

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE GODDESSES FOR WOMEN WRITERS: GENDERING THE GENRE

#### **Introduction**

In Chapter 1 I showed that the detective or mystery genre is haunted by a dualism straining to explode into multiplicity and diversity. Whether that dualism is considered in terms of Western modernity's dominant monotheism (in which a transcendent god structures nature as other), in Bakhtin's dialogism, or in Hillman's discussion of the opposition of Apollo and Dionysus, I suggested that the most comprehensive dualism is in the positing of two types of creation myths of being.<sup>1</sup> Sky Father and Earth Mother are hypothetical form-making narratives in which consciousness is either based upon separation into dualism, or, alternatively, founded on connection and embodiment.<sup>2</sup> They represent two, mutually implicating tendencies in psyche and culture, not actual myths, not least because they are too stark to work alone. Humans require more than just either one. In fact, a viable psyche and culture needs these tendencies in a creative dialogue.

So consciousness requires the presence of *both* a Sky Father and an Earth Mother. A Sky Father is unavoidable, because without separation from the mother in such fateful narratives as the Oedipus complex, no new identity is possible. On the other hand, without an Earth Mother psyche through body and connection there is neither love nor reproductive desire. Baring and Cashford's *The Myth of the Goddess* persuasively argues that Western modernity is sick because of its excessive repression of Earth Mother and neurotic over-favoring of Sky Father. Although the depth psychologies of Freud and Jung bring back an Earth Mother as the pre-Oedipal mother,

this brooding figure prior to gender differentiation has not yet succeeded in rebalancing the modern psyche.

One crucial aspect to Earth Mother and Sky Father is that these myths do not constitute two genders based unproblematically upon bodily sex. Put another way, an Earth Mother and a Sky Father do not imply essentialism, the notion that persons with female bodies have an innate gender identity as feminine and vice versa for men. The idea of an unchanging psychic gender from bodily sex has largely been discounted through pioneering research into varying styles of gender across different cultures and throughout history.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, bodily sex is implicated in gendered behavior. Moreover, in championing an embodied psyche where psyche and soma are inextricably bonded, depth psychology inevitably encompasses bodily and sexual differences.

To return to the creation myths and their non-essentialism, Earth Mother is the pre-gendered pre-Oedipal *ground* of being, because mythically she is the divine planet who gives birth to all life; while psychologically she is the mother from whose body the infant emerges. In this sense, the mother's body can be an actual woman, or any artificial gestation chamber, for to the infant no human shape is yet discernible. Hence the Earth Mother may be a goddess, but s/he is not a woman, although the feminine pronoun will be used in this book for convenience. An Earth Mother is a goddess of both women and men, just as the planet nurtures and produces both, or all, possible genders.

By contrast, a Sky Father takes an active and differentiating role in gender creation. By making nature and the planet as separate from himself, "he" founds duality as a fundamental condition of being. Once that duality is inscribed onto the different bodies of women and men,

gender as a set of binary alternatives begins. Furthermore once gender differences are mapped onto the relation between natural and supernatural, then the divine becomes masculinized and “his” creation feminized. Therefore, in the gendered *position* of God a model of consciousness emerges as disembodied and masculine. It takes only a cultural literalization of God as a disembodied source of fertility to erect patriarchy, the rule of a father who is patterned on the divine Father of created, dumb (in both senses), nature.

Psychologically, the Sky Father is the Oedipal father whose intimated threat of castration separates the child from amorphous pre-Oedipal mother and forces recognition of two gendered bodies. Sky Father makes two genders and in so doing becomes one of them. In this way, Earth Mother and Sky Father are not so much woman and man as holism (everything connected) and dualism (everything defined by an-other). The human psyche needs both myths as basic structures of consciousness. Even in the most patriarchal environments, meaningful connection, body and their psychic energization as Eros, remains dynamically alive. Without some Sky Father elements, there would be no consciousness, for the psyche would be a boundless space of multiple, chaotic impulses.

Consequently, the alternative to dominance by dualism in patriarchy is not switching to a simple matriarchy, of rule by mothers, nor is it to jump into Earth Mother myth of no differentiation at all. Switching the gender in charge, or changing one framing myth to the other, is to remain trapped in the same dualistic structure and become coercive by its privileged status. Rather, healing the world is a matter of rebalancing both creation myths as necessary and necessarily inter-related. Only when both myths are creatively entwined can they be fertile in sponsoring the fullness of our possibilities.<sup>4</sup>

Given that Earth Mother invokes animism, many spirits in nature, the psyche requires not two divine beings but many. Put psychologically, as James Hillman proposed, the psyche needs polytheism, *many* goddesses and gods of being and knowing.<sup>5</sup> For these divine figures offer gender as polymorphous and protean in our possession of, or possession by, many divine stories.

That these goddesses and gods are modes of knowing is an aspect of their function in structuring consciousness. For example, in the previous chapter, *Clouds of Witness* found Aphrodite in the sleuth's recognition of the erotic current of the crime through his own sexual attraction to his brother's mistress. Artemis infused Anna Pigeon in her quest to know through her liminal presence to non-human nature, while V.I. Warshawski is both Athena guarding her city and Hestia trying to reconnect the family that embodies her hearth fires. How these goddesses stem from the trickster myth of the mystery genre and Dionysian dismemberment will be considered next.

The drive to diversity in contemporary mysteries has previously been explored by Stephen Knight in his comprehensive *Crime Fiction 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity* (2004).<sup>6</sup> While covering a longer span of time and authors of both genders, Knight's invaluable analysis stops short of considering myth as a productive factor. He prefers to see history and power as determining forces, and so his work differs markedly from my own archetypal approach.

It is time to look at how genre operates dynamically for the goddesses, from trickster myth to divine vehicle.

### **Trickster, Divine Dismemberment and Goddesses**

Jung shows the way from the trickster myth of hunter/gatherers, to the return of the Earth Mother, in order to heal the modern psyche.

Even [the trickster's] sex is optional despite its phallic qualities: he can turn himself into a woman and bear children... This is a reference to his original nature as a Creator, for the world is made from the body of a god.<sup>7</sup>

Here in Jung's work is the admission that the trickster is one image or figuration (figure) of the Earth Mother; his more capacious sense of the Freudian pre-Oedipal mother. For the trickster is the protean psyche itself, as the origin, ground and multiple possibilities of our being. The trickster as pre-Oedipal entity makes a cosmos from her/his ungendered body. Lewis Hyde, in *Trickster Makes this World*, hypothesizes that the cross cultural trickster myth stems from a deep archaic time when it became the psychic engine of humans hunting and being hunted.<sup>8</sup>

To my mind, then, the [trickster] myth contains a story about the incremental creation of an intelligence about hunting.<sup>9</sup>

In my book, *The Ecocritical Psyche* (2012), I argued that mystery fiction activates the trickster aspect of psyche that has the potential to re-orient our relation to human and non-human nature.<sup>10</sup> This discussion will be developed through later chapters of this book, where I will elaborate on how goddess myths offer particular psychic interventions into nature and human nature through detective fiction. For now, I want to continue the theme of this chapter which is the conversion, within mysteries, of gender dualism into diverse styles of the feminine. As we have seen, such dualism is expressed mythically in the mutual relating of Earth Mother and Sky Father. Here the latter posits an originating gendered creator (masculine), and an "other"

(feminine) as it's negative; while the former, a pre-Oedipal mother, or trickster, offers plural and mutable gender potentials.

