptable one has been Vivian Rivington, a well-to-do member of the upper crust. Her relationship with Jury

provides very little sexual tension. A more likely sexual tension exists with Carol-Anne Pulaski, a neighbor of Jury's who is constantly infringing on his apartment. Grimes's main intent with female characters is to prove the fact that Jury is irresistible to the opposite sex, but kind enough to care for his elderly landlady. No woman has a significant role in solving murders.

Another of the police detectives is Edward X. Delaney, created by Lawrence Sanders (b. 1920-). Like Grimes, Sanders creates female characters who react to the male detective. In The First Deadly Sin, Delaney's wife is dying of cancer, and he finds himself drawn to the wife of a man whose murder he is investigating. The novel ends with his wife dying and his marrying the new wife. Her function is to provide stability to his life after he has spent a day solving crimes; she makes him more human. Sanders does include some female characters, but they tend to be bland. Characterization is not a forte of his. In The Fourth Deadly Sin, Sanders pits the abandoned wife as both victim of her husband and his murderer, not a new premise. He does, however, incorporate women as wives, lovers, and murderers.

Occasionally, the absence of female characters is obvious and explainable. Tony Hillerman (b. 1925-) created Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee who work on the Navajo reservation. The plots center on Native American life and

the crimes committed on or around the reservation. Women figure in only as they pertain to the Indian reservation or its components; they may be holy women or medicine women. Hillerman's objective is to raise the consciousness of the reading public regarding Indian life.

A similar element is true in Marcia Muller (ca. 1970) who created a police detective who was both female and ethnic, Elena Oliverez. Muller worked very little with the character, but, like Hillerman, chose to digress from the traditional role of the white Anglo-Saxon detective. Dell Shannon (ca. 1966) did the same with her detective, Luis Mendoza. Perhaps due to her predating Muller, the roles of women are limited to wives.

Another ethnic detective is Irishman Francis Xavier Flynn, creation of Gregory McDonald (ca. 1970). Flynn is a delightfully atypical detective who drinks only herb tea and uses intuition to solve his cases. The plots are full of G. McDonald's humor and wisecracking style, but are remiss of women except for Flynn's wife, who has little to do with the plots or the cases. Like Edward X. Delaney, also of Boston, Flynn's wife serves to anchor him into humanity.

Despite the use of policemen as detectives, none of the above-mentioned writers can really be called members of the police procedural. Writers of this school of detective fiction emphasize not only the detective, but the role of

police policy, police procedure, and law. One of the most successful of the police procedural school is Ed McBain (b. 1926-), who has created the popular 87th Precinct Series. McBain is both praised and faulted for his extensive detail about police techniques like tire casts, forensics tests, and fingerprinting. McBain has also created a myriad of women in his novels. He has the recurring roles of wives and girlfriends for his detectives. Steve Carella's wife Teddy, a deaf mute, is frequently portrayed. Dilys Winks thinks that Teddy Carella is a "fatuous notion of the ideal woman--beautiful and speechless" (305). McBain has other female characters, like Teddy Carella, who are unmistakably related to male characters. Teddy is, in essence, always good; readers usually have positive feelings about her. Such is not the case of the women who are interconnected to Bert Kling. One of Bert's first girlfriends is Claire Townsend, who is a victim of murder. Other girlfriends, like Cindy Forrest and Augusta Blair, love him and leave him. Their roles in the stories center on Bert and then on their needs for lives without him.

McBain has also created two very strong female detectives in Annie Rawles and Eileen Burke. Eileen develops a relationship with Bert Kling, and McBain has spent quite a bit of text space playing with this relationship. In The Mugger, Eileen acts alone and is

excellent. In Ice, she again serves as decoy and almost kills a "child" who has been attacking women. After this near-death decision, she turns to Bert for solace. McBain traces her work as a decoy when she is raped in Lightning; her perception of herself and her career are shaken. McBain brings her back in Tricks where she kills the attacker because she fears being hurt. In Widows, she withdraws from decoy work and turns to hostage negotiations. Her ability to rely on her own judgment has been on the wane until Widows when she successfully negotiates the end of the hostage situation. Kling tells her that the death of the young woman was not her fault and that she would be good; she tells him, "I'm already good at it" (328). Their relationship, which had degenerated from the rape in Lightning to his losing her the backup in Tricks, is over in Widows. Ironically, the public is more concerned with whether Bert will find a nice girl than it is whether Eileen will build a solid career and regain her confidence, or so said McBain in a public reading at Davis-Kidd Bookstore in Nashville, in February 1992.

The female counterpart of Ed McBain is Lillian O'Donnell (b. 1926-) who has created Norah Mulcahey, a policewoman who rises to the position of lieutenant in the New York Police Department. Maureen Reddy sees Norah as the fictional counterpart of real policewoman Marie Cirile who had written Detective Marie Cirile: Memoirs of a Police

Officer (73). Reddy, however, criticizes O'Donnell for not reacting strongly enough to women's issues in her books about a woman police officer (75). Certainly, O'Donnell falls short of discussing issues like promotion or the lack of it for women in the police department. She also fails to discuss abortion or job discrimination. Her detective, Norah Mulcahey, has a strong friendship with the men on the force, although not all of the men accept her position of authority, a touch which would be true. Surprisingly, Norah has no friends of the same sex; she is not even particularly close to her dead husband's family.

Obviously, when the public accepted a detective who was a member of the police force, a certain clear rationale was made. Policemen and policewomen had every occasion to come into contact with crime. Writers like Doyle created characters who, though not policemen, made it their profession to investigate crimes. In American mystery fiction, the hard-boiled detective fulfills this role. Like with Poe and Doyle, the private investigator originated in short stories which appeared in magazines like Black Mask. According to John G. Cawelti, the hard-boiled school centered in the modern city and showed an empty modernity, corruption, and death (141). A central factor in the hard-boiled story was violence which, according to Wilbur Frohock's The Novel of Violence in America: 1920-1950, allowed for a unified sensibility with powerful sustained

emotion (207, 9). The stories which had begun in Black Mask were frequently developed into full-fledged novels centering around characters from the stories. Writers like Dashiell Hammett (1894-1961) and Raymond Chandler (1895-1959) had their origins in Black Mask.

Ron Goulart, in his Cheap Thrills: American Influential History of Pulp Magazines, feels that the detective hero who became the prototype for the hard-boiled detective developed from the adolescent need for adventure (26). The same detectives who were in dime detective magazines and later in the detective novels were a reaction, according to Goulart, to the disillusionment sustained as a result of World War I (114). In this disillusionment, writers like Hammett and Chandler created Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe. According to Michelle Slung, the hard-boiled era saw the decline of women detectives unless, like Nora Charles, she was a part of a sleuthing couple (141). According to David Madden, the hard-boiled detective spoke the language of the streets, showed a decided restlessness, and became an exaggeration of real American traits (xxiii, xxv).

The hard-boiled detective is typically an American phenomenon. David Geherin, in his The American Private Eye: The Image in Fiction, categorizes the American private eye. Geherin offers the thesis that the characterization of the detective offers evidence of his endurance. The character of the detective is, according to Geherin, a "doer, not a

thinker" who follows a vigorous personal code; he (she) is probably also brave, courageous, decisive, resourceful, independent, solitary, and honest (197). Geherin's thesis is similar to the one proposed by Robert B. Parker in his doctoral dissertation when he claimed that the American detective was like the frontiersman, changing only in that the detective had to move his frontier to the urban environment (198).

Another reason that Geherin offers for the endurance of the private eye is that the character is protean. Although the private eye may be tough, hard-fisted, and redolent of the early development of the genre, writers have also created lawyers, taxi drivers, elderly, ethnic, historic, futuristic, and female. Whatever these hard-boiled detectives do, their feats are revealed to their readers through colorful language, colloquial speech, and frequently humorous dialogue which may be rude, irreverent, and iconoclastic (199).

The hard-boiled detective has usually been an adequate mirror of society. Geherin states that the private eye is one "whose efforts are dedicated to the pursuit of the noblest ideas of his society but whose instincts are those of the streets and alleys" (199). The private eye is usually unaffiliated with any particular law-enforcement agency, although he may have connections with the law enforcement in some way. The fact that the genre is a

mirror of society allows the fiction to address social issues, and the hard-boiled detective may offer social commentary.

Geherin summarizes his points about the American private eye by pointing out that the detective is both a romantic idealist and a pragmatic realist who accepts that decent and honorable behavior is still possible even in a modern corrupt society (201). The twentieth-century private eye is more introspective and compassionate as well as more altruistic and complex than the earlier breed. Geherin's assumptions range from facts relevant to all detectives to those pertinent to only the new breed of male detectives.

Howard Haycraft argued that Dashiell Hammett who created both the Continental Op and Sam Spade began the hard-boiled school (176). Hammett's creations are diametrically opposed to the British Holmesian school, which had concentrated on reason. The upheaval which existed in the world after World War I and the stock market crash of 1929 generated a society which had lost faith in reason. In a June 1951 Ellery Queen Magazine, Hammett himself stated the confusion generated by World War I was like being asked to put together a puzzle in the dark (140). Edmund Wilson characterized these detectives in his "Why Do People Read Detective Stories?" as "Sherlock Holmes with a certain cold underworld brutality" (235). Hammett's detectives always experience a certain sense of evil in society, and that evil

controls their behavior and their reactions to the world and its inhabitants. Hammett's characters interact with the women in the same sense they do with the evil. Hammett and Chandler are addressed in separate chapters in an effort to establish the direct influence on Robert B. Parker.

Other hard-boiled writers like Bill Pronzini (b. 1943-) have developed their hard-boiled detectives. Pronzini's Nameless detective is an older private eye who worries incessantly about his own health. Nameless does have a girlfriend who tries to change his lifestyle of beer drinking, pasta eating, and non-exercise. She is a sounding board for his problems and provides a haven from the evil he faces in his occupation.

Lawrence Block (b. 1938-) has created Matthew Scudder, a former policeman turned unlicensed private investigator. Like Ross Macdonald's (1915-1983) Lew Archer, Scudder is divorced. Scudder refuses to keep records of his expenses, does not have a daily rate, and feels bound to tithe by randomly dropping a percentage of his money into poor boxes or donating it to Alcoholic Anonymous. Scudder, too, has a girlfriend; she is a prostitute who is still working in the trade. They share meals and sex. In A Dance at the Slaughterhouse, she brings up the subject of marriage and quickly withdraws from the subject since neither she nor Scudder had ever mentioned love. At the end of the novel, Scudder is considering the possibility of marrying her. He

had had previous relationships which had to be terminated because both he and the woman were recovering alcoholics and they were not healthy for each other. He and his new love accept the basis of their relationship, and she is able to tell him to leave because she is entertaining a client.

Like Scudder, Toby Peters, creation of Stuart Kaminisky (b. 1934-), is also divorced. Unlike Scudder, Toby Peters has not found a girlfriend since his divorce. When Peters is in a particular bind, he will call or return to his ex-wife; she frequently listens patiently and sympathetically to his dilemma. She then tosses him out. Peters does not appear to survive as well in the knowledge that an ex-wife has a boyfriend.

Some other hard-boiled detectives have female acquaintances who play minor roles in the plots. Joseph Hansen (b. 1923-) has created David Brandstetter, a homosexual private detective. Due to his sexual preferences, women do not recur or are not featured. Hansen does from time to time use his stepmother when a woman is needed for womanly functions like watching children.

Until the 1970s, the hard-boiled detective was exclusively male. If women were detectives, they were amateurs like spinsters or wives assisting their husbands. Marcia Muller (ca. 1970) has created Sharon McCone of All Souls Legal Cooperative; Sue Grafton (b. 1940-) has created Kinsey Millhone who works in an office provided by

California Fidelity Insurance Company and does some work for them to maintain the offices; Sara Paretsky (b. 1947-) has created the very independent V. I. Warshawski who, though she specializes in cases pertaining to business, also frequently assumes cases which help friends. These hard-boiled writers have opened a new aspect of the genre and are discussed in detail in chapter VI.

Linda Barnes (ca. 1985) digressed from her actor-private investigator to create Carlotta Carlyle. Carlotta is working from her inherited home and will work as a taxi driver when the private-eye business is slow. She is tough, but vulnerable in her relationships with men. Her first four books sparked interest, but critics in Entertainment Weekly criticized her Steel Guitar, by saying that the character of Carlotta Carlyle was not well-developed (Mifflin, 88).

Of course, logically, the police and the private investigator are paid to solve crimes, but from the beginnings with M. Auguste Dupin, the public has been willing to accept a slew of amateurs who for one reason or another find themselves involved in the solving or investigating of a crime. As a matter of fact, the amateur presents a unique diversion. The public accepts such amateurs as lawyers, teachers, criminals, journalists, priests, rabbis, nuns, actors, and even the First Lady of the United States. Writers are able to effect an

appropriate reason for the amateur to become involved in crime solving. Besides Poe, the two most important were Doyle and Dame Agatha Christie (1890-1936). Americans have been unable to advance to the aristocracy of Christie's characters, but do have a bevy of their own amateurs.

Since reasoning and logic are involved in the worth of a detective, many mystery writers have used lawyers as their protagonists. The most popular of these was Erle Stanley Gardner (1889-1970) and his Perry Mason. Mason did much to confuse the public as to the excitement involved in trying criminal cases. Mason's end-of-the-case histrionics caused the public to expect trial lawyers to pull rabbits out of their hats. Mason will be discussed in-depth in chapter III in relationship to the way he interacts with women.

Two recent additions to the cause of lawyers solving crimes are created by Margaret Truman (b. 1924-) and Ed McBain. Truman's last two novels, Murder at Kennedy Center and Murder at the National Cathedral, feature MacKenzie Smith, a lawyer and law instructor. Smith also appears to serve as an amateur since he is not necessarily practicing law. Truman uses very few women except, as usual, a spouse for Smith, but this partner serves little purpose to the plots. McBain developed the Matthew Hope series which deals heavily with relationships between the sexes; this series is dealt with in chapter VI.

Another set of people who logically, because of education and supposed expertise in reasoning, make acceptable amateur sleuths are academics. Here the term is used broadly to include teachers, archaeologists, lexicographers, and other highly trained specialists. Charlotte MacLeod (b. 1922-) created Professor Peter Shandy of Balaclava College in Massachusetts. Shandy has been involved in crime solving so often that he is a deputy on the police force. MacLeod gave Shandy a wife who holds a doctorate in library science, and her research and specialty provide the final clues to the solution of the case in A Corpse at Oozak's Pond. Most of the time, however, she is like other wives and serves to offer an ear for the ease of her husband.

Teacher herself Sharyn McCrumb (ca. 1980) has created archaeologist Elizabeth MacPherson. This character uses her knowledge of archaeology and her experience of Appalachia in the solution of her crimes. Elizabeth Peters (b. 1927-) has created Victoria Bliss, an art historian. Use of this character allows Peters the same freedom McCrumb uses. Peters is able to show her knowledge of art history just as McCrumb uses her knowledge of Appalachia.

Jonathan Kellerman (b. 1947-) uses his own knowledge of psychology, especially child psychology, to create Alex Delaware. Delaware is usually involved in cases involving children, but Kellerman has also created a love interest and

the inherent problems in the relationship for his detective. A nice non-sexist touch is that Alex's love is a carpenter.

Amanda Cross (b. 1926-) created Kate Fansler, an English professor in New York, who dabbles in crimes, although Cross admits to trying to establish the murder as quickly as possible. Fansler is an incredibly independent character who, even when she marries, does not allow the marriage to affect her leaving the home to solve cases, but she does desire to return to the nest. In several texts, Fansler becomes involved in cases which become complicated because of interpersonal relationships. In No Word from Winifred, Fansler searches for Winifred who has chosen to leave the country when she found that she was having an affair with a friend's husband and the male would not end the relationship so that she could remain friends with all parties.

Other amateurs abound to the point that classification is difficult. In many cases, the amateur has a limited attitude toward women, although more and more writers, especially women, are creating female amateurs. Writers like John D. MacDonald whose Travis McGee is a salvage operator, a form of private investigator, are discussed in chapter VI as is Andrew Vachss, whose Burke, an ex-convict turned unlicensed private investigator. Both have very strong statements about women.

Some clever ploys are also available in other amateurs. Marvin Kay (b. 1938-) has his detective Hillary Quayle work for a woman who is also his love interest. As his boss, she is frequently annoyed with his performance and fires him with great regularity. A certain sexual tension exists as does Quayle's trauma in trying to effect an end that he wants to his cases.

Similar humor is evident in Gregory McDonald's Fletch, a wisecracking journalist who has numerous ex-wives, all who search for him in hopes of obtaining alimony or his hide. The female characters are undeveloped, but the humor of the situation builds clever dialogue for Fletch.

Nancy Picard (ca. 1986) builds a detective status for Jennifer Cain who, as chair of the Port Arthur Civic Foundation, stumbles across crimes. Although Picard affords Cain a husband who is a policeman, he is not instrumental in helping her solve the crimes. As a matter of fact, in Bum Steer, she virtually leaves the marriage bed to travel west to accept a donation. In the course of the bequest and murder, she finds herself immensely attracted to an old cowhand. A similar independence is given to Virginia Rich (ca. 1980) who sends her widowed Eugenia Potter out to cook and invariably has her solve crimes. Despite her advanced age, she is no weakling. Rich's plots are pleasant enough and are interspersed with recipes of dishes supposedly prepared by Potter.

One area of amateurs who have risen to the foreground is the clergy. These clergy are involved in crimes which conveniently enough call for their religious expertise. Writers like Ralph McInerny (b. 1929-) use knowledge of Catholicism in the creation of the detectives. McInerny's Father Dowling has little chance to come in contact with women, other than the protective and self-effacing housekeeper. On the other hand, William X. Kienzle (b. 1928-) created Father Koesler who has a housekeeper, but Kienzle also developed Pat Lennon, a reporter who is in search of stories. For several texts, beginning with Rosary Murders, Lennon is a strong character. Despite her love interests in Joe Cox, she is adamant about gaining her story. Kienzle eventually drops her character.

The expertise in plots involving Jewish ethnicity for years was credited to Harry Kemelman (b. 1908-) whose Rabbi David Small was a kind soul who had minimal contact with women. Faye Kellerman (ca. 1980) has developed more intense Jewish lore and tradition in her new series involving Rina Lazarus, a Hasidic widow with two boys. In Ritual Bath, Lazarus nearly falls victim to crime and helps Los Angeles detective Peter Decker solve the crime because of its peculiarly Hasidic nature. Despite Rina's religious attitudes, she is a strong character who works within the confines of her religion and her love of Decker.

Despite the many varieties of amateur detectives, none is more peculiar than Elliot Roosevelt (b. 1910-) who develops his mother, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, as a detective. Roosevelt's distinct image in the role of First Lady is developed, and a certain insight into the administration is offered. Of course, the independence of the character becomes a focal point. Contrasting with all the independence or alleged independence of the women is Lillian Jackson Braun (ca. 1980) who utilizes journalist Jim Qwilleran. He is assisted by two cats: male KoKo and female Yum Yum. The male cat is the helpful one in solving the cases; the female provides digression with her unwillingness to walk on a leash and her habit of snatching loose objects.

Many mystery writers work with a one-time detective and a particularly interesting case, but this study looks at those writers who have created a serial detective. Readers of mystery fiction become as addicted to their heroes in the stories as do soap opera fans who cheer or boo for a particular character. The serial detective, if read avidly, provides a certain insight into both the author and the times in which the writer chooses to set his plots. Readers become deeply involved in the stories, the settings, and the problems of the detective.

Robert B. Parker has created a delightful detective in Spenser. Spenser is modeled after Marlowe--note the name which is also an allusion to an Elizabethan poet. Spenser

has a strong personal code akin to Marlowe and Archer. Spenser has some of his own special idiosyncracies: he loves to cook; he drinks enormous quantities of beer; he passionately loves Susan Silverman. In most of his cases, Spenser is either working for or directly involved with a woman. Parker has more female involvement in his plots than do most of his predecessors or contemporaries (unless the writer is a woman).

Early analysis of Parker's motivation in using women finds him to be, as expected, a development of his past, but an extension of his present. In other words, Parker is not like those people who preceded him, and he sets some unique standards for the development of women in his novels. Close scrutiny reveals that Parker takes the ideas of his predecessors and develops them and responds to the ideas present in the society in which he writes. His female characters are not always liberated women, but they are not always just weak women who need to be rescued. Susan Silverman, his love, does provide an ear to listen to his cases, but she has other purposes as well. Parker adds a variety of women like housewives, prostitutes, lesbians, and girlfriends. In each case, the woman's function is highly intrinsic to his plot, not just a frill. Even critics fail to note the function or importance of many of the women except Susan. As a matter of fact, no one has done a study of the roles of women in mystery fiction, except Maureen

Reddy and Kathleen G. Klein, both of whom focused on the female detective and not female characters.

Chapter III

Predecessors of Parker

In mystery novels of the 1920s, a female character may have been anything from the victim to the detective. The presentation of the female character may very well have mirrored society's view of the female. In many ways, the women in the novels conformed to what E. M. Forster called flat characters, one-dimensional figures offering little insight or perception into the story. Women detectives, like Miss Marple or Hildegard Withers, were amateurs who lucked into the solution of the crime through persistent nosiness or "women's intuition." The female characters did little to show that they were anything other than cardboard women. They were not usually independent or very interesting.

The early hard-boiled detective novel still has women portrayed like the Miss Marples, but the very style of the novel required a change in characterization to coincide with its grittiness and tough tone. The female characters did undergo a change. Yet many of the hard-boiled writers exhibited a problem that Leslie Fiedler describes in his Love and Death in the American Novel; there is a tendency in the American novel for vice to be punished and virtue rewarded (10). Looking closely at Fiedler's theory of vice being punished and virtue being rewarded, female characters

can then be further characterized in what Fiedler calls the Dark Lady-Light Lady stereotype (286). According to Fiedler, a writer who uses this delineation may assume a Blakean division of either innocence or experience, thus virtue or vice (286). Many of the early hard-boiled authors found themselves drawn to this delineation.

Edward Margolies offers the suggestion that the hard-boiled detective may see himself as judged in his toughness by the way he responds to women (6). This love-hate relationship develops because the detective, unlike the wilderness hero, cannot escape the contact with women in the city (7). The detective must deal with the woman, but his feelings may be ambivalent for the very reasons explained by both Fiedler and Margolies.

Writers of the early hard-boiled school seemed to adhere strictly to the divisions as explained by Fiedler. This dichotomy of the female is seen clearly in the writings of Dashiell Hammett, Mickey Spillane, and Erle Stanley Gardner while writers like Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald make some advances toward creating female characters who are more rounded or more fully developed. Writers like Hammett, Spillane, and Gardner concentrated on fully developing their male detective rather than female characters becoming a focal point of the story. Women had been used as a necessary force of either good or evil in the solution of the crimes. Chandler, on the other hand,

concentrated on developing a detective-knight hero. A knight hero would obviously view female characters differently from other hard-boiled detectives. R. Macdonald emphasized the compassion of his detective and focused on the psychological development of his characters. The problems which all of these writers worked through allowed writers like Robert B. Parker to develop their characterization and themes with more freedom.

Howard Haycraft credits Dashiell Hammett with originating the hard-boiled detective style, and even if critics disagree with Haycraft on this point, they cannot overlook Hammett's contributions to the style. Dilys Winks claims that Hammett is the best of the vicious school (6). Most readers of Hammett recognize like Gavin Lambert that Hammett has created detectives Sam Spade, the Continental Op, Nick Charles, and Ned Beaumont, who are cynical men in a cynical world (213). Hammett tends to create not only realism, but a "naturalistic cosmos which is ruled by chance, death, and violence" (Cawelti 173). Hammett's detectives are not "erudite solvers of riddles, but detectives whose sense of right supersedes the law" (Layman 176). David Madden says that Hammett's detectives are free of sentiment, free of the burden of the past; yet they fear death and are tempted by money and sex (81). As David Brazelton says, Hammett creates popular myths without

believing in them and, in so doing, creates a unique masculine figure in his detective (470).

No question exists that Hammett made a major contribution to the detective and the hard-boiled school of mystery, but his female characters, according to Margolies, fit the familiar stereotypes of either the ideal or the corrupt (26). This division may be seen in any Hammett novel despite the fact that he features several detectives. Likewise, all of Hammett's heroes respond to women in much the same fashion. Brazelton sees only Sam Spade as a type of sexual being, although the Continental Op is a very moral being who sets about to root out evil (470). Robert B. Parker, in his doctoral dissertation, thinks that Hammett has a difficult time setting his position clearly for the reader; to Parker, this attitude is very much revealed in the character of Nick Charles (116).

