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‘Hard-Boiled’ And ‘Suspense’ In Sara Paretsky’s *Killing Orders*

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Abstract: Detective fiction has gained popularity in the last century. One of the popular crime fiction writers, Sara Paretsky is the creator of the detective Warshawski, a Lady with Courage, and the detective series which is known as the Warshawski series in the literary world. Sara Paretsky altered the word “Hard-boiled” through her detective fiction. Her efforts of bringing change in the detective genre were successful with her Warshawski series. As a result, the rework on Hard-boiled made a mark in her third novel *Killing Orders* and showed how even ‘Suspense’ plays a basic role in any type of crime fiction and such Suspense is unravelled by a detective. This paper aims to throw light on detective elements such as Hard-boiled and ‘Suspense’ in Paretsky’s one of her famous novels.

Keywords - Detective fiction, hard-boiled, Jigsaw detective stories, suspense.

The history of the detective genre can be traced back to the eighteenth century, especially during the time of the industrial revolution or we may say that the process of urbanization became one of the major reasons for the rise of crime.

The short story “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841) was written by Edgar Allan Poe. This is considered as a pioneer work in the detective genre, through this story the private eye Auguste Dupin was introduced to the world. This short story impressed many and influenced some, Willkie Collins was the one who influenced and wrote the novel, *The Moon Stone* (1868), which is usually considered as the first-ever detective novel in the world. Following in the footsteps of these predecessors, many writers wrote detective stories and novels. The nineteenth-century British author Arthur Conan Doyle is the one, who is considered as the master of this genre by producing the series Sherlock Holmes and made him as the greatest character of the genre. The period from 1920 to 1939 is regarded as the ‘Golden Age’ of detective fiction. Agatha Christie is known as the Queen of the Golden Age. During her life span, she produced sixty-six novels and fourteen short stories collection. She produced many best-selling novels of all time and she holds the Guinness world record as the best-selling author of detective fiction. Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple are the greatest detectives created by Agatha Christie and these characters became role models to the many upcoming writers to create their protagonists.

In this paper, an attempt is made to study the elements of ‘hard-boiled’ and ‘suspense’ in Sara Paretsky’s *Killing Orders*. Hard-boiled is the foremost important element in Sara Paretsky’s detective fiction. The element of Hard-boiled has sprouted out from ‘Jigsaw detective stories’ which means, readers have to solve the puzzle along with the detective. These Jigsaw detective stories were too unrealistic because real crime does not require this kind of hassling to solve. So, writing about everyday crime started. Thus, the ‘hardboiled detective genre’ evolved. As *A Companion to Crime Fiction* states, “The Hard-boiled is predominantly American form or that it is the best understood as a response to the particular social, economic and political conditions in the United States from the 1920s onwards” (*A Companion to Crime Fiction*140).

The plot of ‘Hard-boiled fiction’ deals with organized crime and corrupt cops but the scenario of detective fiction changed during World War second. Detective fiction started to deal with new issues like serial killing and psychopath killing etc. In order to solve such puzzles, new puzzle-solving methods like the study of human psychology, especially criminal psychology, forensic science, analysis of DNA, and also computers were introduced. In such cases, scientists, labs, and computers are regarded or considered as the supporting tools of the detectives. Though the ‘Hard-boiled’ detective genre evolved in the 1920’s it saw its height from 1930 to 1950. In America, Raymond Chandler was one of the famous ‘Hard-boiled’ detective writers of the period and *The Big Sleep* (1939) is his successful novel. Philip Marlowe is the detective who was introduced in this novel as a protagonist. Both, the novel as well as the character, became so successful that Raymond Chandler continued him as his protagonist in all of his upcoming novels and short stories. The Hardboiled detective is a less disciplined sleuth. These investigators are typically in some way emotionally invested in the crime they are looking into. Because the stakes are higher for them as a result, it is more difficult for them to maintain their composure during the course of the story. Hardboiled detective stories frequently serve as analyses of the character, morality, and weaknesses of the highly flawed hardboiled investigators. The path created by these great luminaries lead to progress in the literary world. Detective fiction was created by many males as well as female detective writers. A variety of detective fiction is written today that are as follows;