Such dualism is challenged by the notion of divine dismemberment, examined in Chapter 1, in which oppositions morph into a relational multiplicity in the mythical structure of Jung's rendering of Dionysus.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, Dionysian multiplicity, which is also the matter (or mater) of trickster, takes on being in the different goddess and god myths, as I shall show below. In turn, the Dionysian sparks find soma and psyche in our writing and reading mysteries. Therefore dualism within mystery fiction, begun in gendered form, is mobilized by the genre's innate trickster-Dionysian energy into a creative expression and reinvention of gender styles.

Such a complex mythical history accounts for the perception of gender dualism within the early decades of the literary form. For the early twentieth century there appeared to be a real division between tough guy heroes and genteel feminine amateurs with appropriate gender assignments. Yet more recent female writers in particular, I suggest, have been busy dismembering such stark duality that reeks of gender stereotyping. Male hardboiled mysteries are no longer balanced against the female clue-puzzle, or "cozy," as the genre celebrates its own polytheistic liberation.

### **Gender and Genre: the Hardboiled Woman and the Cozy Man**

By the twenty-first century, sleuth fiction by women in the United States and Britain disrupts the earlier gendered opposition of hardboiled and cozy, and also dismembers dualism into multiplicity in a self-conscious irony native to this trickster genre.<sup>12</sup> Mysteries continue to rely upon a sophisticated readership, one that recognizes the masculine and feminine roots of the

hardboiled and the cozy. So, in order to scrutinize the undoing of gender opposition, it is worth looking at how the hardboiled and the cozy emerged in the early twentieth century mysteries.

Unsurprisingly, it was male writers of detective fiction set in American cities beset with organized crime who gave us the hardboiled hero. Raymond Chandler was not only prime practitioner; he also memorably analyzed his art of the iconic “mean streets.”<sup>13</sup>

“...[D]own these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. He is the hero; he is everything. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor—by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world.”<sup>14</sup>

Chandler’s hero, Philip Marlowe, is emphatically masculine, and in fact seems designed to resist the trickster elements in both fictional sleuth and his genre. In a sense Chandler is here archaizing the hardboiled, in pressing the hero back into the ideal grail knight and corralling the trickster energy into the deceits of the city revealed to be an irredeemable wasteland. Here the detective as pure knight ends his quest in becoming the wounded Fisher King, metonym for the unhealed world and bearing the scars of its violence.<sup>15</sup>

By contrast, the clue-puzzle, or cozy, is dedicated to the success of the grail quest, or the restoration of Eden.

The phantasy, then, which the detective story addict indulges is the phantasy of being restored to the Garden of Eden, to a state of innocence, where he may know love as love and not as the law. The driving force behind this daydream is the feeling of guilt, the

cause of which is unknown to the dreamer. The phantasy of escape is the same, whether one explains the guilt in Christian, Freudian, or any other terms.<sup>16</sup>

Here is the coziness haunted by the unease of the cozy. Represented typically in the women writers of an early twentieth century England reeling from the wholesale male slaughter of World War One, the “clue-puzzle,” a term developed by Stephen Knight, was evolved by writers such as Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Ngaio Marsh and Margery Allingham.<sup>17</sup> These women pioneered a form to exploit trickster changeability that would enable a fictional escape from the all too literal wastelands of the battlefields.

With the gender opposition of hardboiled and cozy, therefore, comes also a cultural division between America, a country finding a voice for its new urban realities, and England, struggling with an absence of a generation of young men. Together with the gender division in society between male soldiers and also a largely male police force, it is easy to see a reciprocal influence between social role and the emerging of gender dichotomy in the two related subgenres.

And yet, the trickster-Dionysian energy in the whole genre refuses to be channeled into a static dualism of masculine hardboiled and feminine clue-puzzle or cozy. In the later twentieth century, especially in the work of women writers, there is a skillful dismembering of stereotypes and the liberation of goddesses in mystery fiction. Moreover, a polytheistic approach to understanding the genre also demonstrates how some novels themselves diagnose the absence of a much needed goddess. For example, here I will suggest how Aphrodite emerges from, and also overshadows, Dionysus. To demonstrate, I will show how Marcia Muller’s *Trophies and Dead*

*Things* (1990), shows the high cost of banishing Aphrodite and shifting war from an Ares, her lover, to Apollo, a god without her mitigating embrace.<sup>18</sup>

### **Reclaiming Aphrodite**

As Ginette Paris shows in *Pagan Meditations*, Aphrodite as feminine sexual energy and knowing was marginalized by Plato and much later, by Freud.<sup>19</sup> Each reconfigures Eros to occlude her radiance. In the Greek pantheon, Aphrodite shares with Dionysus in giving “a central position to the spontaneity of the body and to sexuality.”<sup>20</sup> There the resemblance between more primordial and brutal Dionysus and civilizing Aphrodite ends. While Dionysus is ecstatic and savage, Aphrodite is beauty and seduction. Aphrodite is the arts of love while Dionysus provides instinctual energy frequently careless of human vulnerability.

Consequently, in the notion of dualism giving way to multiplicity via dismembered Dionysus, Aphrodite represents a further stage in the gods developing sophisticated arts and graces. Aphrodite is the civilizing force arising from the embodied psyche in sexuality. She is the capacity for beauty that inspires corporeal love. Paris sees Aphrodite as feminine sexual energy that bestows and responds to beauty beyond the nature culture divide.<sup>21</sup> Aphrodite is found in the seductive beauty of flowers, of aesthetic nature in gardens as well as in the gorgeous clothing of those seeking or expressing love. Not least of Aphrodite’s cultivating capacities, then, is to enable nature and art to embrace in human enjoyment of the body.

Evidently, Aphrodite can then be seen as one of the Earth Mother’s multiple figurations as divine earth as source of being and meaning. Or, she may be a reconceived version concealed in plain sight in a pantheon dominated by Zeus, a patriarchal sky father. To the latter

interpretation falls her birth legend as arising from sea foam resulting from Cronos's castration of his Sky Father, the Sky himself, Ouranos.<sup>22</sup> Aphrodite then becomes a fluid, sinuous sexuality that reminds us that our bodies are mostly salt water.<sup>23</sup>

Above all, Aphrodite is a virgin goddess; her divinity demonstrates sexuality as sacred. Put another way, Aphrodite is a form of knowing and being in mysteries.<sup>24</sup> She is virgin in the sense of being self-contained, not to be regarded as defined by any one relationship to an-other. Significantly, she shares this virginity with Athena, Artemis and Hestia, suggesting the importance of the feminine as a primary reality, and not as a secondary product of an original masculinity.

On the other hand, the project of marginalizing the sexuality of divine feminine began early with Platonic philosophy. As Paris explains.

