

A New Gaea Hypothesis:  
The Creation of New Feminist Archetypes in the Work of John Varley

by  
Geraldine Pope

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Mark Lussier, Chair  
Robert Sturges  
Paul Cook

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the use of the earth goddess figure in John Varley's *Gaeen Trilogy* (1979-1984). In the figure of Gaea (Varley's alien goddess villain), the reader is presented with a host of popular culture feminine archetypes with connotations connected to the long-standing tradition of associating femininity and materiality, and Varley's literary examination, operating through the exaggeration of these archetypes, displays their essential flaws. The ultimate antagonistic functions of these archetypal figures, relative to the human characters occupying the world underwritten by them, suggests that Varley uses such figural archetypes to deconstruct, via their varied failures, both the archetypes themselves and the evocative symbolic contexts associated with them, therein demonstrating their inherent limitations and providing a cautionary tale that highlights the fallibility of projective archetypal construction—even seemingly positive ones. By examining these archetypes as performances of gender, the thesis illustrates Varley's integration, at the end of the 1970's, of second-wave feminist theoretical ideals into science fiction (a genre with a long history dedicated to the experimental examination of all social typology) initially sets up and then subsequently breaks down the archetypal villain, thus pursuing a political dimension as well. The narrative experiment in typology promotes a turning away from the ancient symbolic associations of femininity to explore a new kind of goddess, one not reliant on pre-existing archetypes but one more attuned to the emergence of "gender" itself as a construct used to define the feminine itself.

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Science fiction (SF) is a genre that lends itself uniquely well to critical study; not only does the freedom of creativity allow the author to construct the walking metaphors that make critical work so interesting but the very nature of SF lends itself to critical interpretation. The act of writing SF is, in a way, a critical examination of the author's culture; both Robin Roberts and Sarah Lefanu describe SF authors as representing specific ideological standpoints. While Roberts and Lefanu focus on feminist authors, the implication is that most SF writers focus on topics that they find culturally relevant. The development of a type of technology thus becomes a reflection of the author's interest in a particular social or cultural issue.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, creation of alien species lends itself to the use of characters as metaphors, and in the case of socially sophisticated SF, authors have the ability to build multi-faceted characters to represent complex or troubling cultural issues. The works of John Varley, and particularly his *Gaeen Trilogy*, feature just this kind of character development. This work examines Varley's use of an alien character to address feminist critical issues of the 1970's, namely, how the construction of feminine archetypes can be used to illuminate the construction of gender identity.

There are any number of ways to approach a discussion of SF, and feminist science fiction in particular provides a multitude of potential starting places. For the purposes of this discussion it may be useful to locate John Varley

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<sup>1</sup> For example: the creation of technology that allows for colonization of other planets may indicate an author's interest in issues of over-population of the Earth, the ecological impact of humans on the planet, or the dangers of isolationism.

in the larger history of SF, and to discuss his work in SF as being tied to a particular moment in feminist history as well.

Early in his career, it was prophesied that John Varley would be the Robert Heinlein<sup>2</sup> of the so-called “new wave” of SF. The implication is not that Varley wrote in a style similar to Heinlein, but rather that Varley would have the same kind of impact on the genre. What kind of impact Heinlein had on SF is debatable; some might point to his early work and the emphasis on technical detail that would define the golden age of SF. Others might point to the humanist aspects of his later novels, and the wide-spread influence of *Stranger in a Strange Land*, which reached far beyond established SF fans to penetrate the more mainstream reading public. It is likely that the comparison between Varley and Heinlein is made in an attempt to describe his impact on the changing content of SF rather than style. Like Heinlein’s later novels, Varley’s work tends to focus more on people than technology; indeed his *Gaeon Trilogy* spends much more time developing characters than it does explaining the technology behind an alien-manufactured, hollow, wagon-wheel orbiting Saturn. The “new wave,” that writers like Varley represent, is a movement in the genre to focus not just on the machines that will take us into the future but also on the people who will design them, build them, and have to live with them. Naturally, this refocusing on the humans populating SF helped to create the niche of the genre known as feminist

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<sup>2</sup> Gregory Benford discusses Varley as a “Son of Heinlein” and suggests that Varley is a natural artistic descendant of Heinlein in “Verne to Varley: Hard SF Evolves” (*Science Fiction Studies* March 2005)

SF - and also introduced the inclusion of the “soft” or social sciences into the SF discussion.