Each of Hammett's detectives relates and interacts with female characters; there is no limit to the number of female characters presented in Hammett's novels; yet for the most part, the females are truly interchangeable. Hammett's innate distrust of women is evident in all his detectives (Winn 130). This is probably most evident in Hammett's best-known work, The Maltese Falcon, in which Sam Spade tries to find the Maltese and, in so doing, comes into contact with two women other than the loyal, faithful, and efficient Effie, Hammett's model of virtue. The other two

women, Brigid O'Shaughnessy and Iva Archer, represent Hammett's evil women of vice.

To Sam Spade, Effie, the loyal, faithful secretary, epitomizes the nice girl. She helps Spade with his organization and serves as a foil to other women with whom he comes into contact. She is also an interesting foil to the cynical detective whose character seems to undercut traditional values of heroism and romance (Malin 106). Effie is able to retain a sentimental nature despite Spade's efforts to demolish all sentiment (Edenbaum 87). When Spade appears to be a sexual creature, Effie stands isolated as a symbol of the platonic relationship possible in the sexes. She is the perpetual true-blue girl Friday.

Besides contrasting with the cynical Spade, Effie contrasts with Iva Archer and Brigid O'Shaughnessy. Iva, the wife of Spade's dead partner, has been unfaithful to her husband and is totally unaffected by his death. She seems still on the make for Spade while he is infatuated with Brigid O'Shaughnessy. Yet, as Margolies implied, women are to be accepted by the hard-boiled detective, for he must endure her presence in the modern city (6).

Despite Sam Spade's emotional involvement with Brigid O'Shaughnessy, he proves his superior dedication to his vocation and to justice when he tells her:

I don't care who loves who I'm not going to play the sap for you. . . . You killed Miles and you're

going over for it. I could have helped you by letting the others go. . . . It's too late for that now. I can't help you now. And I wouldn't if I could. (437)

Spade continues to be equally unemotional when he tells Brigid that "It's easy enough to be nuts about you. But I don't know what that amounts to. Does anybody ever? Well, if I send you over I'll be sorry as hell--I'll have some rotten nights--but that'll pass" (439). Spade and Brigid share a simple, final kiss, and he walks her to the police with his arm around her. He then returns to his office and the sanctity and security of Effie, except that he must face Iva. Spade specifically responds to these women as any macho male would. He is lured by their beauty and succumbs to their sexuality, but his sights of justice and his role in it are not lost.

Hammett's Continental Op is less concerned with women than is Sam Spade. He seems immune to their sexuality. Robert B. Parker, in his doctoral dissertation, claims that the Continental Op works with a purity of image--to root out evil and hide his own toughness (107). Women are just other people--men with estrogen. The Continental Op hardly acknowledges their differences.

In The Dain Curse, the Continental Op is surrounded by females. He has Mrs. Leggett, Gabrielle, and Aaronia Haldorn. The Op becomes embroiled in a complicated case

which begins with the missing stones and ends with his freeing Gabrielle from the bonds of her drug addiction. The Op's code leads him beyond the solving of the crime of the missing stones. He is not satisfied until he has freed Gabrielle from all her curses. Gaby is the wide-eyed innocent whom the Op saves rather than allow her to succumb to the desperate gloom of her cursed life. The other women, Mrs. Leggett and Aaronia Haldorn, are like Iva Archer and Brigid O'Shaughnessy, self-serving. Leggett sacrificed her sister and her niece for her own gains. Her "suicide" death is unmourned. Aaronia is successful in staging a scene in which the Continental Op kills her husband, partly because of his insane belief in his own spiritual digressions, but mainly because of his sexual interest in Gaby. The women, with their vice-virtue delineation, are typical of Hammett's women.

In The Thin Man, Nick Charles is a character surrounded by women who create problems for him. Like Spade, the women with whom Charles comes into contact are either evil or virtuous. Nora is an essentially good character, but she is occasionally inane in her wide-eyed excitement of the shootings and speakeasies. Dorothy and Mimi both seem, like Iva and Brigid, to be self-centered and evil. They want money from Clyde Wynant in order to live in luxury. Neither Dorothy nor Mimi has any concept of the truth. They plan to use their sexuality to lure Nick to their side.

Nick had been able to retire from the private investigator business when he married Nora and made his business interest keeping an eye on her inheritance and investing it for her. She, meanwhile, blissfully mixes Nick's drinks, providing appropriate clues to help Nick effect a solution to the case. At the same time, she nurses Dorothy. Nick's response to Nora is to keep her well-protected. This is best seen when he knocks her unconscious when he is shot. She tells him that he need not have struck; the policeman who is present attributes her with great daring, saying "there's a woman with hair on her chest" (609).

Nora, despite her minor weaknesses, is still a much more positive character than Dorothy, who dates a married man only so that she may have access to places normally denied her. Dorothy also plays on the motherly instincts of Nora in order to keep herself close to the investigation. Mimi, like Brigid O'Shaughnessy, tries to use her sexuality to secure what she wants from Nick; they had, after all, previously been "involved." As in the case of Hammett's other women, Mimi is thwarted in her efforts by the integrity of the private investigator.

Hammett's women are typical of the attitude toward women in the era. His attitude and the attitudes portrayed in the views of his detectives are typical of the time of the novels. From Erle Stanley Gardner to Mickey Spillane,

both display attitudes toward women which are similar to Hammett's, even though Hammett finished his last novel in 1934, while Gardner published until the 1960s and Spillane was still publishing in the 1980s. In other words, Gardner and Spillane have seen changes in the sociological interpretation of women, their rights, and their positions of worth in society, but neither author reflects these changes in his writings. Of the two, Erle Stanley Gardner is said to be the best-selling novelist of all time with his Perry Mason series. Suzanne Ellery Greene, in Books for Pleasure: Popular Fiction 1914-1945, sees his success because of the emphasis on the action, the failure to be interested in personal gain, and the dominance of the male (101, 108, 112). Certainly, Gardner developed a dominant male while keeping alive the dichotomy of the female stereotype.

Gardner has continued the vice-virtue attitude toward women. His Della Street is akin to Hammett's Effie Perrine; Della is loyal, faithful, and ever-present. She always places her personal life--such as it is--secondary to any case Mason is working. A sense is created that Della longs for a meaningful relationship with Mason, but when she sees his dedication to the pursuit of justice, she pushes her personal interests to the background. She concentrates on being the perfect secretary, offering the perfect assistance, and being ever-ready to assist her boss in any

way she can. She is totally content with Paul Drake's calling her "doll" and "gorgeous" and with being relegated to taking notes, assisting casually in the solution to the case, or listening to Mason's solutions. Her sole reward, besides occasional platitudes, is an occasional steak dinner, awarded without warning.

Gardner's other women seem almost indistinguishable. They are either the sweet innocent daughter, wife, or mother who is wrongfully accused, or they are the wicked women who--if she is not the murderer--is at least hiding some evil part of herself or seeking some personal gain. Gardner then follows closely with the idea that women are divided into the good or evil categories. On top of this characterization, his plots are themselves virtually indistinguishable.

Strong evidence of Gardner's attitude toward women may be seen in every novel. For example, in The Case of the Queenly Contestant, the client-defendant is Ellen Adair née Calvert, a former beauty contest winner who has been blackmailed by a nurse who knew that Adair had an illegitimate child. The nurse, Agnes Burlington, knew that the employers of Adair reared the child as their own. In the course of the novel, Gardner generates many observations about women. First of all, Della Street is notified no less than four times in the novel that Mason has made plans for her evenings. He tells her on the spur of the moment that

the two of them will be dining with a client. When Della asks where she should meet him, Mason says, "You don't meet me. . . . We go out and have dinner then pick up our queenly client at Lo Brea and Broadway on the dot of 8:00" (88). These are the terms of Della's employment.

Della's menial chores continue when Agnes Burlington's body is discovered. At this point, Ellen Adair is acting wildly, and Perry sends Della with instructions to remove Ellen from the house and see that she touches nothing. When Mason is preparing the case to defend Ellen for the murder of Burlington, Della listens to his defense of how the watered lawn is evidence of Agnes's having been alive as she did not turn off the water at the appointed time. Della listens and asks questions, then says that she votes guilty. To this Mason responds that Della is "too easily persuaded by defense's arguments" (125). Della had previously applauded Mason's revelations concerning Maxine Caulfield's misidentification of Ellen; Mason patronizingly admits that the mistaken identity would not discredit all of Caulfield's testimony. To this Della gushes, "But the way you trapped her into the admission it does" (71).

This novel is particularly replete with Gardner's attitude toward his female characters. One of the first examples is the assumption made by many characters that Ellen Adair's pregnancy was an effort to trick Harmon Haslett into marriage, a typical problem of the time period

prior to birth control and legal abortion. When Mason denies this about his client, he is told by Maxine Caulfield, "You underestimate women" (65). Within a few scenes of this statement, Ellen Adair, after swearing that she wants no part of Haslett, learns of the amount of money in his estate and becomes willing to allow her identity to be known. When questioned about her change of mind, her answer is that "a woman has a right to change her mind" (74).

Other similarly sexist clichés are present. Supposedly at the time Ellen Adair entered the hospital to bear her child, the records regarding her age were falsified; this was necessary because Ellen was only nineteen, but Melinda Baird, listed as the mother, was thirty-one. Ellen recorded her age as twenty-nine "on the grounds that a woman always likes to make herself younger than she is" (95). Just before the arrest, Mason tells Ellen that Lieutenant Tragg will find her fingerprints all over Burlington's place, to which Ellen answers:

I don't know whether Tragg will understand or not. But, after all, he's a veteran police officer and he must have seen women go to pieces before.

After all, Mr. Mason, a woman is not a cold reasonable machine. She relies on intuition as much as logic, and she is at times high-strung and temperamental. (103)

Mason novels are inundated with comments like those mentioned. Lines of description are clearly drawn by the sex of the characters. Della Street is the good girl-- Mason's unabashed admirer. Most often other women are judged as either good or bad in relationship to Della. The women in Mason novels are expected to be illogical, intuitive, and occasionally evil and scheming.

For readers who find the portrayal of women in Hammett and Gardner to be offensive, Mickey Spillane is by far more offensive. Dilys Winn calls Spillane "the worse of the vicious school" (6). Spillane sees his detective, Mike Hammer, as being judge, jury, and executioner. Because Mike Hammer is the epitome of the tough guy, his attitude toward women is the barometer against which all men's attitudes are based. According to John G. Cawelti, Spillane uses sadism as a form of catharsis (185). Hammer's violence is orgasmic. Few readers of the Hammer novels are able to miss the violence or sexuality of the novels; many read Spillane for that very reason, for the novels are pornographic in their violence.

Just as John G. Cawelti recognized the evil in the Hammer novels, so does David Geherin, who sees them as the most violent, most sadistic of the detective novels (123). Geherin further connects Hammer's sadism with sex, for Hammer likes to squeeze women until they wince. Even his special love, Velda, is not exempt, for he continues to pass

fake punches at her or squeeze her. Women fall at Hammer's feet with just the appropriate admiration, lust, or fear. Like Gardner, Spillane creates plots that are virtually indistinguishable. One fact is that they all center on Hammer's toughness, his irresistible appeal to women, and his good-old-boy status with men, especially Pat Chambers.

Spillane's audience was secured with I, the Jury in which Hammer sets out to find the killer of his best friend, Jack Williams. In the course of the action of this story, he meets Velda, the Bellamy twins, and Charlotte Manning. Hammer's sexual appeal is strong to all these women.

Velda is introduced in this text as being an "awful distraction" because of her "million dollar legs" and the dresses that show her curves (12). Velda holds a private operator's license, but is content to be Hammer's secretary and confidante. Velda's interest in her boss is not as subtle as Della Street's in Perry Mason. In I, the Jury, when Velda sees lipstick from a Bellamy twin on Hammer's ear, she reacts quite strongly. Despite her jealousy, she lays out a change of clothes for him. Her consideration of her boss earns her a chance to overhear Hammer's date with Charlotte Manning; this brings her to tears until she remembers that she "only works here" (101). Although Hammer tells her he could not do without her, he leaves for his date, leaving her to answer the phone.

I, the Jury was Spillane's first, but in his latest, The Killing Man, very little has changed except a stronger interest in Velda. This novel centers on someone hurting Velda and killing another man who was mistaken for Hammer. In this novel, Hammer is more overt in his feeling for Velda; part of his hostility toward the assailant is the fact that Velda was injured on her day off. Despite this anger and his concern for Velda, Hammer takes her efficiency for granted. He realizes that she would have recorded and kept a record of a call from the man who had scheduled the appointment.

Hammer's affection for Velda does not make him immune to the sexual allure of other women. In I, the Jury, he had resisted the Bellamy twins while being genuinely smitten by Charlotte Manning. There is even talk of marriage; then in true tough-guy manner, he is able to plan her death because she is the killer. He does, however, admit that he must not let her speak or "he would never be able to keep my promise" (237). In a fashion reminiscent of Sam Spade's toughness, Mike Hammer sentences Charlotte to death, and she looks at the bullet wound made by his .45 and questions how he could do this. He responds, "It was easy" (246).

Spillane's male chauvinism continues in The Killing Man. He is a bit more tender to Velda. Like Gardner, Spillane writes sexist comments into the text. When he meets assistant district attorney Candace Amory, he

recognizes her as a "helluva broad" (102). At the same time, he notes that "Women are born clever. They begin life as little girls who have an instinct base that turns little boys inside out. They never seem to lose any of it, just getting better every day" (102). Even though Candace Amory is an assistant district attorney, she becomes another quest for Hammer even as he mourns the damage done to poor Velda.

Hammer begins his acquaintance with Candace calling her the "Ice Maiden," but he seems confident that he will melt the ice image. He even tells an onlooker that she has not melted to sex because no one has asked her. His treatment of her is demeaning. Besides his constant references to her as "kid," "doll," "pretty lady," and "Ice Maiden," he sets her up in a compromising situation where she will lose a bet and have to succumb to his sexual advances. Despite her reluctance, she begins to undress; Hammer allows her to undress to a point, and then he rejects her. This is her test of honor in keeping her word. Although she is not a woman of vice, a bad girl, she is not allowed to have any major part in the solution to the case. She is there merely to offer Mike Hammer assistance when he needs it. She is not as good as Velda, but not a villain either. Probably, Spillane can make no more progress than he has.

The dichotomy of good girl-bad girl was prevalent in the mystery novel, but writers like Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald were able to digress from the pat formula.

Chandler's Philip Marlowe is not as tough as Spillane's Hammer or Hammett's Spade or the Continental Op, but he is still the typical hard-boiled detective with a special Chandler twist. Chandler created Marlowe as a knight-detective. Those knightly qualities prevalent in Marlowe also add to the aura of isolation, an isolation also provoked by his idealism. Marlowe is set apart from other hard-boiled detectives and from other characters appearing in the novels. Rather than the dating and bar talk of a detective like Hammer, Marlowe isolates himself by playing chess against himself. Richard Schickel recognizes that Marlowe is a truly moral man doomed to this loneliness (158). The loneliness has given rise to the theory perpetuated by Frank MacShane that Marlowe is homosexual (70). David Geherin chooses to interpret Marlowe as a celibate knight figure whose courage, decency, and compassion make him a unique figure among detectives (143). Certainly, Marlowe is the classic romantic in a violent society. Robert B. Parker suggests that Marlowe is a figure who must remain isolated from others by the mere value of his positive qualities (143). Cawelti sees Marlowe as a paradox, for he is sensitive, but cynical and deals with moral decay with wise-guy cool; he also handles his bitterness and loneliness with sarcasm, self-control, and indifference (176). Marlowe's dedication to ideals created

the detective whose ethics cause him to develop his own moral code to which he strictly adheres (Lambert 214).

Whether readers accept Marlowe as a mere loner or as a latent homosexual will influence the interpretation of the use of women in the novels. Edward Margolies offers the theory that society creates an atmosphere in which men and women are rarely able to respect each other; to that end, Margolies also takes note of Marlowe's alleged fear of sex (143). Lambert had only noted that Marlowe seems especially mistrustful of blondes (143).

Marlowe is not necessarily homosexual; he is the archetypal detective who must be isolated to function in society. Ties of marriage or relationships create a tension and detract from the knight's ability to function. Chandler, however, does create a degree of sexual tension for his detective. That sexual tension is obvious in The Big Sleep with Marlowe's attraction to Vivian Sternwood and in The Long Good-bye when he is attracted to Linda Loring. Never, however, does Chandler make women and their relationships to Marlowe the focus of the novel. Instead, the women are in the text, and they interact with Marlowe while he maintains his knightly behavior, his code, and his solution to the case.

The focus of Chandler's creation of the knightly private investigator is shown in The Big Sleep when Marlowe approaches the Sternwood home and notes:

Over the entrance doors, which have let in a troop of Indian elephants, there was a broad stained glass panel showing a knight in dark armour rescuing a lady who was tied to a tree and didn't have any clothes on but some very long and convenient hair. The knight pushed the visor of helmet back to be sociable and he was fiddling with the knots of the ropes that tied the lady to the tree and not getting anywhere. I stood there and thought that if I lived in the house, I would sooner or later have to climb up there and help him. . . . (7)

Marlowe approaches his assignment with the Sternwoods in this knightly guise. He is the righter of wrongs and the rescuer of women.

Within due course, Marlowe meets Carmen Sternwood whom he recognizes as needing "weaning" (9). He takes a liking to General Sternwood and agrees to accept the case even when the General describes his daughters as honestly as possible, "Vivian is spoiled, exacting, smart, and quite ruthless. Carmen is a child who likes to pull the wings of flies. Neither of them has any more moral sense than a cat" (14). Marlowe has already decided that Carmen is coy, but he acknowledges that Vivian is "worth a stare. She was trouble" (18). Marlowe's moral and ethical sense is exhibited early in the text when he refuses to tell Vivian

what her father had wanted of him; she confides that he hates "masterful men" (20).

As Marlowe begins the investigation, he encounters Carmen sitting naked beside a dead body. He carries her home and turns her over to Mathilde, the maid, because she needs a "woman's touch" (37). Marlowe tries to learn if Carmen knows who killed Geyer; when Carmen continues giggling, he slaps her. Then he realizes "Probably all her boyfriends got around to slapping her sooner or later" (59). Marlowe's investigation leads him to assess Carmen as a "hot pants" (72). This is not a quality which attracts Marlowe, and he is displeased to find Carmen naked in his bed. She wants to drink with him and seduce him. He notes, "There was something behind her eyes, blank as they were, that I had never seen in a woman's eyes" (133). His insistence that she dress before he will give her a drink produces "the hissing noise that was sharp and animal" (133). When she leaves, he tears the bed apart savagely. Until Carmen tries to kill Marlowe, his encounters with the Sternwood women were seductive. Carmen's attempts at seduction are a part of her nature while Vivian tries to use seduction to learn what Marlowe knows.

Marlowe's responses to Vivian are masculine. He finds her attraction sexual, but he does not allow his attraction to her to interfere with his quest--he was hired to learn what had happened to Rusty Regan. He does what is necessary

to accomplish this without allowing physical allure to compromise his perceptions. Marlowe's moral quest and code would allow no less.

In The Long Good-bye, Chandler surrounds Marlowe with attractive women. Marlowe is able to put aside physical attraction and react to women just as he does to men; he likes some and dislikes others. He early shows his disdain for Sylvia Lennox. He was amazed by her poor treatment of her husband when she drove off and left him drunk in the street. Marlowe's humanity forces him to accept the responsibility for Terry Lennox that the wife rejects.

The Long Good-bye, Chandler's last completed manuscript, reflects a Marlowe who is sour and reflective. Much of the text is given to Marlowe's musings and digressions. When he sees a beautiful blonde in a bar (before he learns that she is Eileen Wade), he ponders at great length on types of blondes. His classifications are specific and detailed, but the woman he sees is "none of these, not even of that kind of world. She is unclassifiable, as remote and clear as a mountain water, as elusive as its color" (493). Despite his recognition of her beauty, Marlowe remains aloof; he allows himself to reach a point of seduction by her. When the spell is broken, he gets drunk.

His attraction to Linda Loring is like the attraction to Vivian Sternwood. He meets Linda while trying to recover

a sentimental gesture for Terry Lennox. While the relationship between Marlowe and Loring begins pleasantly enough, it degenerates when he makes derogatory comments about Sylvia Lennox and Harlan Potter. Loring threatens him. Marlowe is an unbiased observer at a party where Loring's husband accuses her of adultery with Wade. Marlowe sees her in another light when Harlan Potter, her father, sends her to bring Marlowe to a conference. Potter summarily dismisses her like a child with "You may have your tea in another room" (689). An attraction exists, but so does a certain wariness. This is evident when, at the end of the case, Loring shows at Marlowe's house and offers herself to him sexually; she and Marlowe still undergo some verbal parry despite the fact that they do begin a sexual relationship.

One of the themes of The Long Good-bye is the difference in relationships. As a statement on marriage, the novel makes a truly condemning observation. Sylvia Lennox used Terry partly as a cover, and according to Linda, "All she asked in return was to be left alone" (554). Marlowe had seen first-hand the effects of marriage: the Loring marriage, the Wade marriage, and the Lennox marriage. Dr. Loring publicly humiliates his wife by accusing her of adultery; Eileen Wade is a destructive wife, who superficially is helping her husband recover from alcoholism. Marlowe eventually accuses Eileen of not trying

to save her husband, but merely giving the impression of wanting to save him. Marlowe realizes that she killed her husband because of his infidelity. Eileen's response to Marlowe's accusation is that her husband was "a weak man, unreconciled, frustrated, but understandable. He was just a husband" (573). On the other hand, Eileen had expected more of Paul Marston (aka. Terry Lennox), but decided "Paul was either much more or nothing. In the end, he was nothing" (673).

Marlowe's life has always been bleak and lonely; he lives alone in a very small apartment, has very few friends, and engages in very few activities. The bleakness of the lives of these married couples only adds to the barrenness and bleakness of Marlowe's surroundings. Chandler had always portrayed Marlowe in these bleak surroundings. When that fact is coupled with the negative portrayal of marriage, it is surprising that Chandler chooses to pair Marlowe with Linda Loring. When she asks Marlowe to marry her, he refuses, saying it would only last six months. Linda feels that six months would be worth the effort and asks Marlowe if he expects "full coverage against all possible risks" (720). Marlowe tells her that he is spoiled by his individuality and she by her money. He tells her that marriage is for two people out of one hundred and "the rest just work at it. After twenty years all the guy has left is a work bench in the garage. American girls are just

terrific. American wives take in too damn much territory" (720). Marlowe tells Linda that the first divorce is the hardest and after that it is a matter of economics.

This bleak portrayal of relationships is not necessarily a condemnation of women, but a condemnation of the two sexes trying to live together. Ironically, in Poodle Springs, his unfinished manuscript, Chandler has Marlowe marry Linda. Even in Chandler's portion of the manuscript, Chandler portrays Marlowe and Linda as having difficulty with the marriage because of Marlowe's intense need for self-sufficiency and his insistence on keeping his practice open.

Chandler is able to draw his women as more rounded, two-dimensional characters. None of the women seem totally evil or totally good. They, instead, are humans who possess both good and bad qualities. Linda Loring is a rich, selfish, and possibly unfaithful wife of Dr. Loring. Eileen Wade is a distraught and unfulfilled lover of Paul Marston who tries to accept a lesser love only to find herself more unfulfilled. These women, like the men in the texts, have problems which focus on their positive and negative qualities. Even Carmen Sternwood is a child of arrested development; she might be truly evil, but Chandler portrays her as being such from a psychological viewpoint.

Even though Chandler made advances in the creation of two-dimensional characters, probably no writer of early

hard-boiled fiction has created women who are as intelligent, loyal, strong, and persevering as those created by Ross Macdonald. Edward Margolies suggests that this is because of R. Macdonald's strong relationship with wife, Marcia Muller, herself a writer of mystery fiction (74). Lew Archer, R. Macdonald's detective, is one of the few early hard-boiled detectives who has been married. Archer admits that his divorce is a result of his dedication to his work. Through Archer, R. Macdonald delves deeply into the psychological. Because of this psychological interest, Archer is concerned more with mercy and justice (Winks 189).

The women with whom Archer comes into contact are women whose problems are solved because Archer is an apt observer (Symons 172). Archer, unlike Hammer, Spade, and Marlowe, is a questioner more than a doer (McCullough 82). Ross Macdonald himself stated in his article in Otto Penzler's The Great Detectives: A Host of the World's Most Celebrated Sleuths Are Unmasked by Their Authors that he had wanted Archer not to be a seeker of inordinate power, but a person who sought knowledge and understanding (23). Robert B. Parker suggests that Archer will always see through corruption, deception, and guilt to the point that truth will win (153).