Platonic philosophy marked the end of Aphrodite's predominance; it gave the myth of Eros precedence of that of Aphrodite, dissociated love from its corporeal aspect, and valued mostly the all-male relationships... More and more Apollo controlled Dionysus... Woman's body stopped being one of the paths to the sacred.<sup>25</sup>

Here Paris reveals Plato's move in replacing Earth Mother as origin with Sky Father dualistic and patriarchal values. By elevating mobile Eros and discounting the somatic sacred of Aphrodite erotic love, his philosophy looks towards a divine devotion directly opposed to the pleasures of the body. Such a move is indivisible from a separation and privileging relation between masculine and feminine. Moreover, Apollo, god of reason and order, starts to direct cultural preferences, rather than being a psychic capacity equal to those possessed by very different gods.

In making Eros the *masculine* force of psychic energy that Freud saw as fundamentally sexual, Freudian psychoanalysis compounds Platonic preferences.<sup>26</sup> Hence the Freudian libido is masculine; Aphrodite and feminine sexuality as an ontological or primary reality is not offered as part of the Freudian tradition. This is clearly not the case for Ginette Paris's development of a Jungian notion of multiple archetypes, inborn psychic potentials all capable of feminine or masculine expression. Paris contributes magnificently to Archetypal Psychology by positing a polytheistic psyche in which goddesses exist as differentiated psychic powers.

The masculine and feminine universes are in constant attraction and repulsion, interdependent and organically linked. We are here in the world of Aphrodite, Hermes, and, in general, of Greek polytheism: constant negotiations, many rivalries, but also great intensity of life.<sup>27</sup>

Such a portrayal is not an invitation to retreat from the present world. It is rather a way of re-connecting with human potentials that have been neglected in the Western psyche. If, as I have been suggesting, these goddesses and gods have returned in cultural forms such as mystery fiction, it might be worth exploring a little further what Aphrodite holds out to us. After all, if divine feminine sexuality is a civilizing force, then what about the sexual component of fictional crime? Might such an understanding of the knowing potential of the body aid a detective's quest?

Aphrodite is beauty in a state of grace, says Paris. She is a divine invitation to sexuality that is far from a facile endorsement of society's often perverse preferences for beauty in women and men.<sup>28</sup> Aphrodite enfolds the whole body in a glow that incites desire. She brings couples together without preference for heterosexuality. Her arts are culture-*making*, refining intense and

beautiful human connections. She civilizes in ways that promote the liveliness of the body as a way to the sacred.<sup>29</sup>

Above all for this book, Aphrodite *knows* through her sexuality, her charged body, her connection and arts of love, her passions. Her taste for new relationships forms intimacies that reveal what would otherwise remain hidden to an investigator. Her embodied sense of being and touching activates a somatic, only partly conscious awareness that contributes to other, more rational and intellectual modes of thought. Sexually inspired, Aphrodite is beauty that communicates possibilities beyond conventional signals, offering more knowledge of relationships than more polite non-sexual interaction permits.

Indeed, Aphrodite is a possession of an enhanced capacity of what Michael Polyani calls “tacit knowing,” comprehension that is embodied and intuitive.<sup>30</sup> We know without knowing *how* we know. Tacit knowing is creaturely skillful intimation that comes from our somatic roots in nature. So here, in her civilizing arts, Aphrodite provides tacit knowing through instinctual sexuality that is also psychically cultivated through culture.

Crucial to mystery fiction is Aphrodite’s adulterous alliance with Ares, god of war. As Paris explains, today neither Aphrodite nor Ares are prime movers of war to the detriment of the psychic health of all of society.<sup>31</sup> Today Apollonian dominance in technology, distance and disembodied order has triumphed over the somatic fierceness of Ares. What has largely replaced face to face combat is war fought at a distance through unmanned machines controlled from air-conditioned bunkers thousands of miles away.

Perhaps as a result, Aphrodite’s modern role in warfare is almost wholly negative and destructive. Rather than the sacred prostitutes of Aphrodite who might have gently restored

wounded bodies and psyches, Paris points out that rape is used as a mode of terrorizing and crushing a population in defeat. Such a situation brings into question the complex weave between mystery fiction and war. After all, mysteries almost always center on murder, while in wars the same nation that punishes murder sends soldiers out to kill, and thereby encounter terrifying gods and goddesses.

Here I want to suggest that mystery fiction, born in its modern form shortly before World War One, is a trickily fictional attempt to link our ancient history of hunting and being hunted with our modern condition of war. Strategies of the hunter are developed even in modern technological warfare by the snipers and those who direct drones. Yet modern war is distinguished by its capacity to annihilate populations, not just those who choose to fight. It is therefore particularly traumatizing to human culture in threatening its very survival. When survival is at stake, the trickster surfaces.

In her book, *Twentieth Century Detective Fiction*, (2001) Gill Plain marvelously depicted how far Agatha Christie's relatively clean, sanitized, *and recoverable* dead bodies seem to be compensation for the horrific mutilations of corpses in World War One's trenches.<sup>32</sup> Was her work in particular, and the "cozy" genre she helped to mold, attempting to ameliorate the terrible absence of those millions of bodies interred in mud?

I would like to propose that the whole mystery genre may be attempting to compensate for, or rebalance, the cultural psyche in a time when war seems to efface the meaning of an individual death. For above all, mysteries make death meaningful, and therefore solvable at the level of self-conscious fiction, as I argued in Chapter 1. Mysteries convert death, in all its many occasions---from old age, illness, accident, nameless acts of war, to conscious and preventable

murder. They therefore return the deliberate killing of a human being to the individual, and embodied plane of Ares, lover of Aphrodite.

As a metonym is language that works by being part of what it signifies, one could say that at some deep level mysteries are metonymic substitutions for war, for physically taking up arms against an enemy. Specifically, Aphrodite and Ares are deceiving her husband, the iron-working god, Hephaestus, whose forge is arguably the mythical source of the drive to mechanize war with ever more sophisticated weapons of mass destruction.<sup>33</sup>

Tricking Hephaestus, then, is an erotic, embodied and personal gesture against convention (marriage); one that arguably undermines him as the propensity to make machines (of war). When unproblematically allied Hephaestus and Apollo will sponsor the machines and disembodied reason that pervade modernity. These two principles have come to dominate warfare and to degrade Aphrodite's divine powers into yet another dehumanizing weapon, rape. In a society that has historically repressed the capacity of sexuality to be both feminine and civilizing, weapons, ingenuity and warrior courage all seem to have *lost touch*. They have cast aside the playful connection to Aphrodite that might mitigate their dark potential. How might a case study in women's mysteries explore this sad condition?

Aphrodite returns as also a trickster. She deceives and causes pain, yet her erotic bounty remains sacramental in uniting bodily desires with the survival of the soul.<sup>34</sup> Whether it is in the capacity to heal the warrior to come *home* from battle, or to offer the fictional detective that instinctual *knowing* that similarly heals the realm of the mystery from continued killing, it is time for a case history to explore her invigorating divine powers.