The introduction of social sciences into SF was a revolution in and of itself; however, the timing of the inclusion of these “soft” sciences meant that it was not enough to just add these sciences into the SF narrative structure. The late 1970’s was the beginning of a period in which the idea of the objective observer began to be questioned. Beyond questioning if scientists (of both “hard” and “soft” sciences) were able to observe objectively, feminist theory called into question the very subjects that science was observing. As Barbara Fried put it in “Boys Will Be Boys: The Language of Sex and Gender,” the introduction of feminist theory to scientific inquiry required that we address the extent to which “the properties we perceive in what we study [are] more accurately attributed to the properties of our own perception” (49). These questions led to a close examination of the assumptions that science had been making for years. It was just this sort of examination that led Marian Lowe to re-examine the connections between the physical body and the socially constructed bodies of men and women. In her study, “Social Bodies: The Interaction of Culture and Women’s Bodies,” Lowe observes that “a smaller, frailer female frame is seen as not just *consistent* with women’s social role and lack of social power, but as one of the *reasons* for it” (92, emphasis in original). This kind of circular logic which had dominated such studies up to this point is understood by Lowe to not only be the result of cultural conditioning. More importantly, such sex-role stereotyping in fact creates an environment where the physical body is subtly forced to adhere to

the social ideal; thus: small, frail women are seen as socially desirable, meaning they are more likely to breed successfully than their taller and stronger counterparts, creating a next generation of women who tend to be smaller and frailer than the generation before. This situation of socially guided biological determinism then reinforces the social ideal and maintains the status quo. While such a study does not seem connected to SF, the creation of characters like Varley's Gaea, who can manufacture any body for herself that she can imagine, has arguably emerged from the theory surrounding socially constructed bodies.

It is during this, for feminists at least, revolutionary time in science, that SF was undergoing its own changes. The 1970's saw the emergence of the "new wave" of SF, a change in the genre that would open up the SF discussion to a new audience. The introduction of the social sciences did more than just add a new kind of scientist to the SF narrative; the idea of the responsibility of the scientist, the question of ethical intervention with another species, the effect that the observer might have on the observed were issues brought into SF when the "soft" sciences came on the scene. As discussed above, this was also a period of change for the social sciences, changes that were often addressed by a sub-genre of SF, feminist SF. Some authors used the perspective of social science as a narrative frame through which alien life was observed, with Ursula K. LeGuin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* falling into this category. Other authors chose to use alien life to answer the kinds of questions that feminist social science was asking, and Varley's *Gaeon Trilogy* falls into this second category. In particular, it seems that Varley was interested in the same kinds of questions that Marian Lowe was

asking: how do social and physical bodies interact and inform one another, and how does the knowledge of constructed gender identity change how gender is performed and how it is understood. While Lowe was able only to report her observations on these questions, Varley is able to use the creative freedom of SF to act out these questions and hypothesize the answers. The freedom to address these feminist issues emerges from the notion of gender as performance. Judith Butler asserted that “when the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice” (10). If gender is understood as a performance, rather than as the enactment of an inherent set of traits, writers like Varley can create situations in which gender performance is revealed as nothing more than a pantomime of socially constructed stereotypes.

John Varley’s creation of the character Gaea can be seen as a vehicle for asking and answering questions of gender performance and the construction of gender identity that are posed by second wave feminist theory. Not only does the performance of a character like Gaea bring into question the supposedly natural construction of gender, but the introduction of an earth goddess into SF also marks a movement away from the abstract conceptualization of the feminine ideal and towards the reality of the constrictive nature of feminine archetypes. By creating an earth goddess who can walk and talk amongst humans, a goddess who has created a planetary body that she identifies as her own body, is outside of human concerns and yet is interested in human affairs, John Varley exemplifies



the flexibility of SF and highlights the way such freedom in the genre can be used for political ends.

The figure of the earth goddess may seem to be out of place in SF; after all, an embodiment of the natural on Earth is not usually associated with the hard science and technological concerns by which SF has defined itself.<sup>3</sup> However, the revolutionary nature of the new wave of SF, and the inclusion of feminist theoretical concerns into the genre, created an environment ripe for the expansion of SF interests to include the ecological concerns that the earth goddess represents. Interestingly, it is not only Gaea's position as a representative of nature that makes her inclusion in SF appropriate at the end of the 1970's; rather her performance as the living embodiment of a feminine archetype situates her firmly in this place and time in SF history.

The use of the name "Gaea" itself can be understood as designed to create the image of an earth goddess even before the reader is told that there is, in fact, a tangible and sentient godlike being ruling the planetoid Gaea. When the planetoid is first discovered it is named "Themis," by the NASA astronomer Gaby, in an attempt to honor the tradition of using names out of Greek mythology to identify planetary bodies. Soon after emerging on the surface of the planetoid, however, one of the group (ship's doctor Calvin) asserts that the more appropriate name for the planetoid is Gaea. Later, the reader is lead to believe that this name was given

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<sup>3</sup> Roberts discusses the primacy given to the hard sciences in mainstream SF, and the way that this focus has defined the genre. Scott Sanders describes the oppositional relationship between science and nature, and proposes that the objectification of nature by science helps to explain the infrequent appearance of positive representations of the natural – like the earth goddess – in SF.

to Calvin by Gaea herself, without his knowledge. Themis was the name of the ancient Greek goddess of Justice and Law, a suitable identification for a small moonlike structure orbiting Saturn: a little known goddess for an unknown moon. By taking on the name Gaea, Varley's alien queen insists on a different set of associations. Gaea (or Gaia) is not only a goddess; she is the first goddess, the mother of the Titans, and grandmother of the pantheon of Greek gods. Gaea, to the ancient Greeks, was not only a goddess; she was the Earth itself, and it is from her that all life sprang. Gaea the earth goddess is not just a representative of human law and justice; she is the embodiment of the law of nature. With this name, Varley's Gaea claims her supremacy over the land she has created as well as her authority over all who reside within and upon her. Gaea is a name that invokes the image of the earth goddess, but of what does this image consist? How is Varley's Gaea to be identified as an earth goddess beyond her adoption of a human name she may or may not understand the meaning of in its human context?