R. Macdonald is inordinately good with the psychological insights to his character as is seen in Black Money, a story of an old suicide. In trying to solve the

case, Archer comes into contact with Bess Tappinger, the young wife of a college professor whose help Archer has sought in finding out about the marriage of Ginny Fablon and Francis Martel. Bess Tappinger is attracted to Archer and makes a play for him when he questions her. He rejects the advance and observes, "She was rough. They get that way, sometimes, when they marry too young and trap themselves in a kitchen and wake up ten years later wondering where the world is" (131). As the tension builds between Bess and Archer, he notes:

Though she had a strokeable-looking back, my hands were careful not to wander. The easy ones were nearly always trouble: frigid or nympho, schizy or commercial or alcoholic, sometimes all five at once. Their nicely wrapped gifts of themselves often turned out to be homemade bombs or fudge with arsenic in it. (134)

Archer accepts the women in the way any person with understanding accepts another. The women have their problems and worry with them just as the men do. They are good, bad, or indifferent. Archer is not the asexual detective of Hammett's Continental Op, nor is he the lusty Mike Hammer or the chaste Philip Marlowe. He accepts his job, but like Marlowe, he accepts a certain code in his workings. His is understated, without the chivalric sense. Archer's code is wrapped in the working of the mind.

In The Zebra-Striped Hearse, R. Macdonald has Archer work within the social and psychological confines of a family and its interactions. The center of the family is Colonel Blackwell, a retired military man who has had trouble adjusting to life outside the military and life away from his mother. His dominant personality affects the women around him. His first wife, Pauline, leaves him, abandoning their child in order to be free of him. His second wife, Isobel, tries to protect him and cement the family, but she is aware of the deep secrets of the family; she has not, however, done anything to alleviate these secrets. Instead, she has closed herself to them.

Blackwell's daughter, Harriet, is a focus of the novel. As Colonel Blackwell's daughter, she has been the center of his universe; he is not willing to accept that anyone can or will love her as he does. When Archer meets her, he observes, "She was a lot of girl" (218). He also recognizes that he "saw why her father couldn't believe that any man would love her truly or permanently. She looked a little too much like him" (219). Yet, in Mexico, a tavern owner states, "Big girl, big ego, maybe. She hasn't made the breakthrough into womanhood, you know . . . Whenever she does, she could be quite a thing. Beauty isn't in the features so much as in the spirit, in the eyes" (270).

R. Macdonald's interest in psychology comes into play as he shows Dolly Stone as a predestined victim of Colonel

Blackwell. Dolly has been promiscuous, and Blackwell has a tendency toward pedophilia. All of Isobel's help to Dolly does not prevent her falling to Blackwell's sexual interest. Harriet becomes involved in the situation when she falls for Bruce Campion who had married Dolly in order to give the baby--Blackwell's child--a name. Harriet learns that the child is her half-brother. Archer suspects Isobel of creating a scenario to perpetuate Harriet's murder of Dolly.

R. Macdonald writes the novels so that the women are perceived as Blackwell's victims. Dolly is literally the victim of his pedophilia. Isobel is the victim of his duplicity to cover his perversity with what appears to be a stable marriage. Harriet is the saddest victim. She resents Dolly, whom she felt had taken her daddy away. Harriet felt that "She turned him against me when we were just kids. I wasn't so little, but she was" (433). Although Harriet recalls that her father offered a doll to her after he had bought one for Dolly, she admitted that "I didn't want it. I wanted my daddy" (433). Although Colonel Blackwell eventually kills himself in order to protect Harriet, the death is too late to undo all the damage he has done. Dolly is dead, and her child is motherless. Ralph Simpson is also dead. Isobel is aware that Blackwell married her so that Dolly could not accost him. Harriet, of course, will always feel inferior to Isobel and Dolly.

R. Macdonald plants all the evidence of the damage families do to each other. The women in this family seem to have been hurt the most. Earlier in the text, R. Macdonald had planted the information that Blackwell had been dominated by his mother, a character known only through the information of Pauline or Isobel. The complexities of personalities are brought to bear on the action.

The treatment of women in mystery fiction is in many ways a result of progression. Hammett, Gardner, and Spillane all respond in similar fashion, mirroring patriarchal attitudes toward women in either good or bad stereotypes. Chandler and R. Macdonald's female characters vary from the norm not because society has changed its views, but to differentiate the male detectives: the chaste knight and the psychological observer. These latter two allow for a more sympathetic approach to women. Because of the insight of these writers, contemporary writers like Robert B. Parker have been able to make their own advances.

Writers may choose to mirror their own views of women or to mirror the views of society or to view both. Early writers of mystery fiction have created a certain freedom of choice for contemporary writers. Because of the works of Hammett, Chandler, and R. Macdonald, Robert B. Parker may choose his attitude toward women. Of course, the society in which Parker writes and in which he sets his novels is a more multi-dimensional one than the ones of the earlier

mystery writers. Parker has more topics with which he may deal and more freedom in dealing with topics. Sexuality is much more open in the scene of the 1970s when Parker began to publish. Parker's use of sexual relationships may be developed in ways closed to earlier writers. The earlier writers have, however, freed Parker to create women who are good or bad in personality and not merely because they are women.

Chapter IV

Spenser's Clients

Robert B. Parker wrote his doctoral dissertation on mystery fiction. His premise was that the early hero like Natty Bumppo of Cooper had to battle the wilderness while the modern hero, the detective, has moved to an urban wilderness. Parker contends that problems of the urban wilderness parallel those of the colonial wilderness. Parker then analyzed the works of Hammett, Chandler, and R. Macdonald. Once the dissertation was complete, he began his own series of mystery fiction in which he created Spenser, a tough, no-nonsense type who is patterned after Marlowe and, to a lesser extent, Archer. Spenser is a knightly hero who has a very strong code; he also finds himself pitted against the psychological problems of his clients. Spenser's goal is to help his clients by detecting or investigating their problems, but he also tries to make their lives better--to solve problems beyond those for which he was hired.

In creating this series, Parker had to decide what focus he would choose. By creating Spenser as a knightly character like Marlowe, Parker had to provide people for Spenser to save. Spenser's clients are frequently housewives who have become bored with their suburban life. Parker, to some extent, uses these women as displaced

damsels in distress. These damsels, like their medieval prototypes in distress, are dependent on the knights to save them from their evil surroundings and themselves. Parker, in setting Spenser's cases in suburbia, also encounters new problems. Spenser is also hired to deal with women who are terrorists, prostitutes, and lesbians. These women may be types of the damsel in distress, but their treatment as such is not as clear. Parker is, of course, creating cases for Spenser which are commiserate with the settings of time and place: the urban and suburban wilderness about which he wrote in his dissertation. Spenser's reactions to these women are the reactions of a caring human who wants to right the wrongs of a society. Spenser must face the problems of the new society like runaways, alienation, and leisure time.

In his novels God Save the Child, Promised Land, and The Widening Gyre, Parker sets out to have Spenser help housewives who have become victims in this new suburban wilderness. Regardless of their personal problems or peculiar personalities, Spenser sees these women as victims of their society. He seeks to offer aid to these women without judgment. Parker also seems never to pass judgment on his characters. He creates them for a purpose and then allows Spenser to interact to solve the problems. The characters may be despicable, but Spenser is set in motion to solve the problem and settle the woes of the people involved. In Early Autumn, Crimson Joy, and Pastime,

Spenser works in the psychology of the characters like Archer to solve problems of women who totally destroy the family.

Betty Freidan, in The Feminine Mystique (1963), claims that the housewife was a special Peter Pan figure who validated herself by having children, baking the family bread, and generally serving the family, thus keeping herself forever young (39). Freidan finds that the housewife could work outside the home if she still fulfills the family obligations. Ironically, Freidan notes that women expanded their duties to fill whatever time was available--if they stayed home, then they took all day to complete their housekeeping tasks. If they worked, they were able to complete all their tasks at home in a shorter span of time (224). Freidan was stating a premise long accepted, the role of the woman was that of a stereotype. From the very colonial frontier of Natty Bumppo, women were considered inferior to men, and the duties relegated to them were those pertaining to the house. Little attention was paid to people like Abigail Adams who begged for equal consideration for women in colonial times. Women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Lucy Stone also had a difficult time seeking equality. Since women were considered socially and politically inferior to men, their role in the house, or an occupation associated with their housewifely duties, was all that was open to them.

Obviously, any task performed by a woman was a task to be considered of inferior importance. Relegation to this inferior consideration can weigh heavily on the minds of women.

In Spenser's society, the task of housewife may be even worse, for some women have indeed left the home for jobs. A woman who has chosen to remain in the home may be viewed differently by her fellow women. After all, if given a choice, why would a woman remain in such an unfulfilling role as housewife and mother? Parker's housewives and mothers are women who are remaining in the home; in some cases, they drastically feel the lack of fulfillment. Their reactions to this feeling are what causes them problems. Marge Bartlett, in God Save the Child, seeks her fulfillment in art, ignoring her family. In Promised Land, Pam Shepard is totally controlled by a domineering, socially driven husband, causing her to respond negatively to him and the family. In The Widening Gyre, the women, including political wife, Ronni Alexander, are so bored with their lives that they become involved with affairs which lead to pornography and extortion. In Early Autumn and Pastime, Patty Giacomini fears functioning alone and abandons her son in order to find a man who will fulfill her needs, financially and emotionally.

In God Save the Child, Marge Bartlett lives in affluent suburbia. She and her husband appeal to Spenser to find

their missing son Kevin. From the first description, Marge Bartlett is not portrayed in a favorable light, for Spenser sees her as

a bland, spoiled, pretty look, carefully made up with eye shadow and pancake makeup and false eyelashes. She looked as though if she cried she'd erode. Her hair, freshly blonde, was cut close around her face. Gaminelike, I bet her hairdresser said. Mia Farrow, I bet he said. She was wearing a paisley caftan slit up the side and back, ankle strapped platform shoes with three inch soles and heels. Sitting opposite me, she had crossed her legs carefully so that the caftan fell away above the knee. I wanted to say, don't, your legs are too thin. But I knew she wouldn't believe me. (9-10)

Marge is a self-centered woman who plays coy and seductive when she has gone to hire a detective to find her son.

When Marge reveals that she is unsure when her son left the house because she was at an art class, Spenser does not criticize her as a poor mother. She is instead noted as a pretentious woman. After all, her physical appearance is noted as a parody of her creativity. Spenser stops her attempts at explanation by pointing out that he is not on the Parent of the Year Committee, does not referee

marriages, and does not assess parental performances. He will, however, look for the son.

As Spenser looks for Kevin Bartlett, both parents are seen as inadequate--victims of the draw of the new lures of society: money and self-centeredness. The Bartletts live in "a development. Flossy and fancy and a hundred thousand dollar house, but a development" (18). Spenser further observes that all the houses bear the mark for "central intelligence" (18). This attention to house, pool, and lawn, but not to people, is a mark of the new self-centeredness of society. Kevin's room bears the mark of the emptiness of the lives in this society, for:

There was nothing in the room. No pictures on the wall, no nude pictures, no pot, no baseballs autographed by Carl Yastrezemski. It was like the ample rooms that furniture departments put up in the big department stores: neat, symmetrical, color-coordinated, and empty. (25)

Marge may have shown herself to be creative, but Kevin was allowed minimal creative individuality in his own space. Kevin has added nothing to the room. Marge does describe her son as not being creative like her. His orderliness is seen by her as non-creative. She says that he is "just like his damned father. So careful, so neat. Everything has to be the same. Not like me at all; I'm spontaneous. 'Spontaneous Me'" (28). She cannot even allow Spenser

insight into the personality of her son without trying to turn the focus to herself.

Each time Marge is presented, her chances of becoming Mother of the Year degenerate. She tells Spenser and Chief of Police Trask that her husband, like his son, is very orderly and wants plain food--just meat and potatoes. She does not want to bother with cooking, but claims that she would if the family would eat a dish like veal in wine sauce with cherries. Her husband challenges her, saying that she does not cook at all. Even when the first ransom note arrives, Marge is more concerned with letting Spenser know that she is sculpting her dog. Marge also hampers Spenser's investigation by not allowing him to know the truth about the phone call from the kidnapers; she has conveniently left out the part about her own punishment for "screwing her ass off all over town" (95).

Marge is not only a bad mother; she is a poor friend and a poor human being. She puts forward a facade of creativity and grand hostess and suburban wonder which forces her always to worry about her own image as it is projected in her community. Needless to say, she has no basis on which to form an accurate image of what she should become. When the family attorney, Earl Maguire, is murdered in her home, she is impatient in dealing with the issue of murder, for as she says, "My company is coming in three and a half hours. I've got to get ready" (117). The police

attribute her attitude to her grief, but Spenser is more cynical, believing that her society has made her selfish. She is cold to the murder of her attorney and almost as distanced to the disappearance of her own son.

Marge's appearance at the dinner party is almost as ludicrous as her earlier appearance at Spenser's office and her going to deliver the ransom note in toreador pants. She is the "ultimate triumph of Elizabeth Arden" (123). She is further described through Spenser's observations as having matching lavender nail polish and eye shadow while also wearing lavender shoes and earrings. Spenser observes that her latex is stretched with "pressure tightly contained" (123). At this same party, she lures a guest outside, and Spenser charges to her rescue when he hears her protest. She claims to have been merely talking to her guest when he got the wrong idea about her intentions.

Not long after this incident, Spenser finds where Kevin is, but Marge is more angry at Spenser for not having stayed close enough to protect her. When he tells her that he knows where her son is, she says, "We're paying you to protect me and you run off on your damned own" (180). Instead of rushing off to bring her son home, she tries to palm the job off on Spenser, and when he refuses to go without her or her husband, she holds up the rescue while she can change clothes. When the Bartletts and Spenser appear in the neighborhood where Kevin is hiding, Marge's

response is "It's not a bad neighborhood. Look, it's across the street from the museum. And there's a nice park" (183). Once inside the apartment where Kevin has been staying, Marge's attitude is one of open admiration for the physical attributes of the kidnapper. She says, "He is really quite nice looking in a physical sort of way. . . . The apartment is quite neat too" (184).

Once face-to-face with the kidnapper, Marge does, however, jump at Vic Harroway, who bloodies her nose. This may have been her only noble gesture, but Spenser plays the point up to Kevin after the fight is over. Spenser tells Kevin that his parents had gone a long way for him.

Marge Bartlett is quite a despicable character. Readers may draw the conclusion that she is a modern parody of motherhood, but her part in the novel shows her as the product of the "me" generation. She looks primarily to herself, wrapped in the hedonism and egotism of the thwarted creativity. She abandons her own family and her own self-respect to live and function in this flashy suburban environment. She becomes too totally enmeshed in the possession of the material objects so that she never looks to those finer qualities of life. Yet Spenser does his job for her and the family. He finds her son, refusing to pass judgment on her, except in humorous observations.

Spenser's job was to find Kevin Bartlett, which he did. Once Kevin returns to this suburban life with his parents,

there is no guarantee that Kevin's life will be any different than it was before. Spenser can only find the child and return him. The wilderness of suburbia is an environment in which the Bartletts must learn to live. Neither Spenser nor the family can change society, but the family could change its response to the society and the environment.

Critics rarely respond to the characters in the novels, but they did respond to Marge Bartlett. The critics recognized the evil in which the family had to live, but Newgate Callendar, in his December 15, 1974 review in The New York Times Book Review, thought Parker did an excellent portrayal of the mother. Other critics also noted the portrayal of Marge Bartlett. Alice Turner and Barbara Bannon, in Publishers Weekly, thought that Marge was subhuman (147). Like Ross Macdonald, Parker tries to see to it that his creation, Spenser, saves as much of humanity as possible. Parker creates the inhuman, and Spenser works within those bounds. He tends to find society responsible for the changes; Marge Bartlett is not condemned for refusing to be the stay-home mother who bakes pies and cakes and worries about the cleanliness of the clothes. Marge is a product of her environment. She is not pleasant, but society made her that subhuman.

In Promised Land, Parker's Edgar winner, Spenser is definitely setting about to protect and save the female

character, Pam Shepard. Pam Shepard is missing, and her husband, Harvey, has hired Spenser to find her. Spenser has already learned a great deal about her and her situation before he finds her in New Bedford. When he first sees her, he comments, "Pam was slim and Radcliffy looking with a good tan and her brown hair back in a tight French twist. She was wearing a chino pantsuit that displayed a fine-looking backside. I'd have to get closer but she looked worth finding" (51). His talk with her reveals that she does not really know why she left; her response to Spenser is that he has the problem. He reveals his knowledge of Eddie Taylor and suggests that she too has a problem. She admits to loving her husband, but says that a relationship cannot be built on one emotion. She even makes a play for Spenser.

After first taking the case, Spenser had made a revelation about Pam's absence when he told Susan:

Most wives who run off don't run very far. The majority of them, in fact, want to be found and want to come home . . . It isn't particularly liberated but it's the way it is. For the first time the number of runaway wives exceeds the number of runaway husbands. They read two issues of Ms Magazines, see Marlo Thomas on a talk show and decide they can't go on. So they take off. Then they find out that they have no marketable

skills. That ten or fifteen years of housewifing has prepared them for nothing else. (15-16)

Spenser's insights sum up the vacant feeling of many housewives who feel trapped in the home with nothing to do unless they, like Marge Bartlett, find outlets for their creativity or, like Pam Shepard, run away.

When Spenser talks to the Shepard family's daughter, Millie, his insights prove to be accurate. Millie tells Spenser that Harvey Shepard treated Pam like a queen. A picture suddenly emerges of Pam Shepard to show an only child, college graduate, college sweetheart of her husband. Pam had either been under the protection of her father or her husband all her life. Harvey Shepard tells Spenser that Pam could not have had more than twenty dollars when she left because he had given her the house money on Monday and she left on Thursday. Millie agrees with her mother's actions. Millie says, "My father got on her nerves . . . He was always grabbing at her, you know. Patting her ass, or saying gimme a kiss when she was trying to vacuum" (30). Once again life in suburbia proves less than enticing.

Spenser had found Pam after he discovered a secret of hers. The night before she left home, she had been at the Silver Seas Motel with a man, Eddie Taylor. The bartender recognized that Pam was a regular who looked for young, muscular men. Eddie Taylor talks to Spenser about his encounter with Pam and says that she had a "nice body for an

old broad" (42). Taylor acknowledges having spent the night with her and does not understand why, the morning after, Pam had called him a pig and refused his sexual advances. Taylor admits to having punched her out and left. Spenser realizes the plight of a woman who turns to strangers for sex. Pam owes Taylor nothing, and unlike Harvey, she is not obligated to have sex with him. When she does, her shame places her in a no-win situation.

Spenser is able to trace Pam through her credit card. He finds her and resolves that part of his occupation. Spenser will not immediately give her location to her husband. He thinks about Eddie Taylor's last look at her crying and notes the overdressed quality when he first met her. He decides to give her some time to make a decision about returning home.

Spenser senses Pam's feelings and tells her that he is unconcerned about the sanctity of marriage. He says that he instead deals "in what it is fashionable to call people. Bodies. Your basic human being. I don't give a goddamn about the sanctity of marriage. But I do occasionally worry about whether people are happy" (63). Pam does not know whether she is happy or not. She is confused about herself and her marriage. Spenser develops paternalistic qualities. Besides not turning Pam's whereabouts over to Harvey, Spenser also determines to solve Harvey's problems--he is in debt to loan shark, King Powers. Spenser hopes that solving

these problems will give the family a new lease on life. He is able to effect this protection of his client and his family by bringing down King Powers and the group of lesbian feminists with whom Pam had taken refuge.

Pam had resisted Spenser's help until she unwittingly allowed herself to become involved in a bank robbery staged by the feminists in which an old bank guard is killed.

Susan assures Pam that Spenser will help; Spenser tells Pam:

We don't look around and see where we were. And we don't look down the road and see what's coming. We don't have anything to do but deal with what we know. We look at the facts and we don't speculate. We just keep looking right at this and we don't say what if, or I wish or if only. We just take it as it comes. (109)

Pam then goes to live in Spenser's apartment while he effects an end to her problem.

Spenser tries to play at marriage counselor and let Pam know that all that Harvey did he did because he thought he was working for them and their marriage. Since Spenser is not much of a marriage counselor, he decides to give the police King Powers and the feminists instead of giving Harvey and Pam. Once these two forces are removed from the picture, he tells Pam that her relationship with Harvey can be saved because "There's love in the relationship. . . . Love doesn't solve everything and it isn't the only thing

that's important, but it has a big head start on everything else. If there's love, then there's a place to begin" (202).

Pam Shepard is a more bearable character than Marge Bartlett. Pam may very well be a character who is in a life that she deserves. A criticism of Promised Land in the Library Journal indicates that Pam and Harvey deserve each other. Newgate Callendar in his review feels that the characters are caught in a "web of circumstances" (40). Spenser, of course, chooses to try to unweave the web of circumstances and right the wrongs of the lives of the Shepards. He offers them a new lease on life that they may not have had without him. The plight of the Shepards in Promised Land is much like Marge's in God Save the Child. These people are all victims of this new society and the "I" generation. They look to personal happiness rather than a common good for society.

Like Promised Land, the women in The Widening Gyre are unhappy with their lots in life. They do not run away literally; instead, they approach the situation with what is even more socially unacceptable. They seek relief from their boring lives by attending granny parties where young college boys provide cocaine and sex. The sex is videotaped; the tapes are saved until they become useful to force the husbands, government employees, to make particularly poor decisions.

In The Widening Gyre, Spenser is initially hired to provide security for senatorial candidate and right-wing fundamentalist, Meade Alexander, and his wife, Ronni. Meade, however, turns to Spenser to help save Ronni who has attended a granny party and whose videotape is being used to force Meade to withdraw from the race in favor of mob-controlled candidate, Robert P. Browne. Meade wants to withdraw, but wants Ronni's name saved, for he says he would "support Satan to save her" (35). Spenser agrees that he (Spenser) would support Satan to save her as well as agreeing to assume the responsibility for finding the blackmailer, preventing future blackmail, and saving two other women who had been lured into similar activities by Gerry Broz. As Spenser tells one of the two women, "I'm doing it for the person I represent. Costs me nothing to include you" (112).

All of the women whom Spenser assists are politicians' wives. When Spenser is seeking answers, one of the women provides her reasons for boredom:

Nineteen years of breathless with adoration. At all the parties we could get invited to, and when we weren't invited he'd be in dark despair and I'd have to cheer him up adoringly. Even when he was at work I had to adore him from afar at bridge games and luncheons among department wives and

charity teas. The perfect complement to him. The adornment to his career. (112)

Ronni Alexander was the reason for Spenser's having begun the investigation, and she is the initial housewife and politician's wife with whom he comes into contact. She proves to be a mere representative one. She is superficially a loving wife who literally holds her husband's hand as he campaigns and who espouses the same conservative, fundamentalist facade. Yet behind the facade is a woman who drinks excessively, who feels that "Dinner without wine is like a kiss without a squeeze" (12). This same woman made the populace believe that her husband was all "that stood between us and the arrival of the anti-Christ" (12). When Spenser sees the video featuring Ronni, he realizes that the supporters of Meade Alexander would not be likely to forgive him for being married to the "whore of Babylon" (67).

When Parker is looking at the lives of Ronni and Meade, his use of the W. B. Yeats poem, "The Second Coming," shows a strong implication with his own theme. Richard Ellman, in his Yeats: The Man and the Masks, projects that Yeats intended the gyres to represent sexual love and the self over the world (90). This interpretation certainly fits Ronni Alexander and the other wives who find themselves drawn to the admittedly humiliating experience with young men who are "crude and stupid" (118). Despite their

humiliation, these women seek the personal sexual gratification of the new society, turning toward their primeval self. The literary reference is made with Yeats and his life-long search for spiritually fulfilling life and sexuality and the perfect balance of each. These women are nowhere near the harmonious balance.

Even though Spenser and his love, Susan, are not in balance in their own personal lives, she is able to offer some insight for him. She has gone in search of her doctorate and is seeking an identity outside the range of her identity with a male. Her response to Spenser is "I never had a center, a core full of self-certainty and conviction. I've merely picked up the coloration of the you's: my father, my husband, my friend" (91). When Susan hears of the situation involving Ronni, she says, "She must be very desperate" (76).

The difference between the women and Susan is that Susan is working to separate herself from the stifling situation of constant connection to the life of a man while the political wives only turn from one man to another. Their behavior humiliates them and causes them to run the risks of costing their husbands their careers and themselves whatever self-esteem they have garnered. The loss of their husbands' careers would bring on untold grief and guilt, thus perpetuating the problem. The wives want an identity

of their own, but really are unable to move toward that positive manifestation.