- Hard-boiled crime fiction
- Police Procedural
- Thrillers crime fiction
- Locked-Room crime fiction
- Country-house mystery fiction
- Cozy mystery fiction
- Whodunit mystery fiction
- Serial Killer mystery fiction
- The Puzzle mystery fiction

And there are Four major elements in detective fiction, they are,

- Detective
- Crime
- Antagonist
- Logical ending

In 1980's the detective genre became more dominant by American female writers, especially Sue Grafton, Marcia Muller, and Sara Paretsky. These writers are regarded as the greatest female detective writers and they are regarded as the 'three sisters'. Though, they are not sisters by blood just because of one common thing, which they have employed in their fiction. They changed the scenario of detective fiction by introducing the female eye to the genre. These female crime writers challenged male writers and detectives and even became successful by making the female detective by breaking the stereotypical barriers.

Another important element in any crime fiction is suspense. It is a key tool for capturing and holding readers' and viewers' attention in novels, plays, etc. As Hugh Halman stated, "The poised anticipation of the reader or audience as to the outcome of the events of a short story, a novel, or a drama, particularly as these events affect a character in the work for whom the reader or audience has formed a sympathetic attachment." (Hugh 517) The creator of any detective story builds his plot which unveils the mystery by solving puzzles. For any crime and mystery, the logical solution is suspense and thriller they both run hand in hand. Good suspense writing is a part of the intelligence of a writer. The suspense elements of this genre dragged readers' attention because of its unique features like puzzle solving, a mystery to unravel, etc

Sara Paretsky is one of the 'three sisters'. She has created V.I. Warshawski the strongest woman detective and the detective series which is known as the 'Warshawski series' in the literary world. *A Companion to Crime Fiction* states;

Paretsky's Warshawski series has received critical attention as a feminist intervention in the hard-boiled genre, particularly in association with its class overtones. (*A Companion to Crime Fiction* 524)

The novel *Killing Orders* which was published in the year 1985 is the third novel in the V.I Warshawski series. Earlier the novel was titled 'V. I and the Vatican' and then it was changed to 'Iphigenia' but later it was published with the name 'Killing Orders'.

The plot of the *Killing Orders* begins when Warshawski's family member Rose Vignells draws detective Victoria Warshawski (who is also known as Vic) into the investigation of this new case of securities fraud at St. Albertus Magnus Priory, as she accidentally "gotten herself involved with some counterfeit securities." (*Killing Orders*7) Rose is the aunt of Warshawski's mother who was working in the St. Albertus Magnus Priory as a treasurer for the past twenty years. But she got suspicious that she planted the fraud securities in the Dominic of St. Albertus Priory's safe. Rose and her son wanted detective Warshawski's help to get rid of Rose's name of forged securities fraud. The early pages of the novel don't give any clear information about the crime but when detective Warshawski begins her investigation by visiting the Priory of St. Albertus Magnus and meets the new father of the Priory, Boniface Carroll, and also the father Stephen Jablonski, a student master and other close associates of the Priory like Augustine Pelly the procurator, a junior priest and other fathers, brothers, priests and friars monks, they all look similar to detective Warshawski because of their white gown. There she finds out that Boniface Carroll was the one who found the fake shares while he wanted to convert them into money in order to renovate the sixty years old Priory building. Further, it is conveyed to detective Warshawski that all the Priory members are cordially involved in the inquiries of the F.B.I. and the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) in the matter of counterfeit securities. At this juncture, the author tries to put forth some hint about 'organized crime' which might have happened in the Priory, but in the beginning of the novel is full of confusion as it is not clear to know what is happening but in the later part, this confusion is cleared by the investigation of detective Warshawski.