In 1974, James E. Lovelock published an essay titled "Atmospheric homeostasis by and for the biosphere: the gaia hypothesis." While Lovelock's essay (and subsequent book) had little to do with earth goddesses as such, his use of the term "gaia" to describe a "biosphere as an adaptive control system able to maintain the Earth in homeostasis" is highly suggestive of what the name Gaea represented in Western culture in the 1970's (3). Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis maintains that the Earth, both living and non-living components, can be seen as a single living organism because of a complex system of interactions which create the Earth's current chemical balance. Gaia is, for Lovelock, a name which has the

ability to represent a multitude of individual, though interconnected, parts; further, his use of this name indicates that there is an earth goddess figure that can be seen as symbolically representing a complex Earth as a single being.

This figure, invoked by Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis, hovers in the background of second wave feminism in the 1970's. An attractive figure to feminism, Gaea represents the power of feminine reproduction and the primacy of the mother as a source of identity. Gaea is a goddess who is not simply in touch with nature; she is Nature, and her ability to create and sustain life hints at a lost matriarchal heritage. Julie Kristeva notes that the attempt to bring the physical body under cultural control involves a "kind of fusion between the mother and nature" (74). Gaea represents this kind of fusion: she is a mother and therefore a physical being and yet can be seen to also encompass all of nature (and indeed the entire planet as Lovelock's Gaia indicates). She is an individual, yet she is also the multitude. And, according to Kristeva, she is beyond a "universe of socially signifying performances where embarrassment, shame, guilt, desire, etc. come into play" (74). Kristeva's fusion of mother and nature is exactly the kind of figure that 1970's feminists sought to adopt in an attempt to do what Kristeva suggests, to live outside of the "order of the phallus" (74). The earth goddess, the primal power before the advent of patriarchy, is just such a figure. But as Kristeva suggests, the intentional association of women with nature in a patriarchal structure is not usually done in an effort to empower women.

In SF, this image of potential feminine power is most often treated, not surprisingly, with a certain amount of hostility. If science is going to have

supremacy, then it is without question Nature which must first be dominated. As Scott Sanders suggests “science, as popularly imagined and as generally depicted in SF, depends upon the mind’s estrangement from nature: a gulf between the observing consciousness and the natural phenomena being observed” (44). When this estrangement takes place, nature becomes the object to be observed, understood, conquered, and most often, this object is associated with women. Sanders also notes that “in much of the genre [SF], women and nature bear the same features: both are mysterious, irrational, instinctive; both are fertile and mindless; both inspire wonder and dread in the hero; both are objects of male conquest” (42). When women and nature are combined, they form a category both unexplainable and potentially dangerous. If most women in SF are in some way earth goddesses – either because they are representatives of nature or because they are so close to the natural – and are often featured as challenges to be overcome by the masculine SF hero, then it becomes clear that the earth goddess figure is not as one-dimensionally positive as second wave feminism may have wanted to believe. The fact is that the characteristics of the earth goddess are potentially dangerous to masculine dominance and as such these characteristics are demonized. The power to reproduce becomes an ability that must be rigorously controlled, and the “irrational” and “instinctive” nature of women must be demeaned and eradicated. Far from being a source of human identity and the emblem of feminine power, the earth goddess in SF too often becomes a symbol of all that science must fight against and the dangers against which technology was created to insulate us.

Usually, the greatest danger that the earth goddess represents is a sexual one; she is not actively seeking the destruction of the hero or his goals, but her submission to sexuality may prove too great a distraction for the plucky hero. In these cases the sexuality of the earth goddess often emerges from her closeness to nature; sex is natural, and the sexual urge is a part of nature that science must overcome. Interestingly, though, the figure of the earth goddess that is called up by the name Gaea is essentially sexless. Gaea, the goddess of nature, is not herself a sexual being, or perhaps her sexuality is more closely tied with her maternal role than with her role as an exciter of masculine desire.

In some ways, Gaea's role as the mother of all things has been used to counteract her sexual identity and the irony of this endeavor emerges when Varley first introduces Gaea in *Titan*. After their long climb to the hub of the world Gaea, Cirocco and Gaby are subjected to a sort of Wizard of Oz-esque meeting with the all powerful Gaea. Having climbed a giant crystal staircase lined with fire, Cirocco and Gaby get their first sight of Gaea. Cirocco sees "a round head set on a thick neck, eyes that blazed like coals, thick lips" and this version of Gaea was "four meters tall," and "her body was round with a monstrous belly, huge breasts, arms and legs that would have awed a professional wrestler," with Cirocco finally observing that Gaea was "naked and the color of green olives" (*Titan* 271). This image of Gaea is somewhat terrifying, designed to intimidate Cirocco and Gaby and test their metal as heroes. This Gaea is powerfully built, with oversized features, and her "thick lips," "monstrous belly," and "huge breasts" give the impression of being almost bursting at the seams with the power