Parker's sympathy is with the women in cases like those in God Save the Child, Promised Land, and The Widening Gyre. These women were confused by their lives. Even with Marge Bartlett's despicable nature during most of the text, she still eventually comes to the rescue of the son, suffering physical abuse from Vic Harroway. There are, however, women in Early Autumn, Crimson Joy, and Pastime with whom Spenser is unable to develop any sympathy. The women in these novels are women who, for reasons deep in their psyches, abandon their families or else cause other deep problems for people. Where wives in other texts may be seen as victims of the society, the victims created in Early Autumn, Crimson Joy, and Pastime are victims of the housewives, their children. Spenser's attitude is much less forgiving when the women hurt others.

In Crimson Joy, the damage done by the mother has hurt her own child and left such damage to him that he is murdering women, binding them with clothesline, and leaving a single rose on the bodies. Spenser turns to Susan Silverman, his love and a psychotherapist, for advice about the motive of the killer, and eventually Susan becomes a target. The killer, in fact, has been in therapy with Susan. Hawk and Spenser try to protect her when Susan makes the observation, "I probably wasn't the right referral for

him. An attractive older woman in a position of authority, it was easy for the transference of feelings from his mother onto me" (152).

In the course of the conversation with Spenser and Hawk, Susan tries to reveal why the problem originated. She tells them:

Yes, and I'm supposed to then lead him to master those feelings, because I'm not his mother and our interaction will not nurture his condition . . . Here his passion for his mother was transferred to me and her unattainability existed as well in me, and, my God, it's a seminar in shrink school, but too simply, his need for oblique and symbolic sex-slash-punishment was simply intensified by the transference plus the unfortunate accident of your relationship with both the case and me. (153)

Susan, upon figuring the basis of the case, rejects the patient; he begs for the continuation of treatment. Susan decides on the impossibility of this action. At this point, however, she feels that he will attack the source of his problem--his mother. Spenser had learned of this obsession and hatred for his mother.

Spenser's initial reaction to the mother is to see her as nondescript. In keeping with interpretation of psychology, Mrs. Felton, the mother, is known as Blackie, a nickname for her real name Rose Mary. The killer had killed

black women and left a red rose. When Gordon, Spenser, and Mrs. Felton reach a confrontation, she tells her son, "No boy had a better mother. I never left him for a minute. I was always there when there was trouble. I stood on my head for this boy all his life" (192). Gordon's response is:

Just fuck off, will you. You been saying how you stood on your fucking head for me all my fucking life and I don't want to hear it anymore.

Dr. Silverman knows. You stood me on my head. You didn't love me. You never loved anybody. You loved me when I did stuff you liked and didn't love me when I did stuff you didn't like, and none of it had any logic. You frigid bitch, you ruined my life, that's what you did. (193)

Gordon's confession brings self-concern from Blackie. She advises him to run after she tells him that she has friends to think about. She asks him, "Would you put me through this?" (195). At his capture, he tells Spenser, "She made me like this. I had to be like this" (203). The truth of the matter is settled when Gordon remembers while in jail, "He remembered lying in his mother's bed . . . the last thing, the thing he hadn't told the shrink. His mother's body, naked, smelling a little like cooking, touching him" (210). Felton hangs himself, verbalizing as he does, "I never told . . . I never told, Momma" (211).

The topic of child sexual abuse is relevant to the times of the novel, but the mother's minor role gives her anonymity, a blamelessness. Critics of the novel criticize the lack of plot, the emphasis on Susan and her broken relationship with Spenser. Little attention is given to the mother because Parker chose to characterize her so minimally. Her minimal characterization accentuates her horror as a character; she commits so much brutality against her son as to cause him becoming a murderer but seems so insignificant as to be unnoticed.

In Parker's novels, Early Autumn and Pastime, the situation is different with Patty Giacomini, for Patty seems to have a male fixation. Her need for a man is more important than her need to be a good mother. In Early Autumn, she and her husband use Paul as a pawn in their divorce. Patty hires Spenser to bring the child home, but when Spenser finds the child, she offers to pay Spenser to take the child out to lunch so that her date will be uninterrupted. Spenser takes the child to eat, but refuses payment for the meal. In spending time with Paul, Spenser learns that the child is lacking in social graces; he can barely carry on a conversation, does not know how to order or eat in a restaurant, and lives on junk food and junk television.

As danger persists, Patty hires Spenser to live at the house to protect Paul and her. Patty plays wife, fixing

meals, but finally makes a play for Spenser. In so doing, she tells him that she married because "that's where the bucks are" (55). Spenser rejects her sexual advances and realizes that "Poor old Patty. She's read all the stuff in Cosmopolitan and knew all the language of self-actualization, but all she really wanted was to get a man with money and power" (57). Patty admits that "Women are so goddamn boring" (70).

Even though Patty must withdraw her sexual interest in Spenser, she does not become a better mother for Paul. She allows Spenser to take Paul to Maine and does not interfere until she runs out of money. When she no longer has money, her intention is to return Paul to his father so that her bills will be lessened. Spenser in turn seeks to learn enough about her and her husband so as to force (blackmail) them into allowing Paul to follow through with his own choices. The father's involvement in insurance scams makes him an easy target to withdraw from involvement with Paul, but still send money. Spenser also learns that Patty's monthly trips to New York are for the express purpose of getting drunk, finding a man, having sex, and returning home.

When Spenser reflects on Patty and her situation, Susan tells him that "Promiscuity doesn't have to be a sign of unhappiness in a woman" (203). Spenser tells Patty that "Monthly indiscretions--random, promiscuous. Actually,

probably neurotic. If I were you, I'd get some help" (216). Patty's reply is "It's not neurotic . . . If a man did it, you'd say it was normal" (216). To Spenser's credit, he finds the behavior equally neurotic for both sexes, but he secures her non-involvement in Paul's decisions.

Patty is not a factor in any novels until Pastime, when Spenser learns from Paul that he and his mother have developed an uneasy reconciliation. She has become a follower of Paul's career, attending performances and keeping a scrapbook. Paul does admit to Spenser that Patty has changed little, for she still needs men in her life. Paul admits that she is easier and less desperate when "she's got a boyfriend" (16). Paul, through therapy, has discovered "She is what she is" (30). When she disappears, Paul still needs to find her; his life is wrapped inexorably to hers. Paul feels that "She has to accept . . . that I matter" (139).

Patty is easily found living in Stockbridge with Rich Beaumont, who had taken money from the mob. He and Patty have bought a home, but just as credit card receipts had made it possible to find out about her experiences in New York, they had helped to trace her to Stockbridge. When Patty is about to be confronted about Beaumont's past, she says, "Damn you, Paul, I don't want to know! I'm happy, don't you understand that? I'm happy" (144).

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Patty does learn of Beaumont's past and his involvement with the mob, but when he decides to run away, she chooses to leave with him. She again abandons Paul. Paul had already said that she was "not exactly June Cleaver" (203). Patty's decision to go with Beaumont is based on her decision that "It's not so easy for a girl to be alone" (195). Paul tells her that "If you can't be alone, you can't be anybody. Haven't you ever found that out? To be with somebody first you got to be with you" (195). To Patty, this is psychological babble. Once again Paul is without access to his mother. He had wanted to secure a frame of reference before entering into his own marriage. He is cynical and tells Spenser that the truth does not necessarily set a person free, but Spenser reminds him, "pretend sure as hell doesn't do it" (206).

Parker concentrates his novels around Spenser's rescue of women. Interestingly enough, a large number of these are women whose existence center on home and family. For years, women had been taught that their existence in life was forever tied to their securing husbands, having a good home, and being a mother. The sexual revolution of the 1960s changed that perception for many women and men. Yet not all women had careers or other lifestyles readily available to them. To some who had not been "liberated," their existence was still connected to a man. The women in Parker's novels have chosen or been forced to stay in the

home. They do not completely recognize the stifling results of their unfulfilled lives, but do get so far as to recognize the need for filling an emptiness in their lives. Marge Bartlett turns to the artistic in an effort to channel her energies; Pam cannot find her channel and falters with self-destructive affairs as do the women in The Widening Gyre. Patty Giacomini cannot feel fulfilled unless there is a man in her life. Rose Mary Felton practices destructive sex, but the destruction centers on her son.

Parker's portrayal of these women may be an interpretation of the problems inherent when women are unprepared for lives in contemporary society. Parker is, however, criticizing society and the role of the family as much as he is the women. In God Save the Child, Promised Land, Early Autumn, and Pastime, part of the plot focuses on the fact that there are children involved who are being hurt by the family's dysfunction. The pressures on the women are routed into problems for the children. The problem is cyclical, for the children who learn of the family structure in a dysfunctional family will probably engender a dysfunctional family.

In her text Sexual Politics (1969) Kate Millett blames many of the problems of women on the structure of a patriarchal society. The patriarchal society would enforce lifestyles and attitudes on women which enhanced the power of man. Millett spends little time addressing the issue of

housewives, but she does address the roles that women have assumed under patriarchy. Those problems are at work in Parker's novels which feature women who are housewives and mothers, but the problems also exist in the novels in which Parker portrays women who are connected to sexuality: prostitutes, lesbians, and repressed sexuality.

Eva Figs, in her Patriarchal Attitudes: The Case for Women in Revolt (1970), states that patriarchal attitudes prevent men from thinking of their wives and daughters as sexual beings. Certainly sexual gratification was not a concern for their nice women--wives and daughters--so that the men turned to prostitutes, who, because they were paid, did not have to be satisfied (83). The confusion over sexuality and sexual roles may have had an impact on Parker's novels which feature women as housewives and mothers, but the topic surely has an impact on the roles of women in novels like Taming a Seahorse, Ceremony, Mortal Stakes, and Looking for Rachel Wallace.

Prostitution is a motif in several Parker novels, but Taming a Seahorse is the novel in which the concept of prostitution is discussed. Spenser suggests that women who are prostitutes have financial motivation, but Susan Silverman, his psychologist girlfriend, admits that although she would treat the problem therapeutically, women who needed money could find ways other than prostitution to earn it. Spenser then suggests that prostitutes enjoy sex, to

which Susan responds that prostitution has little to do with sex. Spenser does remember that Patricia Utley, a madam he encountered in Mortal Stakes, told him that usually neither the John nor the prostitute liked each other. Susan's response is that "sexual activity, unredeemed by love or at least passion, is not the most dignified of activities. It offers good opportunities for degradation" (76). This degradation of which Susan speaks serves to show the counterbalance of Spenser's relationship with Susan and, at the same time, show the dehumanizing effects of prostitution.

Susan offers, in her therapeutic fashion, that "finding a way to satisfy the pathological need does not always make life untenable. Failing to satisfy the need makes it untenable. Many whores may be in a state of equilibrium" (76). When Spenser thinks through this statement, he decides that some prostitutes are better off as prostitutes until they are ready to treat their pathological needs.

Parker's use of the rescuing knight motif makes Spenser a type of savior for the powerless and downtrodden. Although Spenser encounters prostitutes as early as Mortal Stakes when he learns that Linda Rabb's life as a prostitute is endangering her husband's career as a pitcher for the Boston Red Sox, he does not expound on theories of prostitution. He does, however, meet Patricia Utley, a madam, who provides interesting insight as to the economic

advantages of being a call girl as opposed to a street prostitute. In Ceremony, Spenser rescues April Kyle from her life of prostitution only to learn that she has no intention of returning home. She prefers to be a prostitute. In Taming a Seahorse, Kyle leaves the socially more acceptable life of a call girl to return to the streets to work for a pimp. This change sends Spenser into reflection as to the reasons for prostitution.

Parker's look at prostitution shows the choices that individuals make. Those choices reflect the reasons for entering a life of prostitution as well as the effect that the choice has on all those involved with the individual. Obviously, Parker shows the long-term effect of prostitution on anyone involved with the practice. By the end of his look at prostitution, Parker has shown two tenets: prostitution is about economics, and prostitution is a form of degradation of the love relationship. As Spenser encounters those involved in prostitution, his chief animosity is toward pimps who take from the prostitution without giving much in return.

Spenser's attitude toward pimps may best be seen in a series of chapters in A Catskill Eagle. When Spenser went to Mill River, California, to rescue Hawk, he and Hawk had to effect a jailbreak. To gain quick money, Hawk and Spenser go home with two prostitutes and plan to rob their pimp when he comes to collect at the end of the week. Hawk

tells Spenser that they must take the money from the pimp because pimps are an excellent source because "They got money, and they ain't likely to call the cops. And mostly they deserve it" (40). Hawk and Spenser also come to realize that they must kill the pimp to prevent his retaliation against the women. Spenser broods after the fact, and Hawk tells him, "You shot Leo to protect those whores. Had to be done" (52). The pimp was a parasite; he owned the building in which the prostitutes worked; he charged them to lease the building, and he took a percentage of their earnings. He was financially and physically abusing the women.

Parker's other use of a pimp is seen in Mortal Stakes and Taming a Seahorse. In both cases, the pimps are used as foils opposite Patricia Utley. Utley is described as possessing great sophistication. Her apartment is the model of taste and refinement; she is cultured and well-educated. The pimp, on the other hand, is a parody of pimps. He drives a maroon and white Coup de Ville. His physical description is ludicrous:

He was a black man probably six-three in his socks and about six-seven in the open-toed red platform shoes he was wearing. He was also wearing red-and-black argyle socks, black knickers, and a chain mail vest. A black Three Musketeers' hat

with an enormous red plume was tipped forward over his eyes. (130-31)

Violet is not only a contrast to Patricia Utley, but also contrasts with the pimp in A Catskill Eagle who drives a Volvo and wears "horned rimmed glasses and a full Brooks Brothers costume. Striped shirt, knit tie, Harris tweed jacket, gray flannel trousers, wing-tipped Scotch brogues" (50). Parker's one other pimp is Robert Rambeaux in Taming a Seahorse; he convinces girls that he loves them and needs the money they make for his lessons at Juilliard. Of Parker's pimp-madams, Violet and Patricia Utley are portrayed as having some concern for their girls as people while the other two consider only the commercial aspects.

Patricia Utley had told Spenser that she was a businesswoman and her job was only economic; she says that her business is a volunteer one which exists because men have needs. Utley, however, is totally candid with Spenser about the realm of Donna Burlington's activities while in her employ. Burlington had made a pornographic film, Suburban Fancy. Spenser's request for a copy of the film and a list of its subscribers meets with a denial. Spenser tells her, "You keep telling yourself you're a businesswoman and that's the code you live by. So that you don't have to deal with the fact that you are a pimp. Like Violet" (157). Utley's reaction is violent and base; she did not like admitting what she was.

Certainly looking at the options of working the streets or working out of a hotel room makes the latter preferable. Utley, on the surface, seems like a businesswoman or a mere organizer of the girls' time. Her surroundings are superior to those of pimps like Violet, but she is superficially as high class as the pimp in A Catskill Eagle. High class or not, she is still like a pimp; she is merely a middle person for a prurient need.

By the time Spenser meets Patricia Utley in Mortal Stakes, he has found out that someone has enough information to force Marty Rabb to throw games; Spenser cannot bring himself to submit the news to the owners or break away from the situation. His desire is to save all concerned; he wants to end the blackmail so that Rabb will continue to play baseball by its correct rules. He wants the Rabbs to resume their lives. He discovers that there is a basic hurt in the marriage of the Rabbs. Marty Rabb accuses Spenser of causing the trouble for them by continuing to poke around in the problem, but Linda points out that "I caused it as much as he did Marty. I'm the whore, not Spenser" (242). Rabb refuses to listen to her talk like that. In the same discussion, when Linda is telling Marty that their three year old need never find out about the prostitution or Rabb's throwing games, he tells her, "Maybe you should have thought of that when you were spreading your legs in New York" (246). Spenser says that he feels the tension in his

solar plexus but that Linda Rabb never flinches and remains stiff when Rabb takes her in his arms to apologize.

Spenser feels the pain the family feels. He remains on the case and removes the blackmail threat. He cannot undo the damage done to the family by Linda's past. Rabb had met his wife when she was on "the job" and married her anyway. At the first signs of trouble, her past becomes a threat. His unethical behavior in baseball is his way of protecting her, but he is protecting himself as well. He thought he was liberal enough to accept her past; he was not. Prostitution is still a secret to be left in the closet.

Prostitution is a strong social ill. In Mortal Stakes, Rabb would rather sacrifice his career than let people know of Linda's past. In Ceremony, April turns to prostitution in part to spite her middle-class family. From the beginning, her father feels a sense of shame for her behavior. His first lines about his daughter are "She's a goddamned whore. And I don't want her in this house again" (1). Kyle emphatically says that his daughter cannot come back to his house and that he does not need her guidance counselor, Susan Silverman, to give him "that bleeding-heart mumbo jumbo" (1).

Susan has taken Spenser to meet the Kyles in hopes that they will help April with her problem. Susan tells Spenser that her father is not her fault, but that she has been heading for a wreck since she was in tenth grade. Susan's

assessment is that April's parents have "fixed parental expectations and an inflexible parental stance"; she concedes that in circumstances like this the "rebellion can get to be extreme" (6). Susan realizes that the parents' expectations were not necessarily bad. The problem was that April was not consulted about the choices. In rebellion, she smokes grass, forges excuse notes, is defiant in class. Punishment brings more negative behavior from her. Although April would talk to Susan, Susan admits having little influence on the child.

Spenser defines April's work as a prostitute as "unskilled labor, the pay is lousy, the clientele is not top drawer" (9). This is the life April chooses. Spenser learns that her choice leads her to the Combat Zone where she comes into contact with most every type of perversion. Spenser says, "You could get a drink. Fellatio. Pizza by the slice, adult novelty items. Everything to sustain the human spirit" (26). Spenser reaches his level of accepting depravation when he learns that a fifteen year old in the Combat Zone is a "commodity" (53).

Spenser's initial involvement was as a favor to Susan. She withdraws her request, but he cannot abandon the quest. Serving more like a father than April's father, he finds her on a sheep ranch, a place for "people who like it kinky"; if a prostitute does not behave, she is sent there (59). This is Spenser's first in-person encounter with the girl, and

she tells him that she likes prostitution because no one hassles her. April relates how she had been a call girl, been demoted to working the streets, demoted to the sheep ranch. She will not accept being ordered around.

Since she insists on remaining a prostitute, her options are limited; prostitution is the only life she has known. Spenser contacts Patricia Utley, and Susan is shocked. Spenser's reasoning is that "Some kid doing twenty, thirty tricks a night in hallways and cars isn't having the same experience that someone has who performs once an evening in a good hotel" (125). Spenser acknowledges the natural dislike for prostitution, but his feeling is that April "has a right to be a whore if she wants to be. Just like she has the right to stop if she wants to" (125). Susan argues against the move, but Spenser insists that "If she likes the work. I have no business telling her she's not supposed to like it" (125). Susan thinks that in the long run "Selling yourself rather than your product is destructive. I guess I'm willing to say that metaphorically as well as literally" (125).

Eventually, Spenser confronts April with his solution. He offers to take her to see Utley. April is unable to tell the difference between working the streets and working for Utley. She queries the decision, and Spenser tells her, "I don't want you to be a whore or not a whore. I want you to be free. I want you to choose what you do and I want you to

live a better life than you were living in the sheep ranch in Providence" (150). April then takes the initiative and makes a decision to work for Utley. In Taming a Seahorse, April leaves Utley to work the streets for a pimp, Robert Rambeaux; she thinks he loves her.

Working for Utley has brought improvements for April: she knows how to dress, how to walk and talk like a lady, how to order and eat in a fine restaurant. When April disappears, Utley does what few madams would do; she contacts a detective to find the missing prostitute. Utley tells Spenser that when April can no longer fulfill her street duties, she will be moved to some area less plush. Utley says, "There's always whores. Always. And someone has always run them. That doesn't mean that some ways aren't better than others" (2). Utley believes that Robert Rambeaux is a recruiter with a line and that prostitutes are incurable romantics who want to believe in love. Spenser responds that "Pimps don't love anybody" (5).

Robert Rambeaux proves to be all that Utley and Spenser believed him to be. This is reinforced when Ginger, another of Rambeaux's loves, tells Spenser that "You can rely on him [Robert] to make every dime he can off your body and never let you go off until he can't make anything more. He's reliable as hell about that" (23). When Spenser meets Robert, he proves to be uncaring except in regards to himself. Spenser's questions about April elicit "She's a

fucking chippy, man. How all right do chippies get? How long they stay all right, you know?" (15). Later, after Robert is beaten, he again tells Spenser, "she's just quiff, you know" (40). Spenser learns that Robert is a master manipulator who cares only for himself.

Prostitution is economic; money is both power and freedom. Prostitutes frequently like neither sex nor men. They are disdainful of men, and sex is a means of securing money. Men who patronize prostitutes do not usually like women as people. Spenser calls this "intimate distaste" (36). He does realize after talking to Utley and Susan that sex and power are intricately connected. The information revealed in Taming a Seahorse depresses Spenser, for he realizes that prostitutes are sent to slaughterhouses; the slaughterhouses are worse than chicken farms in that aging prostitutes are never allowed out of bed. April seems destined for a slaughterhouse via a yuppie whorehouse called the Crown Prince Club. Spenser laments, "What kind of world is it when whoring is the best choice open to you?" (131). Although Spenser had wanted April to make the choice about continuing prostitution, he recognizes the dangers in a society where that is a viable option for a fifteen year old.

Yet Spenser's lament about society summarizes his feelings about the women who have turned to prostitution. Linda Rabb had turned to prostitution when she came to the

city and met a young man who used her as a prostitute and left her. April Kyle turned to working the streets in defiance of her middle-class parents; she stayed as a prostitute because it was the only work she knew. At the end of Taming a Seahorse, April returns to Spenser with shattered ideals. There is the promise that she will leave prostitution. Ginger Buckley, the prostitute who gave Spenser insight into Robert Rambeaux, becomes a prostitute because her father sold her into prostitution after sexually abusing her. Parker never really identifies why Patricia Utley is in the business except for the references to economy.

Prostitution is not limited to those who work the streets. In The Feminine Mystique, Freidan points out that women "ran back home again to live by sex alone, trading their individuality for security" (195). Parker's housewives reflect that attitude. Their boredom, also expounded on by Freidan, causes them to turn to other sources of consolation. The fact that they are confused and bored relates to their degradation. Their marriages make them feel used, and the relationships in which they involve themselves make them feel even more used.

The theme of prostitution provides society's attitude toward sex and sexuality. Spenser realizes that society is equally ambivalent toward other types of sexual deviation. In The Judas Goat, the female, Kathie Caldwell, is a radical

political with latent sexual tendencies. In Looking for Rachel Wallace, Rachel is a lesbian feminist; in Stardust, Jill Joyce is an actress who was the victim of sexual abuse. Spenser, hired in each case for a purpose other than dealing with their sexuality, becomes empathetic with the characters. His initial response to the character in each case had been adverse, not because of their sexual deviations. His adversity to them was more a personality clash.

In The Judas Goat, Spenser's initial hostile reaction to Kathie Caldwell is based on her radical political philosophy and her trying to kidnap him. Kathie is an outcast to society both politically and socially. She is a member of a political insurgency group which is "prowhite and anticommunist" (108). Their goal is to keep Africa in the hands of the whites who are currently ruling. Spenser takes Kathie as his Judas goat, making her a traitor--albeit a forced traitor--to her insurgency group. When he cannot understand her motivation, Susan tells him:

she [Kathie] needs a master. She needs structure. When you destroyed her structure, and her master turned her out, she latched on to you. When she wanted to solidify the relationship by complete submission, which for her must be sexual, you turned her out. I would guess she'll be Hawk's for as long as he'll have her. (165)

Spenser had not accepted Kathie's sexual advances because of his commitment to Susan. Kathie's psyche had been badly hurt when Paul, her lover, had abandoned her after he had killed the other participants in the insurgency group. He says that he did not kill Kathie because she had been his lover and he had cared for her.

Kathie's sexual problems are intense. When Spenser takes her as his Judas goat, he binds her to the bed in the room with the dead insurgents. As Hawk searched her for weapons, "she arched her back, and straining against the ropes, thrust her pelvis forward. Her face was very red and her breath came in snorts through her nose" (126). When the search is finished, Kathie queries them, "Shall you rape me?" (126). With no response, she asks, "Take me while I'm helpless, voiceless, bound and writhing on the bed?" (126). Hawk and Spenser respond with "Naw" and "Maybe later," but Kathie obviously is less afraid of the possibility; she is hopeful that it will proceed.

Spenser, in searching her apartment, learns of her repression. Her apartment is stark black and white, angular, furnished in stainless steel and plastic. When searching the drawer to the bureau, Spenser finds a hidden compartment which contains a variety of colored underwear: the bikinis are French cut accompanied by black fishnet stockings and a black garter belt. These exotic colors show a different nature than do the plastic and stainless steel.

