

**Я. Шуфань**

A TOUGH FEMALE CHARACTER  
AS DEPICTED BY SARA PARETSKY IN *BLOOD SHOOT*

Sara Paretsky is widely accepted to be a founder of an American feminist detective novel writing. Her protagonist Victoria Warshawski, smart and kind-hearted, is an ambitious and fearless person who effectively deals with stress, challenges and pressure. Critics say that in 1982 S. Paretsky created a gritty and independent private investigator from Chicago, truly a «tough guy», but from a female point of view [The Usual Suspects // Crimeways Magazine – <https://crimeways.wordpress.com/the-writers>].

Critics as well as readers consider *Blood shot* by Sara Paretsky the best work in challenging the gender norms of detective writing. The theme of toughness as a mode of writing is seen in the plot which twists, so as to induce the reader's curiosity and suspense, from the first to the last page, and in the setting: tough women live in a tough town.

At the beginning of the novel private investigator V. I. Warshawski is hired by her childhood friend Caroline Djiak to find out who her father was. But unexpectedly Victoria finds herself investigating the murder of an environmental activist friend and the corruption at the chemical factory. Unfortunately, she got involved into a murder.

Caroline's request returns Victoria to her roots in the old South Chicago neighborhood she was raised in. She manages to dig up a lot of information on her own past, which she can see through her adult eyes. Simultaneously she sees a gallery of women with tough characters that penetrate the novel.

She remembers her mum Gabriella suffering from incurable disease, loving her daughter, but tough. She remembers herself in her childhood with loving parents: reckless, but tough. She remembers her neighbor Caroline: frivolous and flakey, but tough. She remembers her close friend Dr Charlotte "Lotty" Herschel: caring, but tough. She meets an elderly lady: unsatisfied, but tough.

Moreover, toughness is seen in the author's choice of the name of the protagonist – Victoria (*Vic* for short), presupposing a direct correspondence of the name and the meaning of the word *victory*, of the name and the author's strategy, of the name and the reader's perception: the name possessor must have a tough character.

Toughness is also seen in the form of the author's address to her protagonist Victoria Iphigenia Warshawski as *V. I.* Stylistically speaking, such an abbreviation not only saves the author's speech efforts while depicting the events of the novel, but being peculiar to a military style where it is stated as a conventional symbol and is known only to the initiated, it is used to enable the reader to feel the efficiency of a fast flow of events as military acts: so as to win, a winner must possess only a tough character.

Focusing on the theme of toughness in a women's character, S. Paretsky highlights the representation of gender in other themes reflecting various types of societal conflicts: between human and nature, the rich and the poor, men and women, adults and children.