that makes her eyes blaze like coals. Gaea's olive green color and nudity both suggest a close association with nature, though coupled with the powerful figure she presents it is not far-fetched to suggest that she represents that which is most dangerous about nature – the life force literally bulging out of her in places. Even as Cirocco takes in this image of frightening power, Gaea shape-shifts, and her “legs became tree trunks, her feet firmly rooted” in soil, and “small animals stood around her while flying creatures circled her head” (*Titan* 271). Interestingly, not all of Gaea's appearance changes, for she still seems huge and intimidating, but the transformation of her legs and the appearance of animals create an even stronger allusion to earth goddess figures. Suddenly Gaea is visually represented as being literally a part of the world around her, and this conflation of woman and nature is supported by the animals who show no fear of her. These images of Gaea have been created to terrify her visitors, but one has to ask what is so upsetting about the way Gaea presents herself as an earth goddess? The racial undertones of the figure (thick lips and green skin) are not likely to affect multi-racial Cirocco and star-gazing Gaby; similarly neither woman seems likely to find the nudity of a woman (even a gargantuan one) particularly intimidating. What is horrifying about Gaea is her strange blend of alien and human, a blend that the earth goddess shares as a figure that is the source of humanity and yet which is separate from humanity. Most of Gaea's physical characteristics are recognizably human and yet their proportions make them monstrous, though the fact that it is only her “monstrous belly” that is set apart as specifically monstrous certainly points to her most pronounced potential danger: her fecundity. The alien earth

mother, as Gaea first presents herself, is most upsetting because of the implicit ability of the earth goddess to reproduce. Gaea's huge breasts also point to this ability to generate and nurture new life and here is the irony of trying to use sexual characteristics to desexualize the earth goddess figure. It is Gaea's very ability to procreate that makes her so scary, and the fear of her monstrous, uncontrollable, and exaggerated sexual characteristics (lips, breasts, belly, legs) actually keeps her from being sexually appealing. Cirocco and Gaby have, by this point in the novel, been involved in a lesbian relationship for several months, and there is no reason to suppose that they wouldn't find a naked goddess sexually attractive. However, this naked goddess is not sexual, or rather the danger presented by her sexuality prevents Cirocco and Gaby from identifying her appearance as sexually desirable.

After successfully concluding their interview with the terrifying figure of Gaea, Cirocco and Gaby are invited to a more intimate interview with the goddess and are introduced to yet another incarnation of the earth goddess figure. After the great and powerful Gaea, the woman behind the curtain turns out to be "a short, dumpy woman in a shapeless sack dress" who "looked like Gaea in the same way a carved bar of soap might resemble Michelangelo's 'Pieta'" (*Titan* 274). The "real" Gaea, the physical body that was controlling the images of Gaea initially presented to Cirocco and Gaby, is revealed to be very human and not at all intimidating. The comparison to a soap carving seems to suggest that this Gaea is a pretty mundane, every day, kind of person. She is not flashy, nor particularly awe-inspiring. This Gaea is just a woman who happens to rule the

world. This Gaea is “short and squat, built like a barrel,” and her “skin was weathered and brown” with a “nose like a potato” (*Titan 275*). The final detail of this new Gaea functions as a counter to the lackluster description, “but there were laugh lines at the corners of her eyes and her sensuous mouth” (*Titan 275*). Clearly, this Gaea is not as intimidating as the previous images of her, “but” her human characteristics (wrinkles) have the benefit of at least making her appear to be good natured. The problem with the more human figure of Gaea is that Cirocco and Gaby have trouble believing that she is really the one running the world. Gaea notices and questions Cirocco, suggesting that “letting you [Cirocco] see this body makes you want to believe something else. Namely, that I’m a dizzy old woman, all alone up here” (*Titan 278*). Clearly, Gaea recognizes that this form does not evoke the same authority as those she used to terrify her visitors earlier. This Gaea is only a soap-carving of the ideal, and the disparities between the two figures make it difficult to see her as a source of power. This leads Gaea to explain her relationship to the planet she governs and returns us to the idea that Lovelock put forth as the Gaia Hypothesis.

Gaea explains that, far from being the image initially presented to her human audience, she is:

“three kinds of life. There is my body itself, which is the environment you have been moving through. There are my creatures, such as Titanides, who belong to me but are not *controlled* by me. And there are my tools, separated from me, but a part of me” (*Titan 278*).



The being who speaks to Gaby and Cirocco is a tool of Gaea, a tool that is the extension of her will and that she has created specifically for the purpose of meeting visitors like Gaby and Cirocco. Other tools of Gaea are used to build and maintain those systems which are needed to maintain life. Gaea, like Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis, is made up of many individual pieces all working towards the common goal of continued survival. This deeper understanding of a conscious being who directs the symbiosis that results in survival renders Varley's "alien" use of the name Gaea all the more appropriate.