On the surface, Kathie is totally controlled, and underneath she is repressed. Spenser says, "Interesting girl, old Katherine. Everything black and white and stainless steel. Spotless and deodorized and exactly symmetrical and a drawer full of peepshow underwear. Times Square sexy. Repression" (85).

Susan helps Spenser understand what Kathie is and that her danger is to herself and society. Even knowing this, Spenser releases Kathie after using her to track down the final two insurgents at the Montreal Olympic Games. He believes he owes her something for having used her as his Judas goat. Spenser believes that it is a matter of time before Kathie destroys herself, but Hawk and Susan feel that her politics and repression will prove a serious problem to society before she hurts herself. Spenser's code requires that he give her a chance after using her.

Just as Spenser had had an initial negative reaction to Kathie Caldwell, he also had an initial negative reaction to Jill Joyce, the movie star in Stardust. Initially, he sees her as a sex-crazed movie star. He accepts the job of protecting her from a murder attempt. He develops the idea that the death threats are a hoax. He is annoyed by her constant sexual advances, for each time that he rejects her, she becomes increasingly more difficult to work with. He stays on the job because:

She doesn't have anyone to look out for her. There was something so small and alone in her, so unconnected and frightened, that I couldn't walk away from her. If she was staging these harassments, she needed help. I was better equipped to give one kind of help than I was the other. (60)

People with whom Jill works find her abusive of her power, but men find her "aura so enveloping . . . it's quite hypnotic" (81). Her aura is as quickly acknowledged as is the fact that she has "Many failings" (81). Jill's attitude is fraught with little girl insecurities. She does not want Susan around when Spenser says that he would protect Susan first. When Hawk is hired to replace Spenser for awhile, Jill makes sexual advances to him.

In an effort to help Jill, Spenser travels to California where he learns Jill's real name, meets her alcoholic mother, and learns that she gave birth to a baby girl who was adopted by its mobster father. The mobster tells Spenser that Jill was "Just another snack. Except for that quality" (175). Spenser recognizes Jill's insecurity based in the fact that she has not been important to anyone: an annoyance to her mother, just another affair to the mobster, and a way to make a living for people in the movie industry.

Spenser solves the case when he learns that William Zabriskie, Jill's father, had been fired and had asked Jill for money. When she refused to see him, he decided to kill her so that he could inherit. Jill's face-to-face encounter with her father causes her to draw into a ball and whine like a child, saying "Don't. Don't. Don't let him. I don't want to. I don't want to. Please, Daddy, Please. Please. Please" (238). The father is totally unmoved, and even though Del Rio, the mobster, is empathetic, he wants her to seek help somewhere besides Los Angeles or California. Spenser could leave at this point, but he wants to effect a change in her before quitting.

Spenser takes Jill to the cabin in Maine which he and Paul Giacomin had built in Early Autumn. He isolates her from her agent, the press, and anyone else who might need to see her before she is ready to see the world. He does tell Marty Quirk of the Boston police and Susan where he is.

Susan tells him:

You can't help her. If you're right about her life she needs more than you can ever give her . . . but you may be able to help her get to a point where she can be helped . . . space, and quiet. Try to get her healthy. Eat more, drink less, some exercise. But don't push it. All of her addictions are probably symptoms, no causes,

and will yield better to treatment when the source of her anguish is dealt with. (249)

Jill does open up, eat, exercise, and respond. Spenser tells her that her father is dead and that "He won't frighten you anymore" (256). To this she responds, "He will frighten me forever" (256).

Jill Joyce is totally dependent on men and alcohol, but Spenser is used to this. One of his most challenging cases is with Rachel Wallace, a lesbian feminist who is more independent than Jill is dependent. Like the case with Jill, Spenser is called when Rachel Wallace has had threats made against her life due to publishing Tyranny, a book which will name men who discriminate against gay women. From the beginning, Spenser and Rachel are involved in a strong antagonism. Rachel does accept Spenser's negative criticism about her first book and tells him that she likes someone who speaks his own mind. She also tells him:

You have probably been successful in your dealings with some women. I am not like those women. I am a lesbian. I have no sexual interest in you or any other man. Therefore there is no need for flirtatious behavior. And no need to take it personally. (10)

Rachel intends to complete her work and tells Spenser that he is merely her shadow.

Rachel is immediately antagonistic. When Spenser brings Susan to lunch, she tells Spenser not to cart Susan everywhere they go. At the same luncheon, Rachel queries Spenser about violence and then tells him that his answer is unsatisfactory to her. Spenser tells her that she does not have to be satisfied with his response because "It satisfies me" (25). Spenser's response to the violence has been along the lines of the Hemingway code hero, as is his behavior when he assaults a man for preventing Rachel from entering a public library for her speech. Rachel Wallace is unimpressed with the violence or with Spenser's wisecracking nature about himself. She is absolutely infuriated when he intervenes at First Mutual where security and public relations are trying to prevent her from talking to a caucus of women. When Spenser refuses to remain passive, neither does Wallace. She slaps him for having assaulted the security guards.

Wallace tries to convince Spenser that having been carried out in plain view of the women would have been better for an elevated consciousness. Spenser cannot accept that and says, "What kind of bodyguard stands around and lets two B-school twerps like those drag out the body he's supposed to be guarding" (81). Wallace tells him, "An intelligent one. One who understands his job. You're employed to keep me alive, not to exercise your Arthurian fantasies" (81). The argument continues with Wallace

telling Spenser that his behavior is everything she hates and tries to avoid. She says:

Back there you embodied everything I hate. Everything I have tried to prevent. Everything I have denounced--machismo, violence, that preening male arrogance that compels a man to defend any woman he's with, regardless of her wishes and regardless of her need. (82)

Spenser admits to a doorman that she was probably right.

Even though Rachel Wallace fires him, when she is kidnapped he feels a sense of responsibility about finding her. Spenser finds her at the home of Restore American Morality (RAM) leader Lawrence English, who was trying to prevent Rachel's lesbian relationship with his sister from being made public. Spenser heroically carries Rachel out of the house to safety. His code forced him to find her.

Spenser admits to the doorman that the fight at First Mutual was for his male pride; he admits to Susan that his attempts to find Rachel are centered on his desire to reestablish that pride. His animosity with Rachel is lessened when she shows her gratitude for her rescue. She rationalizes that the kidnapping was a means of a family trying to restore their daughter/sister to normalcy by removing the temptation. She tells Spenser, "And you did what I expected you would. You bashed in the door and shot two people and picked me up and took me away" (215).

Spenser's response is self-effacing, but Rachel Wallace has quickly come to an appropriate assessment of him:

You probably had to do what you did. Ant it's what you could do. You couldn't remain passive when they wanted to eject me from the insurance company. Because it compromised your sense of maleness. I found that, and I do find that, unfortunate and limiting. But you couldn't let these people kidnap me. That, too, compromised your sense of maleness. So what I disapproved of, and do disapprove of, is responsible in this instance for my safety. Perhaps my life. (216)

The antagonistic friendship between Spenser and Rachel Wallace is cemented. She tells him that she still disapproves of him, and he confides that he could not respect anyone who did not disapprove of him. Wallace will return in A Catskill Eagle to help Spenser trace facts about the life and finances of the Costigans, the family whose son is Susan's lover. In other cases, when women say something to Spenser, he will say Rachel Wallace made that comment years ago; when he finds women who are too submissive, he will tell them that they need lessons from Rachel Wallace.

By dealing with issues of gender like prostitution, sexual abuse, homosexuality, Robert B. Parker is keeping his Spenser series current with the sociological issues. When Parker chooses to have Spenser deeply involved in the cases,

he is working with several factors. He attempts always to build on Spenser's code of honor, showing that he goes beyond mere monetary reasons for taking cases. Parker also plays with popular psychology, offering reasons for why people behave as they do. Parker also wants Spenser to be the champion of the downtrodden, the true knight-detective.

In answer to critics of mystery fiction who claim that the plots are not steeped in realism, a lover of mystery fiction would have to point out that readers of mystery fiction would not necessarily be looking for realism. If they were, they would read mainstream novels. A mystery writer's contribution to realism may be that he--like Parker--deals with subject matter like prostitution, homosexuality, lesbianism, and sexual abuse. A mystery novel does not offer the realism of a Frank Norris or a William Dean Howells novel, but the use of real topics like those used by Parker are a mystery writer's contribution to realism.

Obviously, Parker chose his topics in part for marketability and in part to help him develop the knight motif of his detective. Parker is not necessarily striving to create a novel which makes definitive statements about any of the social issues nor about the roles of women. The women exist in the novels because they help develop the social topic and because they help develop Spenser's code of honor. A feminist might be offended by the helplessness of

the women whom Spenser continues to save; a feminist might find fault with Parker's portrayal of the one "feminist" in the novels, Rachel Wallace. Parker is not blatantly chauvinistic; he will develop characters and plot in order to keep Spenser the knight-detective, to show Spenser's autonomy, to show Spenser's code, to show his empathy for other people.

The knightly detective is developed in most of the Parker novels. Spenser rides to the rescue, saving men and women alike. Spenser's self-assurance and autonomy are shown when he is so sure as to what to do with his life; he can always offer assistance to others. Spenser's code is an integral part of the novels; his code prevents his returning Kathie Caldwell to the police. His code forces him to help April Kyle again and again. His code has him look for Rachel Wallace even after she fires him. His code forces him to try to help Jill Joyce escape from her troubled memories. His empathy and sense of caring bring some of the same actions into play as does his code. He is troubled in many cases by the problems of the females; ultimately, Spenser seeks a sense of autonomy for the characters such as he has for himself.

Parker does not show the women as inferior beings; he shows them as victims of a society which has preconceived ideas about women and their roles. Marge Bartlett tries to conflict with that role; Pam Shepard is stymied by it;

Rachel Wallace fights vigorously. Spenser is the force which tries to help break through the barriers of society and offer the women (and in some cases the men) a way to counteract the problems. He seeks autonomy for them. He seeks their ability to make choices--even if the choice is prostitution as it is for April Kyle. He seeks, as a knight figure, to right wrongs. His code forces these decisions on him. Women as victims of wrongs make good subjects for his help; they need to move toward an autonomy which society has denied them.

Chapter V

Spenser's Love Life

In mystery fiction, the early detectives like Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe were only peripherally involved with women. Sam Spade has a strong attraction to Brigid O'Shaughnessy, but his commitment to his vocation was so strong that he was able to turn Brigid over to the police. Philip Marlowe is very rarely attracted to or involved with women until The Long Good-bye when he begins the relationship with Linda Loring. Ross Macdonald's Lew Archer is a divorced detective whose wife could not deal with the profession or his commitment to it. Detectives like Mike Hammer are frequently involved sexually with women, but there seems to be no long-term commitment to any woman-- unless Mike's possible "engagement" to Velda counts. Early detectives did not seem capable or interested in maintaining long-term relationships.

Modern hard-boiled detectives have taken a more direct approach to their detectives and the male-female relationship. Like Lew Archer, some of the detectives come from broken relationships. Very few are like the celibate Philip Marlowe. Detectives like Travis McGee have numerous relationships--almost one per novel. Ed McBain has married off most of the 87th Precinct policemen and has given lawyer, Matthew Hope, a divorce and a broken relationship.

The female hard-boiled detectives like Sharon McCone and Kinsey Millhone have had numerous relationships. Newcomer Andrew Vachss has involved his detective, Burke, in several sexual relationships, but Vachss has had Burke fall in love with a woman who has left him. Burke is similar to Parker's Spenser in that they have both lost loves. The modern hard-boiled detectives do not seem as sexually indiscriminate as Mike Hammer; instead, more often, the writers have the men with a love interest. Parker begins his series with Spenser having a healthy interest in women.

When Spenser first appeared in The Godwulf Manuscript, there seemed to be the possibility that he, though a disciple of Marlowe and Archer, might have taken his sexual habits from Mike Hammer, but within two novels, Parker has Spenser settle down to a relationship with two different women on a regular basis. Once Spenser finally chooses to enter a long-term relationship with Susan Silverman, he is faithful to her until a brief liaison with Candy Sloan in A Savage Place. Parker's use of Spenser's sexuality and love interest make him utilize women differently than a writer whose detective is not sexually or emotionally involved with women. Parker's use of Spenser's dual involvement with Brenda Loring and Susan Silverman causes a development in Spenser's character. Will he choose the fun no-frills relationship with Brenda or the more in-depth one with Susan? When Parker has Spenser digress from his faithful

relationship with Susan, he is exploring the nature of relationships and establishing the texture of Spenser's and Susan's love. Parker is also able, through the use of Spenser's sexuality, to show his knightly character.

In The Godwulf Manuscript, Spenser is indeed the knight, but he is also the detective who sleeps with both the mother and daughter of the Orchard family. Parker develops Spenser's sexuality while also showing that he experiences both a sense of remorse and embarrassment for what he does. Spenser's initial reaction to both mother and daughter had revealed an insight into his sexual nature and his observation of human behavior and human nature. On first tracking the daughter to a meeting of Student Committee Against Capitalist Exploitation (SCARE), he notes that she is:

Like kids I'd seen before, the real goods, faded Levi jacket and pants, faded and unironed denim shirt, hair pulled back tight in a pigtail like an eighteenth-century sailor. No make-up, no jewelry. On her feet were yellow leather work shoes that laced up over the ankle. She wasn't built so you could tell from where I was, but I would bet my retainer she wouldn't be wearing a bra. (14)

Spenser also comments that Terry looks much older than her twenty years, and even though at that time they discuss only

the politics of SCARE and the missing manuscript, she calls on him when her boyfriend is killed. Not only do they sleep together, but Spenser is hired by the family.

On first meeting Terry's mother, Spenser notes that she is nicely tanned; her skin is pulled tight over her bones. She is wearing heavy Mexican jewelry and has silver tips to her hair. Marion's wealth and shine are compared to the silver tea service. Spenser also notes that Marion has little to do with the decision about the case, for she tells him, "Rolly handles these things. I do not" (51). Her Roland addresses Spenser as if Marion were not there. When Spenser returns to the house after Terry's disappearance, Marion discusses Spenser's weight and how much he can bench press. She also tells that Roland has gone off to sit "behind his big masculine desk, trying to feel like a man" (103). She says that his office "Makes him feel better about himself. All he can cope with is stocks and bonds. People, and daughters and wives, scare hell out of him" (103). Her drinking and coyness lead to a love scene that begins in a chair and moves to a sofa. At the culmination, she offers Spenser her hand to shake. He squeezes it saying, "I was goddamned if I was going to shake it" (106).

Despite the male sexual fantasy of the love scene, Parker shows insight into the loneliness of Marion Orchard when he closes this scene. Spenser leaves the house and hears Marion, on the other side of the door, sobbing. He

says that "Every fiber of my being felt awful" (107). Spenser resolves the case, but stays away from mother and daughter together. He is immensely uncomfortable in the presence of these two women with whom he slept. Unlike the Bartletts and Shepards in God Save the Child and The Promised Land, this family goes unsaved. Spenser rescues Terry from the ceremony of Moloch, solves the case, and leaves the family as it was when he first met it.

In the course of his investigation at the university, Spenser meets a secretary. He has wisecracked with her when he went in to see her boss; he leaves her his watch and tells her he wants her to have it if he does not come out alive. She leaves him her phone number. At the close of the case, Spenser calls Brenda Loring who responds by laughing. Spenser notes that she has "a terrific laugh, a high-class laugh. A good laugh, full of promise. A hell of a laugh when you thought about it" (204).

Spenser and Brenda Loring begin a short-lived relationship. She is a contrast to the relationship that he begins with Susan Silverman. This is made apparent in Mortal Stakes when Spenser reaches a dilemma in his investigation and tries to decide whether to call Brenda or Susan. He decides "I wanted to talk about things I had trouble talking about. Brenda was for fun and wisecracks and she did a terrific picnic, but she wasn't much better than I was at talking about hard things" (255).

He calls Susan to talk, but he takes Brenda to the baseball games and to a picnic. He enjoys watching men admire her even though he describes her as being ten pounds on the right side of plump (94). The relationship, however, is over in the novel, Mortal Stakes. Spenser begins an in-depth relationship with Susan, and Parker establishes a character who serves to hear and advise on problems his detective faces.

Despite the relationship with Susan Silverman, Parker still establishes Spenser's sexuality. Few occasions pass when Spenser does not pass comment on the attractiveness of women, but for the most part, his fidelity is with Susan. In the novel, A Savage Place, Spenser does have a sexual encounter with Candy Sloan, a California reporter who hires Spenser to protect her. Parker uses the relationship with Candy Sloan and Spenser to make statements about the nature of a beautiful woman using her femininity and sexuality to advance herself; Parker also uses the relationship to examine more closely the relationship between Spenser and Susan as well as to reexamine Spenser's code.

In the course of the job, Spenser and Candy develop a sexual tension; Candy sets the tone when she tells Spenser, "I need to understand you so I can control you" (63). Spenser tells Candy that he is involved with someone and that the relationship is worth the lack of freedom it entails; he also admits that having entered into a

monogamous relationship has kept him from being as autonomous as he wanted. Candy and Spenser do submit to their sexual tensions, and he tells her, "This is what it is. It leads nowhere. It means nothing more than the moment" (64). Spenser's commitment to Susan is more intense than what his words imply.

Spenser thinks about his relationship with Susan. He decides that he will tell Susan of the indiscretion and that she will not mind because she is not jealous. He also admits that if the situation were reversed, he would mind. His reasoning from the point of reference is that "hers would be an affair of the heart, while mine is of the flesh only, so to speak" (65). Yet by his own admission, Spenser is never aware whether his involvement is only of the flesh; he admits later that he loved Candy.

One point that does become clear about Candy is that she has used her sexuality to acquire her status in journalism. She tells Spenser that she slept with an agent to acquire information; her admission is not bragging but bitter. Her loss of her job does not squelch her desire for the story on which she has been working. She cannot, however, afford to pay Spenser; instead she offers him "house" privileges. Spenser is unable to accept the privileges when he learns that she sleeps with Brewster for information. She offers to tell Spenser, but he has seen. Her flip and bitter response is to ask if he saw anything he

had not seen before. His response is "The angle was different" (137). Candy says that men are the ones who are foolish about sex and that "women know it's useful" (138). Spenser tells Candy that he does not understand sleeping with someone to "nail him to the floor" (138). Candy argues that Spenser disapproves of her behavior, and he responds that he tries hard not to disapprove of anyone's behavior other than his own. In essence, he does disapprove of his own behavior--his sexual relationship with Candy.

Candy offers to sleep with Spenser after sleeping with Brewster; he tells her he cannot because it would be cheating on Susan. He hints that the mention of house privileges was a form of infidelity. Candy thinks that Spenser is jealous of her, but Spenser responds that he wants to be jealous only of Susan. On the surface in this text, Parker has Spenser making these statements which seem plausible. In Valediction, four texts later, Parker has Spenser tell someone that he has loved Susan and Candy. That statement brings to question Spenser's statement about not being jealous.

When Spenser continues to help Candy with her case, she is killed during a meeting with Brewster. Spenser is able to evaluate her to the police:

The thing is that she did what she did because she didn't want to be just another pretty face in the newsroom, you know. Just a broad that they used

to dress up the broadcast. She wanted to prove something about herself and about being a woman, I guess, and what got her killed--when you come down to it--was, she thought she would use being female on Brewster. When it came down to it, she depended on feminine wiles. (181)

Spenser's realization is that Candy depended on her feminine wiles and that her faith in the use of the wiles led to her death. Somehow she does not leave his memory. In Valediction, he admits to loving her, and in Stardust, he visits her grave and laments, "Some bodyguard" (192). Candy haunts him; her death prevented closure of their relationship. His unhappiness is multi-faceted, for he does realize he should have protected her. He also hurt for the infidelity against Susan, but a degree of the pain must be for the lack of completion to his feelings. He admits in Valediction to having some feelings for her. Her death prevents exploring of those feelings.

Other than Candy, there never is another sexual involvement during his relationship with Susan, but once Susan leaves for California after receiving her doctorate, Spenser is lost and at odds. He, at this point, begins a relationship with Linda Thomas who worked in an ad agency across the street from his Berkley office. This relationship is tenuous at best, for Spenser is at odds over the loss of Susan. Linda's purpose is to listen to the

comments Spenser has to make about Susan and his relationship with her. From the first date, Spenser tells her, "I am committed to Susan. If I can rejoin her, I will" (75). Their sexual union affords Spenser sleep that he had not experienced since Susan's absence.

When Susan telephones, Spenser tells her about Linda. Susan does not mind; Spenser believes that this is because she feels less guilty. Susan, of course, tells Spenser that she too is involved with someone. When Linda Thomas hears Spenser say that Susan has a friend, she tells him, "So do you" (98). This causes him to realize that "now it was more than love and need and solace. Now there was sexuality" (98). Yet when Linda is involved in an attempt on Spenser's life, she tells him that the incident was unfortunate, for she now saw a part of him that she did not want to see.

Linda is brought further into Spenser's world of violence when he is shot during the same investigation. She rushes to his bedside and wonders why Susan is not there. Spenser says that he wants Susan to return because she wants him, not because she is afraid of his dying. Linda asks how long Spenser will accept Susan's absence, knowing that she is sleeping with another man in California. Spenser replies, "There's not a deadline. And no conditions" (172). Linda is unable to accept that a man can wait so patiently. Spenser's response is melodramatic at best, for he says that he did not die because he wanted to see the relationship

with Susan to an end. He admits to loving Linda, but he tells her, "The past is painful, maybe even fraudulent, the future is uncertain, maybe scary. What we have is a continuing present, honey. I think we should do what we can with that" (173). Linda's reply is "I don't think so" (173). She leaves him and quits her job.

Linda's role in the novel is served. She was there emotionally and physically for Spenser during Susan's absence. She listens to him and offers advice about Susan's leaving. She shows the fear people would experience coming into a relationship with such danger involved. She is also meant to be measured against his relationship with Susan. She shows the inability of others to experience and comprehend the type of relationship that Parker has established for Spenser and Susan.

Most of the women who appear in the novels are there as a form of contrast to Susan. In The Godwulf Manuscript, Parker is establishing Spenser's sexuality and his code. Brenda Loring is a prelude to Susan and a contrast in that she is a fun date while Susan also provides intellectual insight Spenser needs. Candy Sloan in A Savage Place is an indiscretion for which Spenser never forgives himself even though Susan does. The total physical nature of his relationship with Candy is a contrast to the totality of the relationship with Susan. The relationship with Linda Thomas is a stop-gap in his relationship with Susan. The word love

is used in relationship to both Linda and Candy, but the relationship with Susan goes beyond love. Their relationship is all encompassing, and other women are merely points of comparison to be proven inadequate. Each woman learns of Spenser's devotion to Susan.

The novel in which Spenser makes these professions of love is entitled Valediction, a title taken from John Donne's poem, "Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." Parker's point in this novel is that the love Spenser experiences for both Candy and Linda is what Donne called sublunary love, a love of the sensual. His love for Susan is like Donne's ideal love which transcends time or space; it is a love of the pure and spiritual. Those less kind to Parker and his detective might say that the love for Candy and Linda is a love of convenience, a love of a woman who is available.

Few readers of more than one or two of Parker's Spenser series cannot doubt the importance of Susan Silverman to the series. She indeed serves many purposes. Often Susan's presence is a counterbalance to other women. Hers is the role of the educated, self-assured, stylish woman while other women are compared and seen as equal or lesser. No one can surpass her. Susan also serves as listener and adviser to Spenser. Susan, who has a degree in counseling and a doctorate in psychology, is available to give Spenser information about the personality or character of his clients. The conversations between Susan and Spenser serve

to impart to the reader information about Spenser and his beliefs, especially those beliefs about his code of honor. The couple also serves as a prototypical couple of the twentieth century; theirs is a relationship involving the balance of work and independence for each of the partners.

Whenever Susan appears in close proximity to another woman, Spenser is quick to point out that the other woman pales in comparison. In Looking for Rachel Wallace, when Susan meets Rachel for the first time, Spenser observes that Rachel is a "tough, intelligent national figure, but next to Susan I felt sorry for her. On the other hand I felt sorry for all women next to Susan" (21). Although Susan's purpose in Looking for Rachel Wallace is not necessarily one of comparison to Rachel, Parker does frequently make Susan's presence a notable contrast to some other female in the text. This is particularly true in God Save the Child, the first text in which Susan appears.

In this text, Spenser goes to a local high school in Smithville where he meets Susan, who is the guidance counselor. Where Marge Bartlett, mother of the missing boy, is flashy, brash, and completely ignorant about the activities of her own son, Susan is self-assured, educated, and observant about all the children with whom she works. Marge is unable to relate any information about her son; Susan, on the other hand, is able to tell Spenser that he is bright, but has not yet resolved his Oedipal conflicts and

that his friends are damaging him. Susan is also self-assured enough to acknowledge her limitations; she warns Spenser that she has a master's degree in guidance rather than a degree in psychiatry and admits that her data are inconclusive.