### **Case History (5) *Trophies and Dead Things* (1990) by Marcia Muller**

Sharon McCone, investigator for All Souls Legal Cooperative, San Francisco, is feeling the absence of Aphrodite. Having fallen in love with the client of a previous case, her beloved has left her in order to tend a sick and estranged wife. He may never return. Fearing empty hours, she is keen for a new assignment. Her task is to find the unknown heirs of a man recently killed in one of several apparently random snipings.<sup>35</sup>

Sharon's friend Hank Altman, who is also her boss, is the deceased Perry Hilderly's, lawyer, perhaps because they had known each other in Vietnam. Yet, shortly before he died Perry changed his will without consulting Hank, who, learning of this, says, "I don't know *what* I know anymore."<sup>36</sup> Despite appearances, Hank's comment is prescient, for he does not know that he *does* know the link between the sniper's victims. He also almost becomes a victim before Sharon figures the case out.

Hilderly's four mysterious heirs share a link to the anti-Vietnam War protests and Free Speech Movement of the 1960s that were centered in San Francisco and Berkeley. The youngest heir is the daughter of a protester who killed herself, and the other three are deeply marked survivors of an event so traumatic that they refuse to disclose it. One of these is a particularly dislikeable lawyer who makes gruesome fetishes out of "dead things," feathers, bones and metal. Sharon recalls a verse from John Webster, a dramatist of the seventeenth century specializing in murder, revenge and extreme emotions: "vain the ambition of kings/who seek by trophies and dead things/to leave a living name behind/and weave but nets to catch the wind."<sup>37</sup>

Trophies and dead things appear to stem from the loss of Aphrodite to more than just the investigator. War, in which Ares gave way to Apollo in Vietnam, was without a bond to

Aphrodite's civilizing arts of love for so many veterans. It is this dehumanizing war that is behind the snipings. Far from being random, they are the crazed revenge of someone who cannot escape his experiences.

Moreover, Hilderley's three heirs from the 1960s have been wrecked by their inability to keep their ideals of a more just society in touch with Aphrodite's celebration of the life of loving bodies. Two of them, Libby and D.A., were imprisoned for attempting to bomb a military base. The third, the maker of trophies from the dead things, was the planted government agent who betrayed them. The fourth heir proves to be his daughter, whose mother he pushed into committing suicide lest his indiscretion impede his "vain ambition."

Aphrodite is multiply betrayed in the divorce of Ares from his goddess lover as the conspirators lose touch with the value of an embodied life. She is traduced by the spy who destroys the joy of his relationship with a woman, whom he pushes into despair. And, of course, Aphrodite is betrayed by a society that uses control and violence at the expense of attempts to connect erotically. Fortunately, Sharon's loss of the goddess is not her rejection of divine feminine sexuality. Her previous relationship with police lieutenant Greg Marcus ends with both of them respecting the *knowing* of the other, and so they are able to make an alliance in detecting.

Also Sharon instinctively pays tribute to the polytheistic psyche. She says early on that she needs to know the truth, a statement that resonates with Jess, daughter of the suicide victim of the 1960s conspirators. However, the truth is not the same as the mere facts of the attempted bombing, nor is it that all the recent sniper victims knew each other in a bar in Vietnam twenty years previously. This "truth" requires the presences of several goddesses to be acknowledged.

Sharon's consciousness of the depressive feelings caused by the departure of Aphrodite in her own life enables her to *know* what the harsher rending apart of the goddess did to Jess's mother. Yet she also embraces the Athena mode of close working with men, which again gives her insight into the horror of Hank's own experience in Vietnam, enough to sense the desperate absence of Aphrodite in some veterans.

In addition, Sharon has another goddess within: Artemis, whose hunting prowess and drive for purity of life she embodies in insisting on fitting shards of the past to the fractures of the present. Only then can she deduce that the most wounded survivor is the most deadly, getting his revenge without hope of a goddess. Unlike this killer, Sharon knows both Artemis and Hestia, the hearth maker, gaining insight at the hearth she shares with her friends. For now it is primitive and sometimes death-bringing Artemis to whom we must turn.

### **Hunting Artemis**

Divine hunter, Artemis sanctifies solitude and living in close relation to non-human nature.<sup>38</sup> She therefore grants access to a wild and primitive feminine that is entirely independent of any other goddess or god. She is the feminine radically autonomous and self-sufficient; one almost lost sight of in Sky Father dualism that posits gender as dialogical. By contrast, Artemis is an Earth Mother who connects all nature, siting humanity as creatures with a natural habitat of the wilderness.

Unsurprisingly, Artemis has been little heeded in a patriarchal society in which extinction of species is regarded as of little importance. Not so to Artemis whose hunting nature is one woven into the sustenance of wild animals. Indeed Artemis is profoundly implicated in mysteries

of life and death. By forbidding a hunter to wound an animal rather than kill it and end its suffering, Artemis brings death if it is necessary to sustain the primal purity of life she stands for.<sup>39</sup> It follows that although a virgin and never a mother, Artemis accompanies women in childbirth when death and new life are intimate with each other. With courageous insight, Ginette Paris suggests that Artemis offers abortion as a sacrament, a necessary infliction of death when the alternative is to maim the living.<sup>40</sup>

Artemis is fierce in the protection of instinctual life, a protection that includes the mysteries of death. She therefore drives martyrs, suicidal heroism and sacrifice. This extends even to human sacrifice in the deep archaic past as is suggested by the myths surrounding Iphigenia. In her myth, Iphigenia is a Greek princess ritually killed by her father, Agamemnon, to enable him to proceed with the war against Troy.

Yet Iphigenia is not simply a tragic and passive victim of patriarchal aggression. Paris shows that Iphigenia is associated with Artemis herself, not just as one sacrificed to her but also as containing some of her divine, primal energy.<sup>41</sup> Hence it is not so surprising that unmarried and childfree detective Victoria *Iphigenia* Warshawski, created by Sara Paretsky to haunt the Chicago mean streets, is indefatigable in defense of the weak, and bears the scars of her own sacrifices on her body and psyche.

Above all, Artemis is a goddess of knowing the feminine as divine and as independent of any other reality. As Paris puts it, Artemis enables a connection to a wild feminine beyond possibility of domestication and of being trapped in social conventions. Every fictional detective who steps outside those compromises demanded by an imperfect system of justice is an Artemis picking up her bow and making for the mountains. The sleuth who needs to know in order to fit

her nature to the nature she is connected to outside of conventional bounds is Artemis who “know[s] the art of preserving within [herself] a force that is intact, inviolable, and radically feminine.”<sup>42</sup>

So Artemis in detective fiction is one whose drive for purity of life is uncomfortable for those around her, yet this drive forces her to penetrate the mysteries of life and death. Such an uncompromising goddess at work incarnates the need to know the truth about the murder. It means knowing not just who did it or who confessed to it, but who and what set of circumstances was ultimately responsible. Like the Artemis who will bring death if that is what it takes to preserve wild primitive living, such an attitude on the part of the sleuth can be very dangerous to those around her.

A detective who must continue the hunt for the truth to the point where it satisfies a divine appetite for psychic justice is one who may deliver death as part of her pursuit. In *The Sugar House* (2001) by Laura Lippman, Tess Monaghan appears an unlikely Artemis, until her father confronts her over the smoking ruins of the family home and blames her persistence for the burning house and the dead body inside.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps even more stark is the example of Kinsey Milhone in *K is for Killer*.<sup>44</sup> At the end of her hunt she makes a phone call that she knows will lead to another murder.