In her frumpy state, Gaea represents what the earth goddess image had become in the 1970's: she is dumpy, non-descript (though she is often compared in appearance to Charles Laughton), a governing force who gives all appearances of being asleep or out of control. Long after Cirocco and Gaby have had their interview with her, Gaea is still granting meetings with humans, though she has stopped greeting them with her colossal and monstrous self-representations. Instead, humans meet the frumpy Gaea, leading the human Chris to the observation that "there was this to be said about her unorthodox choice of Godly aspect: it suited, in a way impossible to pinpoint, the image of Gaea as Earth Mother" (*Wizard* 43). Even though this image seems not to be particularly Godlike, it is well suited to the figure of the Earth Mother, a figure that can encompass both the fearful power that is portrayed by the monstrous green woman of the bulging breasts and belly, as well as the more humble and less awe-inspiring Charles Laughton-esque woman in the sack dress. It is worth noting that both of these images are negative to a certain degree. The green goddess with the

blazing eyes is clearly a representation of a dangerous femininity; her limbs are the envy of athletes (well, professional wrestlers at least), and she seems quite capable of smiting those who displease her. The green goddess is a goddess who inspires fear. The frumpy earth goddess is not so terrifying, but she is hardly a figure to inspire devotion. Her identification with nature has less to do with the forces that shape the earth in a matter of moments and more to do with the basic organic structures of everyday life. The problem is that she seems to be mildly incompetent, or, and this may be worse, entirely complacent. This frumpy Gaea does not really care to make improvements, and what maintenance she performs is done only for immediate survival; on occasion, this Gaea makes things to entertain herself. The frumpy form that Gaea chooses as her “real” form when she meets humans is one which is more likely to inspire pity or disgust than devotion. And yet, it is a form that the human Chris finds somehow appropriate to his image of an Earth Goddess.

The image of the Earth Goddess that the reader is left with is a complicated one: the earth goddess is powerful and terrifying, but also pitiable and relatable. One of the reasons for this seemingly contradictory imagery is what Joanna Russ described as the passive nature of powers given to women in SF. As Russ asserts:

“if female characters are given abilities, these are often innate abilities which cannot be developed or controlled, e.g. clairvoyance, telepathy, hysterical strength, unconscious psi power, eidetic memory, perfect pitch,

lightning calculation, or (more baldly) magic. The power is somehow *in* the woman, but she does not really possess it” (*Country* 209).

The frumpy version of Gaea seems to play into this image of a woman who has a power but does not necessarily have complete control over it; she uses her powers but only for petty things and always with the reservation that she can only do so much. The terrifying “fact” of the green goddess is evidence of the power she embodies but her bursting and bulging features might equally be read as that power emanating from a body characterized as possessed by, rather than as possessing, power. Further, Gaea (the planetoid) seems to be in a certain amount of disrepair, something that Gaea (the frumpy body being used for communication with humans) appears unable or unwilling to change; whatever powers she may have do not seem to be readily at her disposal.

Varley’s Gaea, a goddess who terrifies and amuses and who has the power to shape her world yet does not seem to have the ability to use that power, is a mixed bag of a god when she is first introduced. Interestingly, it may be Varley’s very identification of Gaea as an earth goddess figure that makes her so difficult to interpret. The earth goddess figure of the 1970’s is one that feminists sought to idealize and SF writers sought to demonize, and even to the ancient Greeks she was a goddess who had the power to create all life yet could not act in the interest of that life. She is the ironically desexualized mother as well as the dangerously sexualized alien Other. In a way that few popular culture images could have, the figure of the earth goddess manages to highlight the strange juxtaposition between that which must be tamed and that which is untamable in SF.

At this point it may be worth reminding ourselves that the initial image of Gaea, the being who humans encounter when they seek an audience with her, is a construction. She's actually the construction of a construction, since any character of a work of fiction may be said to be constructed. The outer layer of construction, the construction of a character by an author, is an alien being that identifies itself as feminine. This construction is being created by a masculine author, John Varley, and thus becomes an interesting moment of feminine construction. In one way, what Varley is doing can be thought of as a performance of drag, as such performances were discussed by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*. What the term "drag" represents, for the purposes of this discussion, is the performance of gender (either feminine or masculine) by a person whose biological sex is the opposite of the gender being performed. Butler asserts that "the performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed" (*Gender Trouble* 175). The performance of drag is not a moment of displacement between gender and sex but a narrative moment in which the construction of gender is highlighted by the performance of a gender that is socially contrary to the biological sex of the performer. As Butler described it: "*in imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself*" (175, emphasis in original). In the same way, Varley, as a masculine author, is constructing the femininity of his feminine characters in such a way that their performances of gender – convincing and otherwise – highlight the way that all gender is constructed.

In particular, Varley's performance of a feminine archetype displays the way that such figures are constructed and plays with the reader's expectations for that figure. The earth goddess archetype is expected to perform her gender in a certain way, and each of the incarnations of the earth goddess that Varley presents performs to these expectations. What is highlighted by the masculine construction of such a figure is the fact that social and mythic expectations, the belief that the earth goddess will perform her gender in particular ways, can be complicated by him despite his biological status and his lack of personal experience as a woman. Instead, Varley uses his familiarity with popular culture construction of the earth goddess to create a performance of gender that illuminates the creation of gender identity. This may seem like an unusual project for a SF novel, but in fact, as Sarah Lefanu observes in *Feminism and Science Fiction*, SF as a genre "lets writers de-familiarise the familiar, and make familiar the new and strange" (sic, 21). In this instance, gender itself is de-familiarized, and through the narratological performance of gender such de-familiarization can be linguistically and imagistically embodied.