Marge Bartlett had made a point of switching the focus to herself and seemed unwilling to relinquish any of the attention. When Spenser has a lead about Kevin, it is Susan who goes with him rather than Kevin's mother. By creating this dichotomy, Parker is able to make a statement about parenthood in general and Susan, in particular. Susan's totality is so superior to Marge's that she is presented in this first text as an almost perfect woman.

From the beginning of Susan's appearance until Pastime, Susan's appearances are either a subtle comparison or a very obvious point of comparison. Where other women are frightened, insecure, or troubled, Susan is not. The reader is supposed to understand that while Pam Shepard of Promised Land is confused and unhappy with her life, Susan has found hers. Neither does Susan have the neuroses of Kathie Caldwell of The Judas Goat. Susan does not, like Patty Giacomini, need constant male supervision and attention and will not sacrifice herself for the male-female relationship.

While Susan is a point of contrast for other women in the novels, at one point, she does exhibit some of the same problems. Susan is not necessarily unhappy with her lot in

life; she merely decides to expand herself and go back to school for her doctorate. In doing this, she pulls away from Spenser and by A Catskill Eagle has become another woman for him to rescue. When Susan leaves Spenser, she does become a damsel in distress, but Parker is also able to examine the nature of the relationship with Spenser and Susan.

After Susan is rescued in A Catskill Eagle, Parker again portrays her as superior to other women. This time her superiority is based not only on her cool, calm, self-assured nature, but also on her education and her ability to help other women solve problems. She brings her psychology to Caroline Rogers in Pale Kings and Princes; Susan nurses Caroline from the deaths of her husband and son and her guilt feelings that she is glad they are dead. She assists Spenser in finding help for Jill Joyce, who had been sexually abused. The same help was available for Blackie in Crimson Joy, except Blackie was such a reprehensible character that she turned all need for assistance outward, blaming others, such as her son. Susan is once again seen as more caring than the mother. Her training in psychology gives her the compassion that is needed to offer assistance, which in some cases should have been offered by the mother, or care-giver.

While Susan is most often seen as superior to the other female characters, she is very similar to Chantal in

Playmates. Chantal is the very bright girlfriend of Dwayne Woodcock, a star basketball player at Taft University who is involved in shaving points. His team is not losing, but Dwayne is seeing to it that the team does not win by its spread. In the course of the investigation, Spenser learns that Dwayne cannot read, but has received credits in school based on his athletic prowess. In an effort to help Dwayne and Taft University, Spenser tries to secure academic help for Dwayne. This is done with Susan's help and with the help of Chantal who has protected her man from the very beginning, but who does want him to learn to read.

Chantal and Susan are able to establish some camaraderie to bring about the assistance for Dwayne and a solution to the case for Spenser. Chantal knows her man's flaws. She knows that he cannot read and that he is insecure unless he is playing basketball; she knows he needs the approval of the white community. To Chantal, these are merely factors of his being and do not prevent her loving him and seeking help for him. Susan is also like this. She knows Spenser's flaws, but she is ever-ready to offer him her advice and to stand by his decisions.

Susan, like Chantal, is ever-present (in Playmates and most other texts) to assist her man. In the course of the novels, Susan's task is frequently to assist Spenser by offering him advice or by listening to his points of view as he works a case out in his mind. Susan is, in essence, his

Dr. Watson. Her ability to listen has provided Spenser much insight into his cases. Susan is able to offer insight into the women in his cases, the children, the causes of grief, and peripheral elements that bring culmination to the cases.

Susan's advice comes from her own femininity as well as from her training in guidance and psychology. In God Save the Child, Susan's only advice is about Kevin, and that advice is limited to superficial observations from around school. In Promised Land, she is replete with advice about women and their need for liberation as well as their relationships with men. Susan listens carefully to Spenser's assessment of why women run away; she nods and gives him encouraging signs as he explains that most runaway wives want to be found and brought home. Susan's offering is that the woman is found and returned home and that in so doing she has given the husband a "new club to beat her with" (16).

In the same text, after Spenser and Susan have endured a frightening meeting with King Powers's associates, Susan tells Spenser that he is reversing stereotypes. Spenser says that Susan is a linear thinker and that he merely acts on impulse. "Women emotional. Men rational. But that was always horseshit anyway" (91), he tells her. Then Susan tells him that she has picked up the beer bottle, not to protect herself, but to protect Spenser if he needed it. In the course of the investigation, Susan asks Spenser about

his feelings, knowing that King Powers will kill Spenser and Pam if Spenser is unsuccessful in organizing the frame. Spenser, as usual, is flippant in his response, and Susan asks him if it is because "A man doesn't succumb to self-analysis" (145). Yet Susan is able to tell Pam Shepard that Spenser is the man who will save her. Susan always assures the women that Spenser is their savior and even turns to him in A Catskill Eagle as her own savior.

When Spenser is dealing with cases where he has little insight, Susan is there with her advice. Susan was the one who tells Spenser about the repression exhibited by Kathie Caldwell in The Judas Goat; Susan also offers the advice that Kathie is too dangerous to be released. In this case, Spenser, like Holmes, listens to her and ignores her. Susan's insight into psychology offers Spenser needed knowledge in some of his cases. Besides knowing of Kathie Caldwell's repression and her danger to the public, Susan is able to give Spenser insight into cases where he may be completely lost. For example, when Spenser is having a difficult time with Rachel Wallace, it is Susan who realizes that part of Rachel's abrasive behavior is because she is "scared. It makes her bitchy" (26).

Susan is also able to tell Spenser how he should or could react. She does this specifically in the case of Rachel Wallace, but she also offers the advice frequently, sometimes at Spenser's request. In Looking for Rachel

Wallace, after Spenser has created the scene at First Mutual, Susan offers the suggestion that he should have allowed Rachel the courtesy of handling the situation herself. As a woman, she has that added insight that Spenser lacks. Susan knows that Rachel Wallace, the woman, might need protection, but that she also needs her independence. Susan is also able to project how other women might react. In The Widening Gyre, when Ronni Alexander is learned to have gone to the granny parties and filmed having intercourse with college-aged men, Susan is able to recognize the type of desperation and loneliness that drove Ronni to this while Spenser is able to sense the need her husband has for protecting her. In Pale Kings and Princes, when Caroline Rogers falls apart after the deaths of her husband and son, Spenser is handicapped by his feelings of her grief while Susan, the therapist and the woman, recognizes that the grief is more than the usual grief. Spenser suggests that it is the "better-him-than-me syndrome. The if only I'd been nice to him slash her syndrome" (149). Susan agrees to some extent, but also recognizes that Caroline is idealizing her husband but not her son, thus creating a unique situation for her grief.

Almost any woman might have been able to offer insight into the cases involving women, but Susan has the special insight of a cultured and educated woman. She is also able to offer Spenser insight into the cases involving children;

she recognizes Kevin Bartlett's problems as being Oedipal. In Ceremony, Susan knows that the major part of April Kyle's problem is her sense of rebellion against her parents and the roles they have chosen for her to play. In Ceremony and Taming a Seahorse, Susan realizes that the needs of the children prompt them into prostitution. April's turning to prostitution is a retaliation against her parents while her turning to Robert Rambeaux is a desire to find someone who will love her unconditionally. Susan also used her own professional standards to judge Michael Poitras in Ceremony; she deeply resented his use of his position to lure Amy to his side and to use her and April for his own prurient interests.

Susan's special interest in children and her knowledge of guidance counseling give Spenser some special insight into the case of Paul Giacomini. Susan realizes the devastation of Paul's home life, but at this point, she seems reluctant to see Spenser involved as he is. She warns Spenser that taking Paul to the cabin in Maine is kidnapping. She also warns that he must have some long-term answers for Paul in order to be of any benefit to him at all. She knows that the damage done by his parents' marriage is not damage to be undone lightly. She told Spenser early that Paul had been a pawn, that his parents "hate each other and use him to get even with each other" (43). After Spenser has taken Paul to Maine to begin his

education, Susan brings him back to reality by pointing out that the courts are rarely able to give children to persons other than the parents if the parents claim to want the child or object to the child's being taken from them. She also questions Spenser as to whether he will be willing to attend meetings of the PTA, Boy Scouts, or Little League. Spenser realizes that the issue of child rearing is beyond what he has taught Paul in Maine. He admits to being unwilling to share his apartment with Paul. Susan's advice brought him out of the romanticizing he had done about parenthood and sets him on a course of finding ways to insure Paul's autonomy.

Susan's guidance and psychology background also gives her special insight in other cases of Spenser's. In A Catskill Eagle, Susan uses her psychology and her personal knowledge of Russell Costigan to tell Spenser what he needs to know to bring about the destruction of Russell and his family. From her inside relationship with the family, a painful source of information for Spenser, she is able to tell him that Grace Costigan is the "worm in the apple" (214). She tells him she (Grace) is "wrong, but never uncertain. She's overbearing and full of fear. She's infantile and tyrannical at the same time. She's weak and silly and her husband and her son are neither and she controls both of them" (214). Spenser uses that knowledge, gained by Susan, to culminate the case.

Robert B. Parker's creation of Susan allows him a source of advice and insight his detective might not normally have. Susan is also able to serve as a source of information for the reader. When Parker wants to impart some information about Spenser's code of conduct, he can have Spenser behave in the correct manner, but in case the reader missed the point of the behavior, he can have Spenser explain his behavior or reason for his behavior to Susan. On some occasions, Susan comes to the realization of Spenser's behavior on her own.

In God Save the Child, Susan is able to offer the insight and advice on Kevin; she is able to provide the marked contrast with Marge; she is also able to listen to Spenser and tell why he is not a policeman, why he has chosen to work outside the police department. He tells her that he is not good at following the hierarchy, but he also tells her that "Cops are public employees, like teachers and guidance counselors. They tend to give a community what it wants, not always what it should have" (167). In this statement, Spenser alludes to his freedom of choice as a private investigator; he is able to pick his cases and avoid doing what he does not want to do. When he was a policeman, he, like Susan as a teacher, must meet the approval of the public. As public servants, he and Susan would have to accommodate public opinion. As a private investigator, his

decisions are not bound by any laws other than his own laws of conscience.

This conscience comes into play when Spenser kills Wally and Doerr in Mortal Stakes. Even though he is still dating Brenda Loring, Spenser goes to Susan's house in Smithville so that they can talk and she can advise him. He tells her that he has indeed killed people before this, but what is bothering him this time is that he set up Wally and Doerr. Susan is able to bring him some insight and calm that he did not achieve by taking a shower or drinking a bourbon. She tells him that he is a good man and that if he killed two men, even if he set them up, he did what needed to be done. She says, "You are a good man. You are perhaps the best man I've ever known. If you killed two men, you did it because it had to be done. I know you. I believe that" (284). Even after Spenser has brought the case to a close, he still apologizes about the deaths and the method. Susan replies, "Now it's done. What does it matter how?" (324). Spenser tells her that how is all that matters. Spenser philosophizes that the problem in this case was that the code of ethics of athletes did not apply. Susan then serves as adviser and listener. By serving as listener, she is able to counter Spenser's comments about his code so that Parker is able to establish Spenser's conscience clearly.

Susan does argue that the idea is a little silly, but Spenser tells her that all he has is how he acts. His

system of order is similar to Rabb's order, which was baseball. Rabb compromised his order in the effort to care for his family; now he is compromised. Spenser feels that the case may have compromised him too. Susan realizes that two rules in Spenser's code are to protect innocent people and to kill only in defense of a life. In this case, one rule had to be broken. As a result, Spenser feels diminished, a feeling which will never escape him. His life is different because of what he was forced to do. He feels that there is now little difference between him and the brutes.

In Promised Land, Susan tries to help Spenser see that he is different from the brutes. When Spenser comes into conflict with Hawk and King Powers, Susan makes Spenser aware that he is different from them. Susan asks Hawk if it bothered him to hurt people for money, and Hawk says, "No more than it does him" (87). Susan realizes that Spenser does not always perform his job for money, but the importance of the code is made known with Hawk's telling Spenser that the code complicates his (Spenser's) life. Susan, however, realizes that Spenser's goodness creates a compassionate self who would, even after he has found Pam, try to free her husband from his conflicts with Powers, and his wife from her problems with the radical lesbians so that the two of them could make a fresh start with their marriage. Susan has told Pam that Spenser could fix her

problems except restoring the old bank guard who was shot by the radicals in the robbery. Susan also realizes that half of what Spenser does is place himself in competition with the other men of the world where he is constantly checking his code, "proving how good he is" (116).

In Looking for Rachel Wallace, Susan points out to Spenser that his code interfered with his allowing Rachel Wallace the freedom of choice at First Mutual. His code prevented him from following her advice and lying down to allow the security guards to carry him out. Doing this would have violated his code and his pride. Susan, however, points out that in this case Spenser's code comes into conflict with his client's code; Rachel is deprived of her chance to triumph. Spenser's code does not allow for his involvement with others who also have a code. Yet his code does allow for his need to rescue her even after she fired him. Susan offers the insight--more to the reader--that he performed because his "honor had been tarnished" (192).

In Ceremony, Susan asks Spenser to search for April Kyle, a teenage runaway who is working as a prostitute in the Combat Zone. When the case depresses Spenser because of the degradation he sees, Susan tells him that he can quit; he refuses. Susan realizes that even though the case bothers him, he cannot quit. He finally tells that "If you only do it when it's easy, is it worth doing?" (154). Susan eventually asks how much of what he has done was for April

and how much was for himself. Spenser replies that whatever he does he does because it is his way of living and keeps him from confusion. Even though Susan initially objects to allowing April to continue working as a prostitute, she eventually agrees because she, too, cannot put people behind her profession.

Susan usually works very hard to understand the code and to impart that knowledge to the reader. In The Widening Gyre, she is working on her doctorate, and Spenser chides her for following the advice of her supervisor rather than being herself. She responds with hostility, telling him that "You can't understand someone without a goddamned code. You don't see that for millions of people, male and female, the workplace is the code" (91).

Susan also has been the source of letting the reader know that to Spenser the action or performance is more important than thinking or talking about what to do. She is quick to point out that part of her admiration for him is that he always does what he says he will do. For all of his rebellious nature to society's rules, he is very careful about his own rules and what he tells other people. In Pastime, she learns that he never divided work into women's work or men's work in the home. There was merely work to do, and there was not a woman to do the work. All the men learned to cook out of necessity.

Despite the attempt to show that Susan is a well-educated, modern, and considerate woman, Parker still has followed societal patterns. While Susan admires Spenser for his action, she is his observer; Spenser performs, and Susan watches him perform. When Parker does have Susan take action--leaving Spenser in Valediction--it is an action which is negative. In the case of her leaving Spenser, he has to rescue her; so the appearance is made that even when Susan acts, she acts inappropriately, thus requiring appropriate action from her man.

Parker's use of most of his female characters is done from the perspective of having someone for Spenser to rescue. The women are, for the most part, damsels in distress. Susan's purposes in the novels are multi-faceted. She is passive, listening to Spenser, offering advice to necessitate and spurn him to action. She listens to him and helps verbalize his code. In these cases, she is an acceptable, passive woman. Indeed, a chronological reading of the novels follows their relationship from its inception in God Save the Child to its breakup in Valediction to its regeneration from Taming of the Seahorse to the present. In the case of their relationship, she often develops as the neurotic, insecure, demanding woman. Newgate Callendar laments in a New York Times Book Review of Valediction that Susan is a bore (139). A review of A Catskill Eagle in Publishers Weekly laments that Susan cannot make up her mind

(73) while a Library Journal review of Taming a Seahorse complains that Susan has become insipid (114). Once Parker creates the break in the relationship between Spenser and Susan, he appears to lose control of Susan's character.

From Spenser's viewpoint theirs is the great love. He is committed to her. He worships her, places her on a pedestal. His actions are for her. In return, she accepts this admiration as her due, continues her role as listener and adviser. When, however, she makes an effort to assert herself, to become more independent of Spenser and male influence, her character seems to be moving from Spenser's influence to that of others--her supervisor or her new lover, Russell Costigan. In various novels, Susan seems, at times, like the scatterbrained women who do not know what they want and resent attention not directed toward them. At other times, she is more understandable with her concerns about Spenser's personality overwhelming hers.

In Parker's development of Susan's and Spenser's relationship, he failed to show how the relationship developed from their first meeting in God Save the Child to their having been seeing each other for quite awhile in Mortal Stakes. Parker is able to develop the sense that Spenser is aging, but, like many male authors, relationship between the hero and the woman merely develops. There is a sense of automation in the relationship. In God Save the Child, Susan helps with the search for Kevin Bartlett, and

almost immediately Spenser is enraptured with her. He is even protective when Vic Holloway refers to her in a derogatory manner. By Mortal Stakes, Susan has known Spenser long enough to make the assessment that he would not have killed Wally and Doerr unless he had to do it.

By Promised Land, the relationship of Spenser and Susan has settled into the comfort and devotion fans of the series recognize from the two of them. Spenser talks endlessly of how Susan's presence affects him, how he misses her, and how much she means to him. Fans of the series will recognize, however, that Promised Land offers the first of several crises in the relationship. In this text, which reflects the destruction of Pam Shepard in a marriage, Parker has Susan make a strong plea to Spenser to marry her. Spenser has been telling Susan about loveless marriages and that he thinks what they have is "nice" (92). Susan responds with "No. It is momentary and therefore finally pointless. It has no larger commitment, it involves no risk, and therefore no real relationship" (92). Spenser seems unconvinced, but Susan points out that "We ritualize our deepest meanings, usually, and marriage is the way we've ritualized love" (92). She appears to be giving Spenser as ultimatum, for she tells him that she loves him and is waiting for a response. Susan later apologizes for her bitchiness, telling Spenser that she knows her importance to him, but

"It's what we are that is bothersome. What the hell are we, Spenser?" (121).

When Susan is going through the soul searching to figure out what her relationship with Spenser is and is apologizing for what she terms her bitchiness, Spenser's advice to her is to "watch what I do, and pretty much, I think, you'll know what I am. Actually, I always thought you knew what I am" (121). Susan does know what Spenser is. Spenser is aware that she possesses that knowledge. She is not searching for what he is; she is searching for what they are and what they will be. She is, after all, divorced from a bad marriage. She is in this relationship; he is surrounded by information which places negative insight on marriage. She wants to know the boundaries of their relationship.

By the time Spenser does propose, Susan has decided to vacillate. She is not so sure about marriage. One point on which she is sure is that Spenser does not belong in her Cape Cod house, mowing lawns. The decision is made that their relationship, without the benefit of clergy, is more long-lasting, more faithful than the marriages of people like Harvey and Pam Shepard. In order to make that point, Parker creates a negative characterization of Susan. She becomes the woman who does not know what she wants. She wants the satisfaction of a marriage proposal without having to accept the responsibility of marriage. She is the

"typical" woman, free to change her mind. She is seen as childish and demanding. She wants Spenser to do what she wants--propose, but she is free to say thank you for asking, but no thanks. I've changed my mind.

Parker gives Susan that same quality in Early Autumn. In that novel, the focus is on Spenser's trying to effect salvation from psychological abuse for Paul Giacomin. Throughout the novel, Susan is hostile. She is displeased that when the Giacominis have difficulty, Spenser brings them to her house. She tells him that "I don't simply sit around here waiting for your problems to drop by" (89). Spenser's attitude has been cavalier. He tells her to "Love me, love my problems" (89). The inferences drawn from this scene may be that Susan resents Spenser's dedication to his work and his drawing her into it. Yet in past cases, she has always been involved if he needed her; she had not shown any resentment. In this novel, Susan does go to supper with Paul and Spenser before they go to the ballet, but she does not accompany them. This could have a positive interpretation with her allowing for the male bonding between Paul and Spenser, but as Parker writes, Susan appears resentful. At the meeting, he describes her as smiling "but rather briefly" (135). Spenser tells her that he had hoped the dinner to be the highlight of the evening since he would be at the ballet, and she responds, "Am I to

gather you're disappointed" to which Spenser replies, "Well, you seemed a little quiet" (135).

As Spenser considers how to help Paul and goes to Susan's house, she is still negative, asking if he came by because he had been celibate too long. Again, despite the fact that Susan is able to point out that Spenser is unwilling to be a father and has no place to rear a child, she is portrayed as sullen and resentful, needing to be the focus of Spenser's life. Of course, Spenser's focus is on his profession and his cases. He loves and dotes on her and relies on her for solace, showing up at her house for that solace when cases are going wrong. When Susan has needs, Spenser is frequently unable to respond to them because they interfere with a case or because he is focused on some aspect of a case. He worships her; her very appearance turns him to jelly, and he is ready to fight or abuse anyone who defames her in any way. Yet at the very times she needs comfort, she is characterized as demanding and interfering with Spenser's profession. He does, after all, take cases at her request and help her. She then turns around and expects attention when he is preoccupied with his work.

Parker is much more comfortable with Susan's character when she is passive, listening and offering advice. When he creates the events of the relationship between Susan and Spenser, he appears to be floundering. Susan is the center of Spenser's life, but being the center is not enough. She

must look for satisfaction in herself and her profession. When Parker sets the events in motion where Susan goes to Harvard for her doctorate in psychology, he establishes her character with a stronger bent for the neurotic and insecure. In The Widening Gyre, she is hostile with Spenser when he criticizes her for giving in to the habits of her supervisor. She seems to need to hang onto the attitudes of the people with whom she works. She prefers her coworkers to Spenser, and rather than state the fact, she is defensive when he questions her.

The novels also give the impression that Susan, who is the center of Spenser's life, creates a gap in his existence when she is absent. When Susan is not available for Spenser, Parker writes him as moping and lamenting the events which have taken her from him. He cannot even rejoice in her advancement. In The Widening Gyre, Susan chooses to remain in Bethesda during the Thanksgiving holidays to work on her internship. Spenser laments her absence, but accepts Paul's advice that these are the problems which occur when people allow themselves to become close to others. Spenser's response appears on the surface to be gallant and understanding, but underneath, he is resentful. He tells Paul, "I want her to be with me and more than that I want her to want to be with me" (60). The impression is given that Susan is deliberately staying away. Susan has work to do that is part of her future in her

profession. Spenser has remained away from Susan in the course of his work.

Susan and Spenser eventually have a conversation over this very matter. Spenser chastises Susan for enjoying being away from him. He tells her that she did not have to leave Boston. She questions how her leaving is different from his leaving. His answer is that he leaves because he must. Again, the emphasis is on the importance of the male profession over whatever the woman chooses to do. Males work because they must; women work by choice.

Spenser (verbally) attacks Susan's reason for her work. He tells her that she is shallow; the basis for his remark is her comment that a drink by name--or using a call brand rather than the house stock--protected the drink of choice. Spenser is snide and tells her that her opinion is not hers, but rather her supervisor's. Spenser never had a problem when Susan's opinions coincided with his, but when she begins to espouse the ideas and opinions of others, he is resentful.

In the course of this same visit with Susan, Spenser asks how an independent woman can, in good conscience, take alimony. Susan tells him that she believes that she should "exploit the oppressor" (119). Susan also tries to explain that this effort of hers is on a professional and personal basis. Whereas Spenser has always been his own person, she has not. She has been her father's daughter; her husband's

wife; Spenser's special friend. She is trying to find out who she is. Spenser had made fun of Marge Bartlett in her efforts to find herself; Susan had been the self-possessed opposite of Marge. Spenser had regretted the loss of family and love of Pam and Harvey Shepard. At the time of Promised Land, Susan had tried to force him into marrying her. Now, in The Widening Gyre, Susan is at a loss as to her future and is seen as being very similar to these women in the earlier novels. Yet her effort to find herself is centered in a professional change; she is expanding her guidance work to incorporate psychology and psychotherapy.

Through Valediction, A Catskill Eagle, Taming a Seahorse, and Pale Kings and Princes, Susan gives the reader the impression of being in need of the very help she is training to give. In The Widening Gyre, she returns to Spenser only when he is shot; in Valediction, she leaves and returns only when her new lover becomes too all encompassing and she needs Spenser to rescue her. With the focus of the novels being on the detective hero, there is little done to define or explicate the character of Susan. As a matter of fact, here her character vacillates and gives the impression of a neurotic, insecure woman who searches for whatever to fulfill herself.

The developments in the relationship between Susan and Spenser from Valediction to Pastime are, in some ways, ironic. Susan suddenly develops a need for her doctorate

and an internship in Washington, D.C., after Spenser has had an affair with Candy Sloan in A Savage Place. Despite Susan's claim for independence, when she leaves him in Valediction, she calls for his help in escaping the oppressive relationship she has developed in A Catskill Eagle. Once their relationship is on the mends in Taming a Seahorse and subsequent novels, there is little difference in the relationship other than the fact that Susan now has her doctorate.