### **Case History (6) *K is for Killer* (1994) by Sue Grafton**

The victims of unsolved homicides I think of as the unruly dead: persons who reside in a limbo of their own, some state between life and death, restless, dissatisfied, longing for release.<sup>45</sup>

Kinsey Milhone, who is deeply attached to her home town of Santa Theresa in California and who lives in a tiny apartment, would appear to be an unlikely Artemis. However, her opening concerns for victims of unsolved murders as the restless dead reminds us of Artemis as protector of the boundaries between living and dying.<sup>46</sup> Milhone works and lives alone, although she has a strong connection with her landlord, retired baker Henry Pitts. Solitude is not only necessary to her personally but is also vital to her detecting. A young woman with a P.I. License, she can and does ask questions not available to the institution of the police. Moreover, sitting alone with the facts of the case spread out on index cards is a vital process in her pursuit of the guilty.

Lorna Kepler died alone, and when finally found her body was too decayed to ascertain cause of death. After a pornographic film, starring Lorna, is sent anonymously to the family, her mother asks Kinsey to investigate. Kinsey soon discovers that Lorna had an ambiguous relation to the darker side of Aphrodite. Working as a high class, highly paid escort, Lorna was unusual for a woman sex worker. She stayed in control of her professional activities and was making a lot of money. She was, in this sense, *virgin* Aphrodite: self-contained, and in some sense psychologically inviolate.

Yet Lorna was also Artemis, living alone by choice in a cabin surrounded by trees; forging a mysterious bond with a friend's huge dog, and mentoring a younger, more naïve prostitute, Danielle Rivers. Kinsey/Artemis is looking for clues to Lorna's death by following her on the mysterious paths from the disconnected parts of her life: from an apparently loving family to a mundane job in high class bars and hotels; to the friends who found her hypnotic, special and yet were told little of her life.

Through her investigation, Kinsey and the reader get a sense of Lorna as a complex personality seeking a purity of life, and with a gift for friendship. Beautiful, she incurs the jealousy of her landlord's pregnant young wife, who bugs her apartment. What the eavesdropper hears is Lorna telling her self-absorbed spouse to be understanding of a woman's burden with childbirth and caring for an infant. She tells him to help more in the house. Here is the Artemis woman who protects women around childbirth. Perhaps it is significant that Lorna is killed just when she was about to marry a man whom Kinsey is sure is highly placed in organized crime.

By dying before her marriage, Lorna distances herself from possible identification with Persephone, the daughter of Demeter who was abducted by Hades, god of the Underworld. Demeter obtains her daughter's release, but not before Persephone has ingested enough of the underworld to cause her to return there for part of each year as Hades's queen. Although Lorna certainly tastes the Underworld's fruit in her thriving one woman escort service, she was not abducted or forced down into that world. She chose to go there and seems to have chosen to remain in marrying into the lucrative and highly dangerous orbit of the mafia.

Such a position as Queen of the Underworld was not to be hers. Lorna has taken care not to let her various domains overlap. Yet a collision occurs when her boss from her day job becomes a client, and she and Danielle witness how corrupt he is. Lorna is killed; later Danielle is horribly beaten and dies of her injuries. Two moments link Kinsey to both murdered women in an intimacy that is of Aphrodite and Artemis. Visiting Lorna's night owl friend, Hector, and his dog, Beauty who mourns Lorna, Kinsey seems to provoke an otherworldly despair in the animal.

The howling became a low cry, filled with such misery that it broke my heart...

"I feel bad," I said. "I was wearing those jeans when I went through Lorna's files."<sup>47</sup>

Kinsey has taken on Lorna's smell and this makes the bereaved dog experience hope followed by renewed despair. Beauty becomes a real character in this novel. Her relationship to Lorna and her depression at her vanishing is a vivid contribution to Kinsey's archetypal goddess-activated detection. Not only do Lorna and Kinsey embody Artemis in their primal relationship to Beauty, the dog's name also reminds us of the beauty of Artemis as primal feminine, virginal nature. Crucially, this moment is one in which Kinsey, huntress for a truth that will restore a purity to her client's (Lorna's mother) life, and increasingly to the memory of Lorna, takes on Lorna's scent, in order to understand her in the sense of standing on her ground of being. Indeed, by literally inhabiting Lorna's body, Kinsey brings something of Lorna to rebirth.

Kinsey also experiences the goddess through Danielle, who shares Lorna's essentially solitary pursuit of financial stability by unconventional means that thrive on primal instincts. Danielle turned to prostitution because it pays more than hairdressing. She insists on giving Kinsey an expert and flattering trim. In almost all the novels Kinsey remarks that she only ever cuts her hair with nail scissors. True to an Artemis trait of a feminine as natural and autonomous, Kinsey normally dresses for no one but herself.

So, to be in the hands of Danielle cutting her hair into a delicate and feminine shape is an extremely rare moment of Kinsey experiencing feminine Eros and expression of sexual beauty. Danielle momentarily awakens Aphrodite in her, which is perhaps why Danielle's death is inconceivable to Kinsey. Literally, Kinsey cannot conceive it, she cannot let it come into her body by accepting the news. It is in this crisis of knowing and being that Kinsey phones the mafia don, claiming to represent Lorna's fiancé, and gives him the name of the killer of both women. What Kinsey knows through her Artemis hunt is that this man is guilty, yet cannot be prosecuted for lack of evidence. Refusing to accept the death of Danielle who had become a

friend, Kinsey is flooded by Artemis as avenger of vulnerable women in order to restore purity of life.

Almost immediately Kinsey is appalled at her action, and tries to stop the revenge of the mafia underworld for the stealing (by death) of their queen. She is too late, mainly because the guilty man prefers attacking her to listening to her. Finally, Kinsey is left to ponder the eruption of primitive violence in her own being.

As for me the question I am left with is simple and haunting: Having strayed into the shadows, can I find my way back?<sup>48</sup>

It is the nature of Artemis to stray, to venture into a wilderness where there are no conventional paths, outside the law. However, Kinsey knows that Artemis is an archetypal need in her that cannot go unrestrained in its fiercely independent and sometimes death-dealing feminine nature.

### **The Mysteries of Hestia's Hearth**

Hestia is the goddess of the center; center of the self, of the home and of the Earth.<sup>49</sup> She is the hearth fire that makes a home. "Hestia" means the goddess and also the flames of the sustaining hearth at the center of the earth.<sup>50</sup> Therefore Hestia is where the family makes its home. She also is a personal sense of center: the ability to be at home in our own bodies and souls.

Such a powerful *necessary* goddess of well-being lends herself to stillness, to creating the home that nurtures. So in what sense can Hestia be found in mysteries with their energetic quests

for difficult truths? One answer lies in Hestia as protector of the stranger, for the hearth is sacred. Once a stranger is accepted at the hearth, he or she is under the goddess's protection.