The first layer of construction is a performance of drag by John Varley, in which his construction of Gaea as feminine points to the larger construction of gender in general. The next layer of construction is done by the alien being who, after encountering television and movies from Earth, creates bodies that she uses to interact with humans. Notably, Gaea chooses to identify herself as feminine through her creation of feminine tools, a logical procedure if popular culture is the only instructor Gaea has on the subjectivity of humanity. Thus, her choice of the

feminine is clearly a choice made for a specific purpose. Rather than assuming that Gaea had some inherent gender – an assumption not supported by anything but the human obsession with classification and qualification – the reader must draw the conclusion that Gaea *chooses* femininity and that such a choice must necessarily be done with a particular purpose in mind. The fact that Gaea’s introduction to humanity, through popular culture, would have made it obvious that human societies prioritize phallic structuration supports the idea that Gaea’s choice is motivated in some other way. The objection could be made that there are plenty of movies which focus on women or in which women are shown as superior to men in some ways, and this is true. However, even those examples can be seen as being a part of the patriarchy out of which they emerge (i.e. as constructions contesting the status quo). Media in which women figure prominently often show women in opposition to the men (and the masculine world) around them, thereby defining themselves in opposition to patriarchal society as a corrective symbolism restricting definitions. So, if Gaea wanted to impress the humans she meets with her power, the more logical construction would have been of a masculine identity, yet by constructing herself as feminine Gaea seems highlights a different kind of strength.

To begin, it is worthwhile to consider the sources of Gaea’s information about human gender performances and interactions. When Cirocco and Gaby first meet Gaea she explains that she has been listening and watching human media since it first started being broadcast into space. When explaining the nature of the surprisingly human rooms in which Cirocco and Gaby find themselves, Gaea

admits that they are based on plans she “stole from movies,” emphasizing that she is “a big fan of movies” (*Titan* 278). The building of rooms based on plans found in films suggests that Gaea is doing more than just entertaining herself by watching movies; instead it would appear that she has learned from what she sees and has read deeply into these cultural representations. While most movies do not claim to be instructional, to an alien species, film from Earth might seem like the ultimate teaching aid, and this is certainly how Gaea seems to view it. Out of these films Gaea constructs the bodies she uses to interact with humans, and from these same sources she gains the data that informs her choice of physical appearance.

Gaea chooses a feminine identity, suggesting that she views gender as a construction or performance, since the human concept of biological sex cannot possibly apply to an alien being that is essentially a planetoid. Beyond her choice of feminine identification, Gaea adopts the figure of the earth goddess – and the associations such a figure assumes for humans based on popular culture representations – to interact with humans. Gaea asserts that she used the body that Cirocco and Gaby meet (the frumpy Gaea rather than the terrifying Gaea projections) for at least 80 years. This revelation leads the reader to two conclusions: one, Gaea chose a feminine form not simply for the purpose of relating to Cirocco and Gaby, and two, Gaea felt that a feminine form would be the most beneficial in creating relationships whenever humans happened to arrive in her part of the solar system. The fact that Gaea creates human sized rooms and a human form both confirm that Gaea had anticipated interaction with humanity.

As discussed previously, the earth goddess figure is a challenging one for Gaea, since the performance of earth goddess femininity is fraught with competing images of nurture and violence. This may be why Gaea uses the Wizard's trick to create a figure behind the curtain, an unthreatening form to which humans could relate. Gaea constructs a green goddess with blazing eyes in an effort to scare Cirocco and Gaby, perhaps an act designed to ensure that she deals only with heroes. To that end she constructs and performs a femininity that is terrifying, a green goddess bursting with power from every exaggerated feature. Every part of this performance is over-determined. The first words that emerge from the green goddess' mouth express a claim of power: "I am the world, I am the truth, I am the law" (*Titan* 272). While it turns out to be literally true that she is law because she is the world – and thus arguably also the truth as far as such a concept would apply in her world – her presentation of herself as dangerous, primal, and beyond human control, lends credibility to these assertions.

Only after Cirocco and Gaby have been shown the woman behind the curtain do they doubt Gaea's ability to rule her planetary body any way she pleases. Of course, the frumpy Gaea that Chris finds so appropriate to the image of the earth goddess is the figure that asks Cirocco for help. This much less threatening figure, the performance of which is so effective that Cirocco and Gaby have no trouble believing this is the "real" Gaea, is able to interact with humans in a way that the green goddess never could. Never mind the logistics of sitting on a couch with a twelve foot tall goddess with tree trunks for legs; the basic performance – the performance of the great and powerful Gaea – is one that



provides no intimacy. The frumpy Gaea, the older woman with her frizzy hair and potato face, is performed in such a way that she is not intimidating; in fact, her frumpiness is actually inviting. If the two figures of Gaea encountered by this point are thought of as constructions of images specifically designed to engage humans in some way, then it becomes obvious that Gaea is manipulating other characters through her uses of self-representation.