In the course of their relationship prior to Susan's graduate work, they had talked about how their relationship was forever. They talked in long-range goals and in togetherness. Even when Susan leaves for the West Coast in Valediction, Spenser addresses their love as ideal and never-ending. She may leave his side, but she will always be his love (i.e., the theme of the poem "Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" by John Donne). Only in A Catskill Eagle does Spenser talk in the negative; he tells Susan that he will love her forever, but if she chooses Russell Costigan and their relationship over hers with Spenser, he will leave her forever. She cannot have Russell Costigan and Spenser; she meekly chooses Spenser. He rescues her from the relationship with Russell, from her bad decisions, and their relationship returns to talk of forever.

In the course of their relationship after A Catskill Eagle, Parker's attention to Susan has prompted critics to

balk at her as a character. Even diehard Spenser fans are beginning to tire of Susan and her quest for herself. Almost as bad as the attention to Susan is the renewed effort to prove to the reader how permanent the renewed relationship is. In Taming a Seahorse, Spenser tells Hawk that "Love is lovelier the second time around" (65). In her effort to offer Spenser some of her classic advice, in the same text, Susan tells Spenser, "What we've been through in the last couple of years has produced the relationship we have now, achieved love, maybe. Something we've earned, something we've paid for in effort and pain, and maybe mistakes as well" (132). In Pale Kings and Princes, when Spenser and Susan toast at the end of the case, the toast is "Forever" (183). Spenser says that he can feel "the richness and the force and the permanence" (183). In Crimson Joy, the aura of their love is strong; Spenser tells her that "It is not only that I love you. It is that you complete my every shortfall" (169). In Pastime, the novel of 1991, Spenser is still telling Susan how lucky they are to have each other and to have found each other twice; Susan is quoted as calling herself a "spoiled princess" (19). The relationship seems to have come full cycle. Their love is strong, but Susan is the selfish focus of attention.

Robert B. Parker has stated on more than one occasion the importance of Joan Parker in his life. In an interview with mystery writer John D. Carr, Parker stated that Susan

was much more limited than his wife Joan (196). Robin W. Winks, nonetheless, questioned Parker as to whether Susan Silverman was patterned after Joan. To this, Parker responded that Joan would be much more direct than Susan is and would have taken responsibility for her existence sooner than Susan does (197). Parker restates in an interview with Carr that through the creation of Susan and the relationship with Spenser, Parker is able to tell the readers more about Spenser (173).

In the course of the Spenser series, Parker does use Susan as a multi-faceted character. Spenser, with his love and devotion to Susan, was atypical of the early hard-boiled detective who never became involved with women in serious relationships. The development of Susan presented problems for the series, for with his attachment to her, Spenser could become a target for enemies who would hurt Susan to retaliate against him. Parker has not allowed that to happen. The closest incident is in Ceremony when a dog is killed and left on Susan's doorstep, but it is not Susan's dog. Parker, however, must find some purpose for the recurring character.

In the course of finding a purpose for Susan as a recurring character, Parker is comfortable with her as a listener or explainer. Susan is ever-present to help explain the Spenser character to readers. In her attempts to offer consolation to Spenser, she is also relaying to the

reader Spenser's worth, or she is relaying to the reader Spenser's reaction and the purpose for the reaction. Her conversations with Spenser are a comfortable way for Parker to develop for the reader the necessary information about Spenser's code of honor. In Susan's trying to explain it to herself or repeating what she already knows, the reader becomes fully aware of the code, a crucial aspect of the Spenser novels.

Parker's problems with the Susan character come when he works with the relationship. Susan is supposed to be a strong, modern woman who is in search of herself. Unfortunately, in the course of creating that character, Parker allows Susan to become neurotic and unsteady. Instead of seeming to be the self-assured character Parker has initially presented, she is a woman clutching at independence, a woman determined to move from the domination of one male to another. Once the relationship has reached its abyss, Susan and Spenser fall into the same relationship as before the breakup. The only difference is that Susan now has a doctorate and works from an office in her home. Spenser still makes the decisions, and Susan returns to the adviser, listener, and dinner partner role. She has not--as of 1991 Pastime--returned to the full, confident, and witty character Parker first created. For some readers, Parker will have to work hard to redevelop Susan, for the readers are tired of her during her flux.

Chapter VI

Parker's Contemporaries

The attitude toward and treatment of women in popular fiction is usually a model of a society and its times. Of course, writers do occasionally reflect attitudes that are becoming passe in society. The writers of the 1940s-1950s who preceded Robert B. Parker reflected the attitude toward women that resulted from a society which saw women as second-class citizens. Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald began to make advances in the portrayal of women, but their values and views, much like Parker's, were that women were damsels in distress who needed to be rescued. Even though Parker himself uses the damsels in distress motif, he also emphasizes dialogue that reveals the role of women as that very role changes. Parker emphasizes more than most writers by conducting lengthy dialogues between Spenser and Susan or Spenser and his clients; these dialogues concern women and their issues.

Contemporaries of Parker, like Parker himself, are freed from some of the problems of the early genre. Roles of women in society are not as stereotypical in life and can, therefore, be more freely portrayed in literature. Writers like John D. MacDonald, Ed McBain, and Andrew Vachss create female characters who transcend the good girl-bad girl stereotypes from the early genre. They are able to

mirror social issues in the writings; some of these issues are peculiar to the style of each writer, but each of these male writers, like Parker, spends time developing the relationships between their detectives and women. This concentration on the development of women as recurring characters who are not necessarily secretaries creates a multi-dimensional characterization of women in the modern hard-boiled detective novel.

As male writers have changed the portrayal of women, women writers have created female detectives in the hard-boiled school. The development of the female detective by female writers afforded interesting comparisons in the development of the female mystery genre which began in the 1970s with the advent of Marcia Muller's Sharon McCone. Previously, women writers had been more comfortable creating male detectives, but with Sharon McCone the hard-boiled female detective was born. Following closely behind the creation of McCone was Sue Grafton and her Kinsey Millhone, a free-lance private investigator. By the 1980s, Sara Paretsky had opened new insights with her V. I. Warshawski; Paretsky's creation opened vistas not only for the female detective, but for the development of social consciousness in the detective novel as well.

An engrossing hypothesis about the contemporaries of Parker is that they, like his predecessors, are controlled by the social and historical events of the time. Currently,

the women's movement and the civil rights movement have opened avenues for women so that they may be perceived and accepted as equals of men. Writers like Vachss and Paretsky are able to create strong female characters who are capable of both strength and tenderness.

Writers like John D. MacDonald and Ed McBain come close to being Parker's predecessors since both of them were writing prior to Parker's advance to the scene. Both of these writers have had their problems with the critical interpretation of the female characters and their male detectives. John D. MacDonald's Travis McGee, according to David Geherin in John D. MacDonald, has over 130 women characters in his novels. Geherin offers as J. D. MacDonald's strengths that he is able to create individuals and not stereotypes (44). The women McGee meets are perfectly distinguishable. McBain states in the preface to his McBain's Ladies Too that reviewers alleged that the danger of the text was to show how little he knew about women (viii). Other reviewers offended McBain by saying that his women were "dumb as dollards" (viii). McBain's claim, in his preface, is that he tries to present his women as people, which is what he tries to do with his male characters as well (ix).

Feminists might be glad when male writers are able to create women who are more than bed partners, who have some personality, who can survive if the male detective is not

around. John D. MacDonald and Ed McBain have created such women, and Andrew Vachss has opened a new and seamy world where men and women must be strong or else be destroyed. The women detectives created by Muller, Grafton, and Paretsky have matured to very independent women who have strong personalities.

John D. MacDonald is a prolific writer who began the Travis McGee series in the 1960s and continued until his death in 1986. Travis McGee becomes, in many ways, like Spenser in that he feels the need to fight a quest, to be the knightly figure. McGee follows a code, not one as meticulously elucidated for his readers as Parker does for Spenser, but readers of the series will detect the limits that McGee will and will not be bound by. Unlike Spenser, who has an ongoing relationship with Susan Silverman, McGee has a liaison in each text, but McGee's strength is that he also has a strong friendship with the women. In some cases, even if he beds the women, he comes across as the big brother who wants to offer assistance. In his work in salvage, McGee encounters very few women with recurring roles. Women appear and disappear; McGee has few lasting relationships and few regrets.

In Deep Blue Good-bye, McGee's friend Chookie, requests that he help fellow dancer Cathy salvage what Junior Allen has taken. Part of the plot has McGee realizing that by bedding Molly Bea, a young creature he met at a party, he

was at least partly like Junior Allen, one of J. D. MacDonald's truly evil villains. McGee thinks that Molly Bea and Patty and Deleen are "rabbit girls." As an incurable romantic, McGee thinks that "the man-woman thing shouldn't be a contest on the rabbit level. The rabbits have us beat" (173). This attitude coincides with his comment earlier in the text when he says that sex with Chookie was "not trivial enough for purely recreational sex" (22). He told her, "You are more complex than that" (22).

In Deep Blue Good-bye, McGee begins as a character who is totally romantic and knightly. He tells Cathy and Chookie that "A woman who does not guard and treasure herself cannot be very much value to anyone else . . . Only a woman of pride, complexity and emotional tension is genuinely worth the act of love" (25). Although this attitude appears knightly and romantic, Abraham Fox argues in "John D. MacDonald: The Case of the Licit Libido" in JDM Bibliophile that J. D. MacDonald has a "refined distaste for aspects of sex in general and unlicensed sex in particular" (15). Fox is correct when he argues that J. D. MacDonald does not offer representations of conventional, romantic love (15). Fox further argues that the attitude of McGee toward women is one that is "avuncular, patronizing" and that he is seduced by their helplessness and vulnerability (15).

Fox's 1990 article contradicts the 1985 David Geherin biography in which Geherin argues that J. D. MacDonald gives McGee no sexual politics (56). Both men fail to note the good male-to-female advice offered in the novels by McGee to the female characters. They seem equally oblivious to comments by Meyer to McGee about the relationship between McGee and women. In Darker than Amber, Meyer tells McGee after a rescued prostitute has turned up murdered despite their efforts to help her, "You like women as people. You do not think of them as only placed here by a benign providence for your use and pleasure, so in a sense you are not a womanizer. But you cherish the meaningful romantic charade" (66). Earlier in the same novel, McGee showed just what a romantic he was when he rejected the sexual liaison with Vangie, the prostitute, because as he said:

I have a feeling there is some mysterious quota which varies with each woman. And whether she gives herself or sells herself, once she reaches her own numbers, once x pairs of hungry hands have been clamped upon her rounded underside, she suffers a severe change wherein her juices alter from honey to acid, her eyes change to glass, her heart to stone, and her mouth a windy cave from whence with each moisturous gasping, comes a tiny stick of death. (56)

Giving credence to Fox's arguments, however, is McGee's comment in Pale Gray for Guilt that "Sex with a particularly skilled and desirable woman who could convince you that you were the greatest thing since fried rice was a marvelous gadget for one of the manipulators" (131). McGee says this when he is searching for the murderer of his friend Barnes and a corporate leader has provided Mary Smith as a manipulator to keep McGee sidetracked from his search for the truth. McGee recognizes the ploy and stays ahead, but he also recognizes the value of the ploy for Mary Smith. He says:

The role required a woman exceptionally confident and decorative, a woman of a hearty and insistent sexuality, a woman who understands that serving the manipulator in the way is part of the price of the ticket on all the best flights to all the best places. (132)

This is the type of sexual relationship from which Travis McGee withdraws; to him, Mary Smith is not worth the effort.

Fox contends that McGee's bedding women is an action generated in the nerve endings and not in the heart strings (15). Such might be the case, for one reality of J. D. MacDonald's is that through McGee the idea is presented that sex and an appropriate sun on a beach may be the best possible cure for what ails a heroine. In A Purple Place for Dying, Isobel Webb, the repressed sister of the victim,

tries to kill herself. McGee nurses her through and when the case is solved takes her on a holiday of sex and sun. This sun-sex therapy brings Isobel to a healthy life. McGee recognizes the assistance and does not try to offer an everlasting relationship. His early pop psychology is evident in the concept that by renewed "emotion" a healing can begin.

J. D. MacDonald does not limit his female characters to McGee's sexual partners. Travis McGee meets some very evil female characters. Vangie, the prostitute, in Darker than Amber is both a user and used, while Dolores Canario in A Purple Place for Dying is guilty of planning the murder of her own father after he tried to seduce her; she used her need for revenge to bring her half-brothers into the plot. These women, like Mary Smith, in Pale Gray for Guilt have a side which makes them wicked or immoral, but in creating Lilo Perris in The Long Lavender Look, J. D. MacDonald has created a truly amoral female character to rival his male Junior Allen in Deep Blue Good-by. Prior to meeting Lilo, McGee notes the hate and fear people exhibit when merely talking about her, but he also notes the attraction the men feel. When he meets her, he notices that she has a "flavor of total and dangerous unpredictability" (196). When Lilo shows her physical prowess by lifting a car, McGee is sexually attracted by a "savage surge of absolutely simple and immediate sexual desire" (199). Because of her

sexuality, McGee suggests that she might have been in on Lew Armistead's plan of prostitution. Lilo points out that she is on no one's list. Instead, she masterminds the plan to kill a lover and take her stepfather as a lover while also using Lew Armistead before killing him. Lilo has few equals in physical strength or in amoral plans. Only Junior Allen even comes close to her.

When Robert B. Parker created Susan Silverman as a long-term relationship for Spenser, John D. MacDonald did not create a serial love interest for Travis McGee; McGee has numerous female companions, but there are none who are of any great emotional interest for him. In Pale Gray for Guilt, McGee seems distraught when Puss Killian, who has been assisting him with the case, disappears without a word. McGee has developed some feelings for her. J. D. MacDonald resolves the conflict by revealing that Puss was married and dying of a brain tumor; she had tried to escape a memory and attempts to make her ordinary, standard life more exciting. She thanks McGee for his help and remains only a pleasant memory until The Lonely Silver Rain, the last McGee novel, in which Travis learns that Puss had borne him a child.

John D. MacDonald creates a myriad of female characters. He does not allow himself to succumb to delineating his females into good or bad characters. He approaches equanimity with his characters. He allows them to be both good and bad. He creates a balance in his works

by creating the amoral Lilo Perris to balance the amoral Junior Allen. Perhaps he comes close to stereotyping the beach characters; in these characterizations, J. D. MacDonald displays female characters who are interested only in a good time and easy sex, but he does create a general beach scene in which he makes equitable portrayals of male characters. Even though these beach characters seem totally hedonistic, J. D. MacDonald is able to use them all to contrast to McGee, who is in the hedonistic atmosphere, but does not allow himself to submit to total abandonment to hedonism.

Like Parker but unlike J. D. MacDonald, Ed McBain, in creating his 87th Precinct series and his Matthew Hope series, has recurring female characters. Not all the women in the McBain series can be conveniently connected to one of the male characters. The females in McBain's novels are there in their own rights; the women are not there merely to bed the male characters, nor are they there only to be rescued. Some of McBain's best advances in the development of the female characters are in the 87th Precinct series which falls close to the hard-boiled school, but which is really a style of its own. His Matthew Hope series, written in a style similar to the 87th Precinct, has overtones of the hard-boiled school. In the Matthew Hope series, McBain not only creates the recurring female characters connected to lawyer, Matthew Hope, but he also spends time exploring

the relationship between males and females. McBain is, however, less concerned with the characterization than he is with the story itself.

In his Matthew Hope series, McBain does, like the 87th Precinct, create female characters, but none as strong as Eileen Burke, Annie Rawles, or Teddy Carella. His characterization is not as thorough as that of John D. MacDonald, but he does, unlike MacDonald, appear to be exploring the depths of relationships. McBain seems to be exploring how relationships are built, how they survive, and what causes them to be destroyed and rebuilt. In an appearance at Davis-Kidd in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1992, he acknowledged that his first Matthew Hope novel, Goldilocks, was about other women. In this text, Hope is unfaithful to his wife Susan and in the course of the novel decides to divorce her despite his unwillingness to lose his daughter Joanna. His reason for the divorce centers on his own infidelity just as the murderer committed her act because she saw her father's second wife as the woman who took her father from her mother. In the course of the novels, McBain explores Hope's relationship with his ex-wife; the relationship varies from hostile after the divorce to conciliatory in the 1990 Three Blind Mice. In the interim, Hope has had other relationships. Even in Goldilocks, he decides he will not continue his relationship with Agatha, leaving the sexual and turning to Dale, another

attorney with whom he has a strong emotional and premarital relationship; she, however, leaves him. The women, except Susan, have little characterization. Susan appears to be, like Parker's Susan Silverman, a woman who cannot make up her mind.

In the course of the novels, Susan reacts realistically when she is hostile to Matthew due to his infidelity and the divorce. As they resume a decent, less hostile relationship, they still fight, again realistically, over the fate of their daughter Joanna. Even when she and Matthew resume a sexual relationship, Susan withholds returning to the married state. Like Susan Silverman, she appears to want an offer and then withdraws when the offer is made. Susan Hope is being careful, having been hurt once in a relationship with Matthew. She does, however, tell him in Three Blind Mice that he is free to come to Cape Cod for vacation. She must, however, think of the best interests of Joanna. To Susan, Joanna's best interests are served by placing her in a private school. Susan and Matthew fight, but as custodial parent, she stays with what she feels is best for her daughter. To Matthew, she is sometimes interfering with his visitation and using the daughter to retaliate for the divorce. McBain has effectively captured the modern life even if the female character is not given much individuality. By keeping the characterization vague,

the divorce and its subsequent problems make Matthew, Susan, and Joanna a family with whom many may identify.

The other females in the series are usually women who are seen in a relationship. Agatha appears only in Goldilocks and serves, like the murdered stepmother, to show the other woman who infringes on an established family. Dale, an attorney with whom Matthew forms a relationship, serves to show an attempt to rebuild a relationship after a longstanding relationship has died. McBain seems particularly interested in the destruction of a steady relationship. In Three Blind Mice and Rumpelstiltskin, he examines the idea of infidelity and its consequences. McBain's characterization in this series seems to be taking a backseat to his development of ideas.

Both John D. MacDonald and Ed McBain began their writing careers prior to that of Robert B. Parker, but both have continued to write during the same span of time as Parker's career. These men are aware of the heritage of the genre and have roots which connect them with the specifics of the genre. They have paved the way for other writers who want to expand the genre for newer purposes. Such a writer is Andrew Vachss, a New York attorney who specializes in child justice and child abuse cases. His six novels all have focused on an aspect of child abuse as well as generating a series which contains strong characters. Vachss's detective, Burke, brings the abusers to justice

without being bound by the criminal justice system. Burke is assisted by an ensemble of characters. The recurring female characters are Michelle, a black male who is undergoing a sex change; Mama, the oriental owner of a Chinese restaurant and the message-taker for Burke; and Mac, the oriental wife of Burke's "brother" and counselor at a clinic for children of dysfunctional families.

Vachss's women are modern and liberated. His character of Mama is stoic, determined, and organized. In Blue Belle, Burke says of Mama, "Some Orientals are fatalist, Mama is fatal" (292). Mama takes Burke's messages, holds his money, acting as a banker. She offers free advice and expects it to be accepted and followed. She is perceptive and totally in control of her family of thugs and adopted children like Burke and Max the Silent. When Max's wife is pregnant, Mama automatically takes an additional cut from the proceeds and sets them aside for the child. No one argues with her about the decision. What would be the use? Mama has a strong will and iron control.

Like Mama, Immaculata (Mac) is an oriental. She is a French Vietnamese who escaped the country and came to America prepared to work in a bar in order to have the money to recertify herself as a psychotherapist. Her role is very useful in the series in that as a psychotherapist, Vachss can, through Mac, offer advice for the treatment of children who have been abused. He is able to pass along the

necessary information about child abuse, but he created Mac as a strong female who stands up to thugs in a railroad station, who is undaunted by Mama's initial dislike for her, who is loyal to her husband and child, but who is also strongly committed to her profession. When Burke brings in a victim of child abuse in Strega, Mac refuses to assist unless the child and his parents consent to long-term counseling rather than a patchwork effort to alleviate the child's fears.

In creating Michelle, Vachss has settled a puzzling gender problem. Michelle is a female in a male body. She works as a prostitute in order to save the money for her sex change operation, although in the 1991 Sacrifices Vachss revealed that the operation was denied to her. She assists Burke when he needs a woman; she works as his receptionist by taping messages wherever he needs a female cover. In Hard Candy, she helped him combine his staff of prostitutes in an effort to apprehend a particular John. Vachss has created a relationship for Michelle with the electronic wizard, Mole. Together the Mole and Michelle serve as parents to a child who has been rescued from working the streets as a child prostitute. Michelle has the motherly instincts despite the fact that physically she and Mole possess the same anatomy. Vachss is certainly doing a great deal of damage to Freud's "anatomy is destiny theory." Vachss has given Michelle the appropriate female instincts

and provides her with an interest in makeup as well as an insight into human nature and a desire to nurture. Mama, a true female by birth, desires to control rather than nurture while Michelle, a male by birth, has a desire to nurture.

In the course of all six novels, Vachss introduces a series of female characters, each of which is strong-willed and determined to avenge some aspect of child abuse. In Flood, the character is an overweight, martial arts expert who is herself a victim of the correctional facilities for children and of child abuse. She wants to avenge the death of her friend's child by killing Cobra, the martial arts expert who killed the child after abusing him. Despite the love that she and Burke develop, she leaves him when she has completed her mission; her need to immerse herself in the martial arts is more important than a mere relationship. Her presence emanates in the other texts.

Strega is the most bizarre of the texts, for Gina, who prefers to be called Strega, wants Burke to find the abuser of a young boy who is a close friend of her family. Strega is strong-willed and used to getting her way. Her sexual rewards for Burke involve his not touching her, but rather her mere physical gratification of him. At the end of the text, Strega reveals that her hold over the Mafia don who wanted Burke to assist Strega is that he had abused her sexually as a child.

In Blue Belle, like Flood, Burke develops strong feelings for the main female character. Belle becomes friends with Michelle, Mama, and the remainder of the nuclear family. She assists Burke in his case and gives up her exotic dancing. Burke discovers that she is the victim of incest. She is her sister's child by her father. Her troubled life ends when she drives a car for Burke and is killed by the police. Vachss presents her as a troubled character who is dependent on sexuality, but tries to keep herself above emotional ties. Of all the female characters Vachss creates, Belle is the least self-assured, the least determined for a cause. Belle is trying to flee the demons of her birth and is only able to do this when she is killed driving for Burke.

Candy in Hard Candy shows a victim of child abuse who, unlike Belle, does not seek to escape the demonic past. Instead, Candy relishes the life that she developed after her abuse. She turns to prostitution; she becomes a madam. Vachss paints Candy as a truly lost person who has traveled so deeply into the world of depravity that she would even sell her own daughter into prostitution. Candy is, however, a strong-willed woman who knows what she wants. Her wants are merely depraved and illegal.

Burke meets Blossom, who is a doctor working as a waitress. In this text, Blossom is trying to avenge the death of her sister who was killed in a lover's lane

sniping. Burke becomes involved in an attempt to save a prison friend's family. In the first sexual encounter between Burke and Blossom, she rejects his advances because he does not have a condom. She says, "Forget it. What do you think this is? I did not go to medical school to have some strange man playing with my life. I don't know where you've been" (161-62). Burke acquiesces and admires her for her request. Although Blossom seems to have been developed along the lines of the strong-willed woman, she is less well-developed as a character than some of the others. Through Blossom, however, Vachss is able to make some strong points about safe sex.

Andrew Vachss has created a terrifying world of truth and reality. The cases of child abuse he records and the methods of abuse he builds are worse than anything published in the news. Burke's character is a victim of the system, as are most of the other characters Vachss creates. If these were not strong characters, they would be totally destroyed. Vachss allows them to be strong enough to survive. Their survival is their life replete with its problems which have not been handled by others in society. His women are tough, the kind of toughness that makes them need love, but fear that the love will never come. Their toughness comes from the fact that they learn to live by their own standards, as they know they can trust no one but themselves. In Belle's case, she creates bizarre exotic

dances to help her work through her problems while Candy gives into the life of the streets. Because Vachss creates all these characters with such serious psychological and emotional problems, he leaves little room for happy endings and a one-on-one relationship; instead, all the women leave Burke.

Of course, Vachss is himself a man with a demon. As a juvenile justice attorney, he is writing with a cause. By creating the Burke series, Vachss is able to make known some of the problems he encounters in his field. He is a man with a cause, but his creation of this underworld of human depravity also allows him the freedom to create a wide range of characters. Through Michelle he is able to explore the androgyny of transsexualism. For the most part, Vachss is very liberal in his creation of female characters. He does not feel obligated to develop them along stereotypical lines, but then Vachss is interested in characterization only as it helps him make his point about child abuse and the inadequacies of the law in dealing with the victims and in punishing the abusers. His women and his subject matter are therefore very contemporary.