...Hestia protects, receives and reassures. When a stranger was invited into the area of the hearth, he was protected, for this place was sacred.<sup>51</sup>

Hestia is also patron of mysteries that center on the home and family, which is either itself threatened by the crime; or where someone, including strangers, accepted at the hearth/heart of the home is in danger. "Cozies" typically have a female sleuth who, although not professionally involved in law enforcement, is drawn into the quest because of concerns for family or the stranger at the hearth. Here we have figures such as Lucy Stone, wife, mother, reporter and sleuth, from the pen of Leslie Meier, the bed and breakfast mysteries of Mary Daheim, and caring Annie Darling, bookstore owner whose passion for justice in her immediate family and community is drawn from the imagination of Carolyn Hart.<sup>52</sup>

Hestia sleuths defend the family and the stranger at their hearth as the centering energy of the home. They *cannot* stand by when violence or crime threaten to destroy it. A particular subset of the cozy is the food mystery, in which the detective is primarily a cook and recipes appear in the book along with the quest story. As Ginette Paris astutely notes, food is the *matter* of divine Hestia when it serves to unite the family.<sup>53</sup> Hestia is the communal, community-making aspect of food, while Demeter stands for the harvest.

So, unsurprisingly food mysteries frequently involve a cook with a catering business who stumbles across dead bodies when her hearth, or catering event, is meant to enact Hestia for family and close knit community. Diane Mott Davidson's detective, Goldy Schultz, has a cooking enterprise run from her own kitchen.<sup>54</sup> Katherine Hall Page's Faith Fairchild lives in a

small New England town where she combines the role of mother, wife to a clergyman, and caterer, while Isis Crawford writes about catering sisters, Libby and Bernie, who live close to New York.<sup>55</sup>

Joanne Fluke's very popular Minnesota series, with cookie store owner Hannah Swensen, perfectly illustrates how the Hestia sleuth is not confined to being a traditional homemaker.<sup>56</sup> A romantically minded spinster living alone, Hannah is nevertheless intimately bound up with family and community through the act of solving mysteries. Additionally, she is family-centered because her cooking is an enactment of familial connection extended into the community of significantly named Lake Eden. Moreover, her cookies and cakes become a material medium for drawing her into a murder, enacting the desires of those around her for sweetness. Sleuthing, for Hannah, restores Lake Eden to a mythological Garden of Eden by centering and discovering what is necessary for home to be reconstituted. Perhaps this accounts for the large dose of sugar in the portrayal of tensions within a small town named for paradise.

The powerful presence of Hestia in cozies does not preclude her divine energy from extending to other mysteries by women writers. Centering a family, or a group making a new kind of family, is arguably innate to women's detective fiction. Even loner Kinsey Milhone has a familial relationship with Henry, her aged, yet still handsome, landlord. V.I. Warshawski and Sharon McCone each find that many of their professional cases invoke Hestia for their clients, along with drawing familial dimensions into their own lives. So in *Trophies and Dead Things* Sharon takes on a project that appears distantly linked to her friend, only to discover that the people she is most connected to, her new family, are in danger.

Sara Pareksy's V.I. appears less able to enjoy the comforts of Hestia than Sharon, who eventually marries her long-time partner.<sup>57</sup> V.I.'s parents are dead, and she is estranged from living relatives. However, memories of parental love remain a vital centering force to her. They make sense of V.I.'s drive to solve crimes that have both a political and a familial aspect, because solving the crime makes the hearth fires of home again ready for kindling.

Indeed, these professional female Private Investigators share something of Hestia's sacredness in their contract with clients. In these mysteries the client is a stranger taken to their hearth. The client is sanctified and defended, sometimes even after death. For example, in *M is for Malice* (1996) Kinsey is determined to defend the honor of the long lost brother she was hired to find by his uncaring, Hestia defying family.<sup>58</sup> She finds him, but when he is swiftly murdered, she refuses to be stopped by what has become a violation of a sacred trust.

Hence, Hestia detectives are not confined to home based amateurs, nor do they always work within a group. Even the lone sleuth will often invoke Hestia by herself being the center of a web of friends. She then makes the *solution* a re-igniting of the home building hearth fire. As Paris explains, Hestia is opposite to Hermes in that she centers the home while he rushes about in a flurry of communicative travel.<sup>59</sup> In fact, both goddess and god are important to the modern detective. While Hermes may be found in the swiftness of electronic media, Hestia is a knowing based on centering, on the fires that make a group into a family that do not have to be (indeed often are not) the traditional nuclear family. Knowing Hestia is to feel at home in one's body, psyche, (modern) family and community. It is to *make* one-self a home in detecting the ultimate threat to the hearth as sacred; the killer.

Therefore above all, Hestia inhabits women's mysteries in the aspect of knowing that finds the center in the solution to the murder. Finding the solution centers and re-ignites the hearth; the community is reborn, and the wasteland healed. Hestia here embodies, and is also the object of, the quest. The detective has to *know* because only solving this crime will re-start the hearth fire. The stranger lies dead, and so the sacred fires need re-kindling in a heroic quest for the center, the home, of this person; or this group and this Earth-centered nature.

### **Case History (7) *A Catered Thanksgiving* (2010) by Isis Crawford<sup>60</sup>**

It was two days before Thanksgiving and five members of the Field family were huddled around the fireplace in the study off of the living room. It was a dismal space... A flickering overhead light did little to dispel the gloom of the late November afternoon. Each one in the room was wearing his or her coat.<sup>61</sup>

Here at the start of the novel Hestia is vitally absent. Her absence is *vital* because this family has no vitality without its hearth fire; this family has no home. This fireplace is empty; the room dark and cold. The Field family patriarch, Monty, has hired Libby and Bernie Simmons of the shop, *A Little Taste of Heaven*, to provide some divine intervention by catering their Thanksgiving dinner. Unfortunately Libby and Bernie are not feeling very thankful either. Their disabled father has taken himself off to relatives in Florida and their family hearth risks being untended.

Even more disastrous is the blizzard that begins as they drive to the remote Field house. It is indicatively situated next to a concrete bunker where the family business of fireworks manufacturing is still in operation. Fireworks, rather than hearth fires, represents the Field family

under the miserly rule of Monty. They provide explosions without any warmth, any trace of making home. However no one expects the selfish old man to die of an exploding turkey on Thanksgiving Day. Horrified, Libby and Bernie discover they are trapped in the icy house with the feuding family and a dead body. Until the phones begin to work and they can call their ex-cop father, they have only each other and the optimistic possibility that only one member of the family is a killer.

Family business is the key to this mystery in more ways than one. The Fields have made a lot of money with their fireworks. Monty kept most of it for himself, earning the resentment of his brothers and adult children, not to mention a new and expensive wife. Moreover in that family business brings Libby and Bernie to the house with the fatal turkey means that these very unlike sisters cannot separate work and home life. Furthermore, in this case family business also extends to the police. Not only was their father, Sean Simmons, injured in the line of duty, he was also forced out of the police department for political reasons. One factor making him vulnerable to unfair treatment was that he once attacked Monty Field for cheating his wife (now dead) over a catering event for the business now run by his daughters.

Food prepared by Libby for *A Little taste of Heaven* is delicious and innovative. It draws family and friends to their hearth as well as customers who may or may not have hidden agendas. Through catering, Libby and Bernie are the center of a network that extends via ex-cop Sean into his friends still in the police, the boyfriends of both women, and those people in this tight-knit community bordering the city who want to use their distinctive food to enhance social status.