In the beginning, detective Warshawski suspects, someone from the Priory or Rose to have stolen the money, but there were no solid pieces of evidence which could support her assumption. In order to gather the proper evidence, she had to find the original shares, and along with that, she had to confirm whether the shares were authenticated or not. As Peter Humn rightly said, "The private eye, moves continually between action and direct observation; he is never allowed the breathing-space of anticipation or interpretation." (Humn 30-31) In the same way, the private eye detective Warshawski in the novel goes on investigating things and gathers as much as information about the Priory, fathers, teachers and even her aunt Rose. It somewhat makes readers to think why detective Warshawski was not going in one direction, but the private eye never believes anyone including their own thoughts, it is their habit, to gather as much as pieces of evidence and to examine the case in all the possible dimensions so that they can come to the proper conclusion on the matter. But still, the mystery is unrevealed and there is no progress in the case after putting in much effort.

One fine day detective Warshawski got a message from her friend Roger Ferrant who works in the stock market that "Barrett called to tell me that. Called to let me know he was getting a lot of orders from a small group of Chicago brokers who had never traded in Ajax before." (*Killing Orders* 49) So, detective Warshawski thinks of visiting and investigating some of the brokers in this regard.

Agnes Paciorek a school friend of detective Warshawski is there in the stock market as a broker. detective Warshawski got some information about the takeover of Ajax shares and how the American Stock Exchange works and operates. Here, detective Warshawski was trying to find the person who forged securities when she was completely involved in this, Warshawski heard that the original stock certificates appear in front of Priory's safe without anybody's knowledge. Rose and Albert try to keep away Warshawski from the investigation as they know that her life, as well as their life, was in danger. detective Warshawski receives an anonymous call and the caller warns her to quit the case this effected Warshawski so much, "Don't go on, Miss Warshawski. You

have such beautiful grey eyes. I would hate to see them after someone poured acid on them.” (*Killing Orders* 78) But nothing made detective Warshawski to keep herself away from the investigation, she keeps on thinking the ways of solving this puzzle. Later she remembered her friend Lotty Herschel’s uncle Stefan, who is an expert and also a former forger in engraving. So, she decides to meet him in order to take his help in finding the real culprit behind these fraudulent securities.

Detective Warshawski’s friend Agnes Paciorek is brutally murdered and found with more than twenty bullets in her brain, when she starts to look into the financial dealings of some of the organizations and she finds something fishy about the financial dealings of Corpus Christi a secret organization. Throughout the novel, the reader can witness a series of suspenses and this particular horrifying incident increases the level of suspense in the minds of the readers as to know who murdered Agnes. Warshawski is in shock after hearing the news of Agnes’s murder. There is a sudden jolt in the life of Warshawski as she was in the custody of police for the purpose of interrogation because she is suspected of killing Agnes as she was the last person to see Agnes alive. Mrs Paciorek (Agnes’s mother) and the policemen put an ugly accusation on Warshawski, “You and Paciorek were lesbians, weren’t you?” (*Killing Orders* 105) So, somehow now Warshawski is stuck in the web which was woven by her opponents in order to keep her away from the investigation of the forged share certificates.

Warshawski in an anticipation of getting some clue as well as she had to pay her last tribute to Agnes, attends Agnes’s funeral, where she notices some of the Dominic Priory members along with Augustine Pelly. Reverend Xavier O’Faolin was introduced to Warshawski by Pelly, who is Archbishop of the Priory as well as in charge of the Vatican financial functionary. When Warshawski spots all the members of the Priory, she suspects a connection between the Priory frauds and Agnes’s murder. So, Warshawski starts to look into Agnes’s office, which reveals half of the mystery and that is how detective Warshawski finds out that the organisation is called ‘Corpus Christi’ and a list of members of that organization. She comes to know that Mrs Paciorek was also a member of the secret society and she was the one who purchased the highest amount of Ajax shares. The group was initially started by a wealthy Roman Catholic group of laypeople in order to help poor people. The interesting thing is that it always likes to operate secretly. This makes Warshawski to suspect a link between Corpus Christi, Agnes’s murder and the church mafia.

This was her big breakthrough in solving the suspect and murder but, detective Warshawski had to face some harsh attacks which included an acid attack but by the God’s grace the acid which was carried by the attacker fell on her neck instead of the eyes. Thus, she escaped and survived an acid attack. This horrifying incident increased the level of suspense in the reader’s mind to know who murdered Agnes. Though, detective Warshawski felt a little weak with fear she says to her partner Roger that “I don’t plan to turn into a clinging female who runs to a man every time something doesn’t work out right” (*Killing Orders* 181) Soon, she traces out about the acid attacker and finds him. His name is Walter Novick, and he works for Annuzio Pasquale, he has done many of his deals like killing, looting and torture with the help of the local mafia.