Perhaps no field is more widely open than the field of female hard-boiled detection. Since the mid-1970s, women have rapidly entered the world of mystery fiction. In Sisters in Crime, Maureen Reddy takes a close look at the different types of female hard-boiled detectives, whether

they are serial detectives or detectives who are used only once. Reddy also analyzes the way the female authors, through their detectives, address issues of feminism. Similar issues are discussed in Kathleen G. Klein's Gender and Genre while Elaine Budd addresses 13 Mistresses of Crime to analyze individual writers rather than ideas. Each writer seems to come to the realization that modern female writers desired to make the genre accessible to women, not only as readers but also as writers and detectives. The writers of the hard-boiled school had to follow certain patterns set by the men, but they have also been able to expand the genre.

The modern female hard-boiled detective is probably a college graduate. Unlike her male counterpart, she has some training professionally in the field of law or its other disciplines; she may be a lawyer (V. I. Warshawski), a sociologist (Kinsey Millhone and Sharon McCone), or former member of the police department (Kinsey Millhone). Like the male hard-boiled detectives, the women are, in some way, disillusioned with the society as it is; they turn from the structure of law, school, or the police department to work on their own. Like the men, they desire a certain autonomy over their own lives. The women also have to deal with the violence. To that end, the female authors spend more time explaining the physical training of their characters than do any men except Robert B. Parker, who makes Spenser's

physical size and training an integral part of the books. Grafton has Millhone jog and occasionally work out in a gym while Paretsky created a jogger and a martial arts expert in V. I. Warshawski. Only Muller disdains the physical, and Sharon McCone becomes winded chasing suspects. Like the men, the women find themselves dealing with members of the opposite sex. Each develops her own way of coping, but each is aware of the problem of being a woman in a man's world. The women writers had to invade the male space and make their characters believable.

One major difference between female hard-boiled detectives and male hard-boiled detectives seems to be in the concern for family. Although Robert B. Parker has given Spenser a steady girlfriend in Susan Silverman and has given him a surrogate child in Paul Giacomin, Spenser has had very little to do with the actual rearing of Paul; Paul was sent away to private boarding school. In the texts of many of the female hard-boiled detectives, there is a sense of the extended family. Sharon McCone has a living family with whom she must contend, but she has also taken on the family at All Souls Legal Cooperative as her family. Hank is like a big brother or surrogate father; Rae is like a sister she has adopted. The family is ever-present to worry about Sharon or have Sharon worry about them. Kinsey Millhone has her landlord Henry to worry over her while Sara Paretsky has given V. I. Warshawski a surrogate mother and father in

Lotty Herschel and Mr. Contreras. V. I. also has her own family on both her father's and mother's side who show from time to time to offer problems or family concerns. In a relatively new series, Linda Barnes's Carlotta Carlyle not only has strong ties to her part-time job and the oversized dispatcher, but she has taken on the responsibility of being Big Sister to a Hispanic child, Paola. Few, if any, of the male writers concern themselves with the concept of familial relationships.

In the development of the female hard-boiled detective, Marcia Muller is often referred to as the "mother of the contemporary hard-boiled female private eye." Muller's Edwin of the Iron Shoes in 1977 was one of the first novels to focus on a woman as a hard-boiled detective. Sharon McCone, Muller's detective, has a degree in sociology, has worked in security in department stores, and is now employed by All Souls Legal Cooperative as an investigator. As a founder of the style, Muller has had to set some guideposts. Her concern is plotting and a study of relationships. Other than Sharon McCone herself, Muller has few other female characters. Unlike other detectives, McCone does have a family which she loves. Her mother nags her to settle down, and her sister tends to travel from one bad relationship to another until The Eye of the Storm, when the sister and her new beau survive the storm and a murder to develop a relationship. McCone claims to be friends with Anne-Marie

Altman, an attorney at the cooperative, but except for the statements about the friendship and a brief appearance by Anne-Marie from time to time, there seems to be no evidence. In Where Echoes Live, McCone uses vacation time to travel to Tufa Lake and assist Anne-Marie in some work, but the lawyer herself makes only a minimal appearance.

Muller has introduced Rae, who began as a character hired to assist Sharon and who is becoming, by Where Echoes Live, not only an assistant but a future investigator. Rae escaped a bad marriage, moved into McCone's old office, and built a new relationship with Willie Whelan, the accused of Leave a Message for Willie. With Sharon's assistance and friendship, Rae is becoming one of the few women characters in Muller besides McCone herself. Muller seems to be bringing Rae through the negative male-female relationship to a future as an investigator; the character is moving from mousy codependent to an independent woman with a future, a young Sharon McCone. In Where Echoes Live, McCone notes that Rae:

Still tended to choose shades that blended with her natural coloring, thus conveying the totally false impression that she was a bland little person. Was this a last vestige of insecurity stemming from her early, emotionally abusive marriage? (82)

In this same text, McCone learns that her mother is seeking a divorce from her father and is starting a relationship with another man. Muller examines, through Rae and the mother character, the effects of long-term negative relationships.

Marcia Muller had ground to break in creating a hard-boiled private investigator. She did just that, and her characterization of Sharon McCone is a rounded one, giving the impression of a capable and determined detective who loves her cats, tries to do more than an adequate job, be a good and caring friend, and have a meaningful relationship with a male that does not interfere with her chosen profession. The latter she does not achieve. Her attempts, however, in the creation of a female hard-boiled detective have paved the way for successors like Sue Grafton and Sara Paretsky.

Sue Grafton has achieved much success with her Kinsey Millhone series which is traveling blithely through the alphabet with the 1991 H Is for Homicide to be followed in 1992 with I Is for Innocent. Unlike Sharon McCone, Kinsey Millhone is an orphan, reared by an elderly aunt. Like McCone, Millhone does not have much interaction with women, although there do seem to be more women in the Millhone novels than in the McCone ones. Maureen Reddy in Sisters in Crime thinks that Kinsey Millhone's portrayal in A Is for Alibi creates a strong female detective and that Grafton

attributes the crimes of the other female characters to their "subordination to men" (109).

The character of Kinsey Millhone is a divinely likeable, pleasant ex-police officer. She lives in a converted garage and believes that all her social needs can be met with a simple black dress durable enough to be folded and carried in an overnight bag. She wears no makeup and cuts her own hair with cuticle scissors. She has a surrogate relationship with her landlord, an octogenarian who used to be a baker and is currently retired. Millhone does not seek a male-female relationship, having already failed at marriage twice. Her life focuses on her work and her jogging. Grafton said in a lecture in Nashville, Tennessee, in October 1990, that she and Kinsey Millhone were the same creations, except that Kinsey received the better body. Grafton repeated that comment in an interview with Alice Cary for Book Talk (2). Kinsey is deeply molded by her maiden aunt who reared her. The aunt, seen only in flashbacks and in Kinsey's thoughts, tried to mold a child who would be self-reliant. The aunt taught Kinsey how to shoot a gun and how to care for the weapon, both practices much needed by a private detective.

Many of Grafton's other female characters appear to be evil and domineering. In A Is for Alibi, Millhone says of Marcia Threadgill that she (Kinsey) was "offended by the minor crimes of a Marcia Threadgill, who tried for less

without any motivation at all beyond greed" (192). The character, Pat Usher (aka. Marty Grice), in B Is for Burglar kills Elaine Boldt for financial reasons. Usher is portrayed as unstable; Grafton is able to show this in part by having Usher destroy an apartment of Boldt's when she is asked to vacate. Part of the reason she had been asked to vacate was that when people offended her she would defecate in the apartment house's swimming pool. In G Is for Gumshoe, Kinsey faces her typical characters: the good, kind old woman like Elaine Boldt and the youngish shrew like Rochelle Messinger. Grafton seems to have settled into patterns with her female characters. They are almost like Hammett's, Gardner's, and Spillane's good girl-bad girl. In H Is for Homicide, Grafton is able to create a more complex character in Bibianna Diaz who, while she is certainly a con artist, is also the victim of an abusive relationship with Raymond Maldonado. Bibianna has spunk and fights quickly for herself and her husband. She runs away from Raymond because escape is her only chance with him as he will not allow a simple break in the relationship. She enjoys life and learns to make life and insurance fraud work for her. Readers might find themselves cheering for her despite the fact that she is a con woman.

The creation of Bibianna Diaz raised Sue Grafton in the minds of the critics. She was given credit for being willing to expand her character and her plots. She

approached the subjects of Hispanics, Tourette's Syndrome, and murder within the same plot. Although Entertainment Weekly conceded that there is little mystery in H Is for Homicide, they find that "Kinsey Millhone remains a droll narrator and an unpredictable, more-than-just-engaging hero--gutsy enough to talk back to a psychopath, vulnerable enough to slide into a sharp touching reminiscence of homesickness at summer camp" (Rubin, 60). Bibiana Diaz adds a pleasant balance to Kinsey, allowing her to play big sister, mother, and private eye all in the same novel. This was the best of the female portrayals in Grafton's repertoire in that Bibiana is good and Kinsey expands as a character.

Sue Grafton takes the changes made in the hard-boiled genre by Marcia Muller and expands on them. Her Kinsey Millhone is less likely to become embroiled in a personal relationship (although she does in A Is for Alibi only to find that he is the killer). Kinsey can admit to being able to use her gun where McCone frequently has left hers in the glove compartment of her car. Kinsey has killed where McCone rarely even fires the weapon. Kinsey, in some ways, has much in common with Spade, Archer, and Marlowe in that she is alone and does not necessarily seek the company of others.

Like Muller and Grafton, Sara Paretsky has created a hard-boiled female private investigator. Unlike Muller and

Grafton, Paretsky has made V. I. Warshawski a truly independent private investigator specializing in financial work. Muller's and Grafton's private detectives are associated--albeit loosely in Grafton's case--with businesses from which they draw some of their work. V. I. Warshawski was at one time a lawyer who worked for the district attorney's office; when she tired of that type of work and defending people whom she personally disliked, she began to work for herself. She has that strong-willed nature, has been once divorced, and wants to maintain total control over her life. She is not opposed to a relationship, physical or emotional, with a man as long as he understands that he is not to interfere with her work. Paretsky has made V. I. Warshawski a very modern woman; her other female characters are usually strong women as well. Where Muller and Grafton have ambivalent female characters, Paretsky draws very independent women; her characterization like her plotting makes her the heralded queen of the mystery genre--as far as female detectives go.

Like Kinsey Millhone who is influenced by the aunt who reared her, V. I. is influenced by a deceased mother. In virtually every text, Warshawski remembers her mother and her advice. In Killing Orders, her mother's deathbed request to take care of family has V. I. go to her Aunt Rosa's and offer to give the assistance requested. She tells Rosa that the reason for her being there is "Gabriella

made me promise that I would help you if you needed it. It stuck in my gut and it still does. But I promised her and here I am" (14). V. I.'s love and respect for her mother are ever-present, and she has inherited her mother's compassionate values as well as her independence and a strong sense of justice. This is seen in Blood Shot when V. I. returns to an old neighborhood to help a friend. Her friendship with Caroline began because Gabriella encouraged V. I. to baby-sit the child for her mother. Gabriella had been the sole friend of the young unmarried girl whose family had thrown her out when she conceived out of wedlock. V. I. was brought up to trust people, not circumstances.

Paretsky has given V. I. a surrogate mother in Lotty Herschel, a doctor who has survived Nazi Germany and who has a strong sense of humanitarianism. Lotty runs a clinic in Chicago for the poor and working class. She keeps long hours and never appears to be concerned with whether her patients have insurance. She is ever-present to fuss over V. I. when the certain beating or near death experience occurs. Lotty never tries to stop Warshawski from her job; she merely tries to insure that she receives the proper rest and takes better care of herself. Besides being a surrogate to V. I., Lotty also serves as a contrast to the male surrogate, Bobby, V. I.'s father's police friend, who is always telling V. I. that she should be home having children and taking care of a husband instead of doing man's work.

Peppered throughout Paretsky's novels are other female characters who, like V. I. Warshawski, are strong-willed and made independent by human nature or circumstances of society. Her Aunt Rosa is such a case. While Rosa gives the outward impression of being the passive Italian matriarch, she is instead a domineering woman who wants to control all that she encounters. She is incredibly reluctant to ask for V. I.'s help. In Blood Shot, while Caroline Djiak gives the impression of being a whiny manipulator, the reader will quickly assess her competence. She is holding down a job and caring for a mother made ill from years of smoking and exposure to poor working conditions. She is able to manipulate V. I., but she does so as a last resort. In her work, she is competent and is used to having her orders obeyed; she is also used to V. I. giving her what she wants.

One of the strengths of Paretsky's novels is her willingness to take sides in political and social issues. She, like Parker, has occasion to offer narrative about women's rights and other pertinent issues. In Killing Orders, she is quick to condemn the government for missing revenue by not taxing the churches. In Blood Shot, she tells a friend from school:

My parents loved me. They thought I could succeed at anything I wanted to do. So even though I lose my temper a hundred times a week or so, it's not

like I had to spend my life listening to folks tell me how my baby sister was wonderful and I was garbage. (30)

In Bitter Medicine, V. I. becomes involved with a diabetic teenager who dies. Paretsky attacks the issue of a woman's control over her body and the right of teens to control theirs.

In this context, Paretsky created one of her more dependent women in Burn Marks. V. I.'s Aunt Elena is burned out of her low-rent home. Elena has a drinking problem, and despite the fact that she has living relatives, she is able to receive little financial assistance. She is among the homeless even though her son is a wealthy officer in a corporation. V. I. takes her in even though she does not want to. Elena has, after all, sold her body for food and more alcohol. Paretsky then is able to make a statement about the status of the homeless and the system's attitude toward helping them.

Paretsky's social consciousness causes her to create characters, frequently women, who have to contend with society and who have not been taught to stand up for themselves. In this context, V. I. Warshawski is there on a fictional level to offer her assistance. Her intelligence allows her access to cases that are human and complex. V. I. Warshawski understands the working of insurance companies, hospital administration, and government. She

does not have to settle for skip traces and divorce cases. On the factual level, Paretsky uses her fiction to take stands on social and feminist issues, a feat not usually done by mystery writers.

Katrine Ames, in a May 11, 1990 Newsweek article, describes the new breed of female writers. While writers like Muller and Grafton are praised, Paretsky received the highest praise. Her detective was called "finely drawn feminine feminists with complex internal lives, intuitive and brainy" (66). While most popular critics recognize the new female hard-boiled detective, they recognize Paretsky as being not only marketable but critically acclaimed. Hers is not work that is merely churned out on a formulaic mill; hers is work that is given thought in characterization, plotting, and social commentary.

Modern mystery writers have advanced the genre. No one can doubt the contributions of a Chandler or a Hammett. Indeed, their fiction mirrors the society of their times as does the writing of a Vachss or a Paretsky. In these more complex times, when social issues are abounding in the news and in the schools, readers have every reason to assume that the mystery writer might make use of them in the course of his/her work. Readers who are not interested in social commentary can overlook it when it occurs in most fiction. Few noted the interest of Chandler concerning problem marriages in The Long Good-bye or of Ross Macdonald in The

Zebra-Striped Hearse. The issues have been there anyway. Ed McBain makes no bones about his problems with the Just Say No campaign, finding occasion in several 87th Precinct novels to lambast the program. What makes some writers more interesting than others is their method of handling fictional or factual problems in their texts.

One such problem for writers is how to interpret and characterize the females in the novels. History has some influence in that writers are to some extent bound by traditional and historical interpretations of gender roles. Writers like Hammett, Gardner, Spillane, Chandler, and R. Macdonald are bound by certain restrictions of society, although there is the breaking away from those traditions for some of the writers like Chandler and R. Macdonald. The feminist movement of the 1960s has afforded modern writers new interpretations of the female. Thanks to feminism, the woman in the modern detective novel does not have to fall into the category of either a good girl or a bad girl. She is free to be more complex. She is even free to become the private investigator rather than just a secretary for a detective. The woman may occasionally be in an emotional relationship with a male, but times have changed enough that now the male may also serve the role just as an emotional relationship for the female detective. There are now fewer boundaries and fewer restrictions on the roles of women. Because of the new interpretation of the female, there is

also a new interpretation of the male. The male must be seen in the context of the relationship with the female.

This change in women's roles in the mystery novel has created a wide range of characterization for both male and female writers. Men must decide on the characterization for their female characters. Will they allow the woman a major role in the novel? Will she be a traditional woman who acquiesces to men, or will she be a feminist? Females must decide whether they will address issues special to women or refrain from them and stay within the formula without speaking to the special issues of women. The changes wrought in mystery novels are very complex, but none is more complex than the change in the role of women in the novels.

Chapter VII

Mysteries and Women

For many years, popular culture was, for the most part, completely ignored by academics. As William W. Stowe argues in his article, "Popular Fiction as Liberal Art," academics asserted a degree of "moral superiority of high literary taste" (646). Stowe maintains that critics of popular culture see it as "socially and culturally pernicious as well as aesthetically inferior" (647). Yet readers of popular culture turn to the genre anyway. Even if the mainstream critics of literature are disdainful, the readers of popular fiction realize as Stowe states that this genre provides "effective justifications for the dominant values of a society" (648). Readers expect to gain insight into the problems, attitudes, or status quo of society. In mystery fiction, readers can expect, as Stowe states, to see the dominant culture and ideology through the detective who is an upholder of values (656). Yet, strangely enough, the mystery by its very nature is limiting; the conventions of the formula restrict how far a writer may take the genre.

Writers of detective fiction have long mirrored the values of society. In the early days of hard-boiled fiction, writers like Dashiell Hammett presented the bleak view of society, but as stated, Hammett was also limited in the perspective he was able to present for his female

characters. Women in the 1940s were limited by society as to their value in the workplace, their responsibilities at home, and the extent of their education. Hammett's writings mirror some of the values. His female characters are distinctly good or bad. As the attitudes of society changed, so did the development of the female characters in mystery novels and other forms of popular culture. From the good girl-bad girl depiction of writers like Dashiell Hammett, Erle Stanley Gardner, and Mickey Spillane, the female in the mystery novel has changed so that she is now a more complex, more complete characterization than was previously present in the mystery novel.

The female character became less stereotyped than she had been in the early hard-boiled detective novels, although Carolyn Heilbrun claims in "Gender and Detective Fiction" that men stereotype females in their novels while the female authors do not (296). Heilbrun does exempt Robert B. Parker from this stereotyping of female characters by pointing out that his Spenser is both sensitive and tough with views on poetry and women that would terrify Rambo (296). Heilbrun continues her argument by adding that what many modern male writers have done is to create female characters who are androgynous (299).

This belief in androgyny may very well be a new movement in hard-boiled detective fiction, for the gender lines in society are very well becoming blurred. Deviating

from the mystery formula for awhile and mentioning the field of hard rock or heavy metal music will allow a point on androgyny. One has only to look at some of the rock groups to note the long, bleached hair and the abundance of makeup, not like Kiss, but like young adolescent girls just learning to apply the eye shadow, foundation, and lipstick. People need not even jest to point out that many of these groups look androgynous as do many women who are trying to survive in the male-dominated business world. Some of these businesswomen need or want to downplay their femininity. To that end, they dress in business suits similar to those power suits worn by the fellow businessman. Occasionally, these suits are adorned with look alike ties and wing-tip shoes. Certainly, an aspect of modern society may be a tendency toward androgyny. If so, this would likely be mirrored in mystery fiction, which, as Stowe points out, is a mirror of society, but the mystery novel goes beyond the androgyny and instead mirrors the complexity of the modern female.

In the early hard-boiled novels of Hammett, Gardner, and Spillane, the woman was either good (like the loyal secretary) or bad (like Brigid O'Shaughnessy). Later, writers like Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald began to create female characters who were more multi-dimensional. Yet both of these writers were still bound by their own

personal agendas; Chandler created characters whom Philip Marlowe could rescue in his knight-detective guise while R. Macdonald created characters--both male and female--who were typical of some psychological point he wanted to make.

A turning point in the depiction of female characters came in the 1960s and later with the advent of a definitive women's rights movement in the United States. Such a movement and subsequent attention to the issue of women's rights caused many writers to reevaluate the characterization of women in their novels. In this perspective, Robert B. Parker began to write his Spenser series. This series has at its core a detective who is, as Carolyn Heilbrun points out, both tough and sensitive. Most of the Spenser novels concentrate on a female which allows Parker the same technique as Chandler; Spenser is able to be the same type of knight-detective as Marlowe. Spenser is, however, conscious of the new roles of women in society. In the course of the novels, Spenser and Susan have conversation after conversation about women: women who are insecure, women who turn to prostitution, women who leave their homes, women who are abused. Although Parker does occasionally create women who seem unreal or unbelievable, his depiction of women is more attuned to the attitudes of the times. His women are faced with the problems of society and react based on their backgrounds. Even when Susan Silverman becomes a little obnoxious as a character, Parker

spends time explaining that Susan's desire is for her independence; she seeks not to be just an extension of a man in her life. Many of the earlier hard-boiled writers would not even have addressed that issue for a female character. Parker is attuned to the problems inherent in women's lives from the 1960s forward.

While Parker is addressing the issue of female characterization and women's problems in the latter part of the twentieth century, he is also exploring the relationships between men and women as well as the impact these relationships have on the women involved. In exploring these relationships, Parker is able to examine the effects of marriages, live-in relationships, lesbian relationships, abusive relationships. In each case, he scrutinizes the effects these relationships have on the women involved. Of course, Spenser is still like Marlowe in the sense that Spenser hopes to be the knight-detective who will rescue women from the harmful effects of these relationships and return them to a more meaningful relationship with their men, their families, and society in general.

In the course of examining relationships as a means of developing the female characters, Parker is not alone. He is, however, more sensitive than many male writers whose women characters fall passionately in love or in bed with the male detective. By establishing the relationship

between Spenser and Susan, Parker ceases to have to deal with Spenser's raging hormones which had been evident in The Godwulf Manuscript. Naturally, the relationship between Spenser and Susan allows Parker to examine a knight-detective who is involved with only one woman. This distances Parker from his predecessors and from the contemporaries like John D. MacDonald who had Travis McGee fall into bed with at least one woman per novel.

The examination of women in relationships is also evident in the writings of Ed McBain and the Matthew Hope series as well as Marcia Muller's Sharon McCone series. Both of these writers seem to examine the male-female relationship. McBain is looking at infidelity and its relevant effects on a harmonious relationship while Muller is examining the feasibility of an independent woman investigator who can juggle her occupation of choice as well as a relationship. What both McBain and Muller show in their novels is that women, whether involved in a harmonious relationship or in a relationship hampered by a dangerous profession, are multi-faceted creatures. They, like Parker, create not stereotypes of male fantasy, not good girls or bad girls; they create women typical of the twentieth century. These characterizations which broke the old-fashioned mold of the Hammetts, Spillanes, and Gardners are what paved the way for the more radical characterizations of writers like Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton.

The advent of the female hard-boiled detective has created and opened new vistas for the characterization of women in mystery novels. Writers like Robert B. Parker may have paved the way with the emphasis on women who are multi-dimensional, but the female characterization has really broken into new channels with the new female detective. Grafton's Kinsey Millhone is a strong female who refuses to concern herself with physical appearance, who concentrates instead on her job performance. She can be romantically involved, as was the case in A Is for Alibi, but still distance herself enough to solve the case. Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski is equally devoted to her job, and Paretsky has kept her involved in cases that are not typically female cases. V. I. specializes in financial investigations; V. I. also refuses to allow men to patronize her by relegating her name to childish derivatives, thus she uses her initials. These female detectives carry the characterization of women in the hard-boiled mystery novel to the pinnacle of equanimity while male writers like Andrew Vachss are also able to continue characterization with very strong female characters.

The mystery novel, especially the hard-boiled variety, has seen a general spectrum of characterization of the females in the texts. Women like Brigid O'Shaughnessy were intrinsically evil and were meant to be seen in contrast to the competent and efficient Effie Perrine. Other writers

like Erle Stanley Gardner and Mickey Spillane carried these characterizations to the ultimate. Eventually, writers like Raymond Chandler created female characters who were multi-faceted, but whose purpose was to be rescued by knight-detective, Philip Marlowe. As the novel progressed into the 1960s, the female became more diverse. By the 1970s, with the creation of female detectives, the female character was more ingrained into the focus of the mystery novel than ever. She was no longer merely a Madonna or a Magdalene; she was a possible distressed victim, an accomplice, or the detective herself. The role of the woman has steadily developed and become more integral to the hard-boiled mystery.

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