Trapped in the cold house with family members continuing to be murdered, Bernie and Libby are forced to explore familial space; their own and that of the Fields. Familial territory

proves to have hidden perils in relationships both familiar and secret, and also in the unexplored material divisions of the house itself. While searching for missing Geoff Field, the sisters discover a concealed staircase leading to bedrooms once used by a servant and her son.

She tightened her grip on her knife, just in case Geoff was up there waiting for her but she didn't think he was. The space felt empty, devoid of life. She wouldn't be able to explain to anyone why she felt that way, but she did, and by this time she'd learned to trust her instincts. It was when she didn't that things usually went wrong.<sup>62</sup>

Bernie insists on following her embodied intuition into this dark space that is “devoid of life,” thus most lacking in Hestia divine energy of the home-hearth. Libby protests but will not let her sister face danger alone. Together they discover the violation of Hestia by Alma, who has herself found no secure home at the Field's when she was seduced by the patriarch, Monty, and gave birth to a son. Denying paternity, Monty had illegal immigrant Alma deported, so betraying both familial responsibilities. Bernie and Libby share enough Hestian fire from their family and food preparation to sniff a motive for murder in such behavior in these cold apartments.

Roberto, the disowned son, is the obvious suspect for who has been murdering the Fields. However, when Libby and Bernie discover that the whole house has been rigged to explode, it is the legitimate daughter, Melissa, who proclaims that she is “El Huron,” the vengeful killer from the dark. In a dramatic twist, the sisters learn that she, not Monty, was responsible for deporting Alma and making it look as if Roberto was Monty's son. As she is *apparently* suffering from multiple personality disorder, Clyde, Sean's cop friend, says that it is also possible she is pretending, and did it all for the money.

What is certain at the end of *A Catered Thanksgiving* is that the Fields were a fractured family. Cracks in the psyches of its members extend to the possible detonation of their house. Devoid of Hestia, relationships turn sour or lose so much meaning that fantasy ones take over. Libby and Bernie cannot help the Fields because Monty's dominance literally kills him when he insists on a ritual inspection of the cooking turkey. Unlike the victim, food for the Simmons' materializes and transmits the loving Hestia hearth. Reflecting upon how much he enjoys his daughters' cooking, Sean Simmons compares himself with Alma, who has lost her son to Melissa's murderous rage. He knows himself to be lucky, despite his unfair professional treatment.

Libby ends the novel by summoning family, friends and boyfriends to a late Thanksgiving Dinner, "because... we have a lot to be thankful for."<sup>63</sup> Hestia enables the quest and the knowing of family that proves crucial to solving this mystery. Where Libby, as the cook who connects through her imaginative ways with food is Hestian, Bernie, with her taste for fashion offers something of Aphrodite to her sister. Although often resisted, Bernie, through sharing with Libby the preparing and serving food, takes on enough Hestian fire to share her sister's intuitions about dysfunctional families. After all, it is Bernie's taste for Aphroditean adventure that gets her home-loving sister on the icy roads to the Field house.

Aphrodite leads Hestia outside to try to start hearth fires through their catering. Together the sleuthing sisters provide a Hestia knowing of the familial center that proves essential to stopping a mad daughter from continuing to kill.

It is time to consider the detective who wants to work within the system for the good of the whole community. For Athena too, inhabits this trickster genre, in the woman who likes to work within male structures.

### **Athena's Troubled Cities**

Athena was the beautiful warrior goddess who protected her Greek heroes in battle. She was the goddess of wisdom and crafts, a master strategist, diplomat, and weaver, and patroness of cities and civilizations... She sided with the patriarchy in casting the deciding vote to free Orestes, who had killed his mother.<sup>64</sup>

Also pointing out that divine Athena never acknowledges her mother, Metis, (preferring to consider herself as wholly Zeus originated), Maureen Murdock's portrayal of Athena suggests a feminine wholly imbued in the patriarchal system. On the other hand, Christine Downing, in *Women's Mysteries*, notes that Athena is particularly interested in the fate of wily Odysseus, the most tricky of all the Greek heroes at Troy.<sup>65</sup> In Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus is also the one given to extraordinary adventures on his long way home.

Indeed, Downing says that Athena calls on women to take on the male world in male terms, seeing everything in terms of the interests of the community.<sup>66</sup> Athena is here the embodiment of arts and insight: "the goddess of clear vision and artistic power."<sup>67</sup> It is therefore hardly surprising that Athena is particularly well represented amongst detectives created by women writers in Linda Fairstein's sex crimes prosecutor, Alexandra Cooper.

Mike and Mercer came from backgrounds as different from mine as one could imagine, but we had the same respect for the criminal justice system and the same value for the dignity of human life. Both of them had helped train me – every bit as much as the lawyers from whom I’d learned – in the art of investigating cases, in the search for the truth that characterized the way a great prosecutor’s office worked.<sup>68</sup>

As a lawyer firmly dedicated to making the masculine dominated justice system work, Alex Cooper is Athena, whose closest comrades are male cops. Where Alex differs from Athena is in the goddess siding with the patriarchy, for example in deciding *for* Orestes after he killed his mother, Clytemnestra, and her lover (who had previously murdered his father). Clytemnestra initiated the cycle of revenge for the sacrificial killing her daughter, Iphigenia by husband, Agamemnon.

Alex does not side with patriarchy in her work prosecuting the (mostly) male criminals who have raped or sexually assaulted (mostly) women and children. Indeed, *Night Watch* (2012) opens with Alex risking her romantic relationship with a Frenchman, Luc, when he takes the side of a socially important man accused of rape. On the other hand, as James Hillman points out, the important role of Athena is that her finding for Orestes makes a place for the Furies *within* the divine order.<sup>69</sup>

Athena here really is a lawyer in the modern sense, for her persuasive speech incorporates revenge into a system of order by which the community can live and flourish. As such, she allows Alex to uphold the father’s law that fortunately has been changed to take account of the true horrors of sexual crime. In this sense Alex is patriarchal Athena whose

defense of the father's law is essential to her role of making a place where the potentially unending furies of revenge can be assuaged within the city or community.

Alex Cooper precisely embodies such an exponent of skillfully woven words dedicated to stitching together the body politic of her city. Here also is her characteristic love of New York which is enacted in plots that explore and bring back to her ordering communal influence the city's deep fabric such as the water pipes beneath the streets in *Bad Blood* (2007), or the literary legacy of Edgar Allen Poe in *Entombed* (2004).<sup>70</sup> In her devotion to the history of New York she reminds us of Athena's protection of Athens.

Athena remains virgin despite her intimacy with masculine order. Similarly, Alex, while erotically attracted to blue collar detective, Mike Chapman, places her professional relationship with him above its romantic potential. In fact until the most recent books, she, most Athena-like sees a love affair with Mike as threatening her power to work effectively as Athena/lawyer.