While reading this part of the novel, readers can witness so many mysterious things, within a few days, Warshawski faced a second attack, which was too dangerous than the earlier one, where-in her apartment was on flame, and her kitchen was on fire. Warshawski and her partner Roger escaped from the fire along with her mother’s wine glass to which she was emotionally attached. This all seems to indicate that someone is trying very hard to pull her out of this investigation, on the other hand, it is making her strong enough to find the real culprit. After the fire attack again the smooth-voiced strange called her up again and scares her by saying, “You were lucky, Miss Warshawski. But no one will be lucky forever”. (*Killing Orders* 198) When Warshawski is in the middle of all these troubles, she goes to Uncle Stefan’s apartment to check on him. But when she enters the house she finds him in a pool of blood, he was stabbed by someone and he was in very serious condition. After this incident, Warshawski and Lotty have some arguments and differences in their opinions which impact their relationship, but Warshawski was happy for a day that at least she had saved Uncle Stefan’s life by taking him to the hospital at the right time.

Further, Warshawski’s only focus was to trace that threatening caller in the hope that the criminal may show the path to the real culprit. Adjunct to this, Phil Paciorek invites Warshawski to the party arranged by Mrs Paciorek and all the Dominic members are also invited to the party. Finally, at that party, the so-long-kept suspense is revealed. Warshawski meets the voice which she used to hear in the phone calls. It was none other than Archbishop O’Faoline, but she does not reveal this to anybody, instead to herself she says, “I found I was shaking so badly I could hardly stand. This was the man who wanted to blind me”. (*Killing Orders* 240)

Warshawski turns over to O’Faoline in order to find out more about him and how much he is involved in these crimes. So, she disguises herself and breaks into Faoline’s room and starts to look over every piece of paper, then she discovers Ajax’s insurance papers and their plan to take over Ajax’s insurance company. This action of Warshawski finally uncovers the mystery, suspense and plan behind the crime.

The final scene is all about revealing the puzzle in front of the police and Father Boniface Carrol, who is the head of St. Albertus Magnus Priory. Warshawski uncovers the story behind the crime which takes back to some thirty-five years ago to the place called Panam. O’Faoline joined Corpus Christi while working as a priest in Barrio. Meanwhile, Catherine Sarage (Agnes’s mother) rich young woman also joins Corpus Christi through O’Faoline for whom she donates much of her money into a trust for better upliftment of Corpus Christi. During O’Faoline’s last days in Priory, a young energetic man, Augustin Pelly joined the Priory and came under O’Faoline’s influence. He was his disciple for several years. When they rejoined at San Tomas Priory, they thought about buying Ajax shares with the help of Corpus Christi Priory because Priory shares had not been used for decades which persuaded Don Pasquale to easily replace them with forgeries with the help of Augustin Pelly. In the meantime, O’Faoline tries to run away but, “someone just set off a radio bomb in O’Faolin’s car.” (*Killing Orders* 340) and he is found dead.

Even though the mystery is revealed that of O’Faoline’s murder suspense does not yet solve. Because they couldn’t trace the person who killed O’Faolin and why? Warshawski could not find the culprit of Agnes’s, murder, she says helplessly to Agne’s father that, “there is no evidence,” (*Killing Orders* 318) Though, O’Faoline was the person behind forged securities, the suspense regarding the two murders does not solve. Warshawski could not find who murdered Agnes and O’Faoline. As this novel is truly ‘hard-boiled’ and the ‘suspense’ in it keeps readers on their toes. The mystery gets solved but the murderous get away with the crime. Detective Warshawski puts her maximum efforts into solving the scam of fraud securities. Sara Paretsky’s novel *Killing Orders* contributes to establish the ‘hard-boiled’ fiction as a genre. As this novel has organized crime and serial killings elements that make it a thorough Hard-boiled story.

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