The purpose of the green goddess is to intimidate, and Gaea uses exaggerated features to create this effect. The purpose of the dowdy version of Gaea, and how she goes about accomplishing that purpose, is less clear. Lefanu asserts that “the majority of matriarchies portrayed in science fiction...are vicious, static, crumbling from within, or a mixture of all three” (*Feminism* 43). Gaea (the planetary body) is arguably a matriarchy, since it is run by a being that identifies itself as feminine. As a matriarchy in SF it can accurately be described as a mixture of vicious, static, and disintegrating elements. The green goddess, with her blazing eyes and uncompromising demands of heroism, can certainly be seen as a physical representation of the viciousness that humans are sure to encounter in Gaea. If that is so, then it stands to reason that the frumpy form of Gaea is likely being used to represent the crumbling from within that Lefanu proposes. The short, squat woman who sits with Cirocco and Gaby and complains about the state of her rebellious lands is sympathetic. It is easy to believe that this woman has lost control over the planetoid she rules, a view reinforced by her performance of frumpiness. This Gaea is not well kept; she wears ill-fitting clothing and appears to be living in a place that “looked like a

seedy opera house when the house lights come up and banish illusion,” evoking a space over which she has no control and which is more convincing because of her performance (*Titan* 274). When Gaea asks Cirocco to help her regain her lost control, the purpose behind testing her metal as a hero becomes more understandable, for she needs someone who will not withdraw at the first sign of adversity. Her representation of herself as being less godlike is equally understandable in that light – Gaea wants to appear as though she needs Cirocco’s help, and her appearance makes her seem more deserving of that help.

Clearly, then, Gaea uses her appearance to manipulate the humans with whom she comes into contact by using their gender expectations against them. From movies, Gaea must have learned that the terrifying green goddess is one way to interpret an earth goddess figure, an interpretation that is useful for commanding attention but which would likely subvert her aim of having humans come her aid. To counter that awesome image, Gaea subsequently creates a completely non-threatening woman, an earth goddess unable to extract herself from the quandaries of matriarchy and its negative associations. The frumpy Gaea is a construction which uses feminine passivity and the idea of the earth goddess as somehow down-trodden by humanity, in order to achieve her private objectives. While this might seem cynical, Gaea is open about the fact that the body with which human characters interact is nothing more than a creation used to achieve pragmatic ends. Those characters then conflate that body with the sentient being in which they reside, offering one likely reason that Gaea creates that body in the first place. It is easier to feel that Gaea could need Cirocco’s help

if it is forgotten that the body of Gaea is not the little woman in front of them but rather the planetary body through which they have been traveling.

The most convincing argument for reading these characters as specifically constructed identities may be the time in which they were written. At the end of the 1970's, second wave feminism ran into a problem that would irrevocably fragment the feminist movement. This problem is most easily summed up by a question: what is a woman? In part this question emerges from a desire to find a political identity to which women can attach themselves in an effort to work towards a common goal. Perhaps more importantly, however, was the emerging idea of gender performance and the impact that such performances had on the construction of identity. In 1976, Helène Cixous would state that "woman must write woman," but by the end of the decade it was no longer clear who might be included under such a category. The advent of performance theory, and the idea that gender is not fixed but is instead constantly shifting to incorporate new understandings of gender expectations, destabilized the very idea of what it meant to be a woman and suggested that womanhood was much more tightly controlled by society than had been previously thought.

This is the discursive place from which Varley imagines the future presented in the *Gaeian Trilogy*, making it unlikely that Varley was unconsciously creating characters so obsessed with construction of the gendered self. Gaea can create different bodies to represent different aspects of herself, embodying facets she wishes to emphasize, but her behavior can also be read as taking on different masks as they are expected of her. The fact that Gaea knows these masks have

little, or perhaps nothing, to do with who she really is only makes her use of them all the more compelling, since the performance of gender is directly tied to pragmatic ends. Gaea performs different constructions of gender with the intention of creating different responses in the humans with whom she comes in contact and upon whom she will prevail.

While the figure of the earth goddess was clearly useful to Gaea, her next incarnation may be even more telling about her motivations and ultimate goals. After Cirocco kills the potato faced Gaea, she is reborn as a fifty foot tall Marilyn Monroe. Beyond the reference to classic film, this incarnation of Gaea is a commentary on another feminine archetype – the sex goddess.

As mentioned previously, the most dangerous aspect of the feminine character in SF is her ability to conquer the hero through sexuality. The use of Marilyn Monroe in particular reflects the anxiety about feminine sexuality in the golden age of SF, a period when, according to Robin Roberts, the pulp magazines often featured a “large, powerful female alien” (*A New Species* 42). It may seem that this in and of itself does not seem particularly condemning; after all, Roberts’ description could be read as positive, and there is no reason to assume that Marilyn Monroe, even in a giant form, is a threat to anyone. Of course, that analysis does not account for the way that Gaea constructs her performance as a sex goddess. The fact that the heroes of this trilogy are women might suggest that there is no sexual danger to be had from Gaea at this point; however, these women are participating in a lesbian relationship even if they do not identify themselves as specifically lesbian. The relationship that they share defies the