Somewhere along the line, Mike Chapman had become my closest friend...If I gave any thought to dating Mike, I knew that Battaglia would relieve me of my position. He wouldn't allow the impression that a top detective was closing cases or eliciting confessions because he was sleeping with a supervising prosecutor.<sup>71</sup>

Alex habitually chooses Athena over Aphrodite; to be inside the patriarchal system where communal values of political appearances threaten to prevail over the personal integrity that marks her relationships with cops, Mike and Mercer. The reward for such sacrifice is for Alex to enact what Hillman describes as Athena's "institutional mothering."<sup>72</sup> Her nurturing and defense of vulnerable victims of sex crimes embodies the sacred mothering of the state or of the justice

system. It is an Athena aspect bound up with her role of enacting the divine necessity of reason in Alex's skills and strategies as a prosecutor.<sup>73</sup>

Other female authored sleuths contain Athena characteristics. Even loner, Kinsey Milhone, has an Athena-like willingness to work with the police, sometimes. Another example occurs in *A Lesson in Secrets* (2011), where Jacqueline Winspear's psychologist-detective, Maisie Dobbs, has an Athena streak when she agrees to become a British intelligence agent in order to combat a Nazi spy ring in 1930s England.<sup>74</sup> Mostly, however, the fictional sleuth prefers to work alone, with a well-founded distrust of pervasively masculine institutions like the police.

It is not so much that the police in these mysteries prove venal, but rather that they lack, disrespect, and in some cases feel threatened by, feminine divine powers of detecting. Their priorities and parameters are too limited to pursue the *wholeness* of being and knowing demanded by the genre. Such a deficiency in institutional order is still true even when the fictional sleuth is actually a member of the police force, as Kinsey McCone recalls of her time as a cop, in Sue Grafton's *O is for Outlaw* (2001).<sup>75</sup> Hence the ubiquity of the maverick cop as a staple of the genre. She, or he, is always in danger of being ejected from the masculine pantheon of law enforcement. The maverick or genius cop, frequently exceeding police rules, is more often the creation of male writers, such as Ed McBain, Elmore Leonard, and the more genteel, clue-puzzle variety, such as Colin Dexter's UK, Oxford based, Inspector Morse novels.<sup>76</sup>

As a generalization, women writers have tended to prefer sleuths working external to the law, whether licensed Private Investigators or amateurs in cozies. Lawyer-sleuths are an exception. For the pursuit of justice in a courtroom, Athena's strategies and weaving ability with words can be a divine vehicle of healing, reconciling individual hurts with Athena's communal

values. On the other hand, as Alex Cooper discovers, Athena's divine reason and skillfulness within the masculine system is no protection against surprises.

So even in the realms where Athena and rational strategy are most called upon... there are obvious and tragic strategic failures because too many other dominants have been left out of the calculations.<sup>77</sup>

These other dominants may include less rational qualities of ambition, greed and desire. A good example of the challenge to Athena comes to Alex Cooper in *The Deadhouse* (2001), a novel that begins when her good sense over a trick to catch a violent man is ignored.<sup>78</sup> So Athena here cannot prevent an unlooked for murder.

#### **Case History (8) *The Deadhouse* (2001) by Linda Fairstein**

It was hard not to smile as I watched Lola Dakota die.<sup>79</sup>

Despite Athena's attraction to stratagems to defeat an enemy, here a wife abuser, Alex Cooper nevertheless decided that this particular sting to trap a potential killer was too risky. Her warnings pushed aside, Alex is proved correct when shortly after the staged murder of academic, Lola Dakota, she is found genuinely dead in the elevator shaft of her New York apartment building. Alex teams up again with homicide cop Mike Chapman and Special Victims detective Mercer, in order to pursue the criminals. Her role is to prepare the case for trial in court.

Opening *The Deadhouse* with the trap for Lola's violent husband recalls the trickiness of the mystery genre itself. What on the level of narrative realism is a plausible strategy with a wily wife beater, is on another level is a display of the self-conscious reflexivity of detective fiction.

The genre is characterized by its inbuilt sense of a sophisticated readership with experience of the ritual repetitive aspect of mysteries. Indirectly referring to its status as fiction, *The Deadhouse* enacts this further evidence of Athena's love of contrivances expressed within the system.

After all, the mystery genre itself is, in its knowable and predictable codes, part of the structures of society and psyche. Athena finds a home in this particular city of the mystery in which regular patterns can be discerned if manifested in individual expressions. Arguably, Athena embodies here what distinguishes almost all fictional detectives: that primal sense of quest for a justice that can restore communal values. James Hillman notes that Athena has an association with the goddess Persephone.<sup>80</sup>

Abducted by Hades from her mother in Demeter's fertile valleys, Persephone is only restored to the upper world after Demeter's grief causes a terrible famine. Yet, having eaten some pomegranate seeds while in the underworld's darkness, Persephone must return there for several months of the year. During her daughter's absence, Demeter makes winter on the Earth. Perhaps Athena is allied to Persephone in her accommodation with the male order through becoming Hades' Queen for only a few months each year?

Two aspects link Alex Cooper with Athena in association with Persephone. Given the possibility that Persephone's abduction refers to rape, Alex-Athena is a compassionate yet pragmatic supporter of justice and restitution for such victims. She is not their avenger as Artemis might be. Alex's progress in all the novels is to distill rational discourse from a traumatic event. For example, she guards the male order from false accusations by women as

well as transmutes the Furies of violation into their place, making a *divine* order of the justice system.

Secondly, like Persephone, and even more like Demeter, in aiming to rescue Persephone, Alex herself frequently descends into the underworld, usually to try to bring back a female victim. Here “the deadhouse” is an abandoned morgue on an island off New York once used for those dying of infectious and incurable diseases.

“The River Styx, Lola used to say this was. Souls crossing over from the realm of the living on their way to hell. To what she called the deadhouse.”<sup>81</sup>

Alex first visits this gruesome relic safely in the company of Mercer and Mike. However, later she finds herself forcibly returned to this place of death after being abducted, like Persephone by Hades. She is snatched by the murderer. Now trapped in a hellish underworld of masculine unreason, she has to plead for her life far from what tries to be the rational order of the courtroom where she usually speaks her Athena reason. Yet it is her Athena affinity for strategy and devices that ultimately saves her.

The murderer wants a treasure map she is concealing on her person. Unable to overpower her male attacker, she needs to summon help by stealth. So she persuades the murderer to speak to Mike Chapman, in a message that carries a double meaning. Again, her device appears to fail; but, fortunately, the message reaches its destination and Alex is rescued. In the meantime, notably, she has already saved herself by running away into the rocks. Wildly pursuing her, the murderer is swept away in this particular River Styx.

Here Alex’s contrivances through speech prove effective. Like Persephone she makes a deal with the darkness in order to leave it. Also like Persephone the taste of the underworld never

entirely leaves her. Earlier in the book, Alex expresses distress that a murder victim's body has been left exposed to the elements. Unlike Artemis of the wild woods, Athena and Alex need the bodies to be brought into the city for proper burial. Imprisoned in the deadhouse, or ex-morgue, Alex discovers the body she has been seeking. Her rescue will enable the murdered young woman to be taken home.

Goddess myths inhabit mysteries by women in ways that offer greater imaginative possibilities to gender and genre. It is time to get closer to these divine beings, to track their pathways to the sacred through the many exciting possibilities offered by the mystery novels of women writers.