hetero-normative expectation by creating an environment of the sort called for by second wave feminists like Hélène Cixous: a lesbian culture in which women identify with and rely upon other women. It also creates a situation in which feminine sexuality has the potential to be dangerous to women as well as men. Further, the 1958 film, *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman*, - the likely source of Gaea's giant Marilyn - features a giant woman whose attack is motivated by abuse and sexual competition. This giant woman is entirely threatening (i.e. she causes the death of her sexual rival) and while she is eventually killed by a brush with a power line she successfully exacts revenge on her cheating husband by crushing him. Nancy Archer (the 50 Foot Woman) is a threat because of her size, but her choice of victims makes her a specifically sexual threat. The image of Marilyn Monroe with her submissive sexuality is superimposed onto the terrifying figure of the 50 Foot Woman, creating a woman whose hyper-sexuality is distinctly threatening.

By the third novel, Gaea has explicitly aligned herself against Cirocco and her band of heroes, which clearly establishes Gaea as a villain, but the trajectory of her assumed forms of gender also points to her intentional constructs of herself as villain. By the third novel, Gaea has already established Cirocco as a hero, and the purpose of their first meeting is, in fact, to determine whether or not Cirocco meets Gaea's heroic standards. As Cirocco is then offered a job on Gaea the reader can assume that Cirocco passed Gaea's test. This does not automatically set Cirocco up in opposition to Gaea, but Cirocco's murder of the potato-faced earth goddess figure most certainly does. Thus, at the beginning of the final novel

of the trilogy, Cirocco and her group find a film of what Gaea – by this point already the fifty-foot tall Marilyn Monroe – has been up to and the resulting information is troubling.

Gaea's interest in movies from Earth has, by this point in the trilogy, influenced the creatures that Gaea creates to inhabit her lands. Amongst these creations the most recognizable is probably King Kong, full sized and set to live in a cave in an uninhabited part of Gaea's land. The Kong Gaea has created is not particularly dangerous, though he does on occasion kidnap women and put them in a cage in his den, but neither is he a terribly sympathetic character. However, when Cirocco and her friends see what Gaea has done to him he immediately becomes a figure of pity. The video that Cirocco finds features Gaea wrestling Kong, ultimately defeating him, and then raping him. As Cirocco's ally Conal watches the video he observes that "he hadn't thought it was possible for a female to force sex on a male. Perhaps it wouldn't have been, but Kong was badly injured" (*Demon* 92). Gaea has done more than simply taken advantage of the exhausted Kong, "blood gushed from a hole in his chest as Gaea straddled him. She washed herself in it" (*Demon* 92). Here is a truly horrific scene of sexual brutality; Gaea use of her sexuality solidifies her victory over Kong, specifically symbolized in her ability to use him physically however she sees fit.

The message behind this scene can hardly be misread: Gaea is dangerous. The fact that she chooses an intensely sexualized figure to epitomize this danger points to Gaea's understanding of the threat posed by sexually dominant women. Marilyn Monroe herself was not generally portrayed as being sexually aggressive;

rather her great art was the ability to submit; however, the scene between King Kong and Gaea suggests that Gaea's giant Monroe is not a passive canvas upon which others might write their own sexual fantasies, but is in fact a sexual predator capable of taking what she wants. This scene might also be read as indicative of Varley's personal anxieties about feminine sexuality. David Attebery explains of the female aliens he characterizes as "cyber-amazons" that they often "tell more about male desire and dread than about female identity" (86). The creation of Gaea by Varley may be a reflection of his unique anxiety about the dangerous qualities of feminine sexuality, yet the way Gaea constructs herself as a villain suggests that she is intentionally designed to reflect exactly this type of anxiety. However, it is just as likely that Gaea reflects larger social anxieties about feminine sexuality, an argument strengthened by Gaea's choice of feminine archetypes emerging from popular culture.

It may seem like the dangerous sexuality of Gaea's Marilyn Monroe incarnation is completely separate and distinct from the danger represented by Gaea's earth mother incarnations and their desexualized performances, but upon closer examination the source of their threat is similarly located in the ability to reproduce. At the end of the video that Cirocco and her friends find, the blood-bathed Gaea begins to go into labor, the apparent result of her encounter with Kong. The film cuts out before the heroes can see Gaea's latest child (a camel in this instance), although the implication seems clear: as with all good horror movies the monster is not revealed, and the viewer's imagination is allowed to fill in the blank. This technique places the horror not on Gaea and her rape of King

Kong, as upsetting as that scene may be, but instead relocates it onto Gaea's ability to reproduce. At this point the reader discovers that this form of Gaea has given birth to a number of creatures, most of whom do not survive for long and all of whom are neuters. Unlike the creatures that Gaea creates but does not physically give birth to, these children of Gaea seem to be completely without purpose, since "Gaea gave birth to things simply because it seemed the proper function for a god" (*Demon* 93). This creates a distinct separation between Gaea and her ability to bear children, a distance that is solidified as the reader is told that "the part of her that supervised her equivalent of a uterus didn't tell the rest of her what it was up to" and that "once a kilorev her body presented her with something new," most recently "she had borne a litter of dragons, a four-meter tiger, and a creature that was half Model-T and half octopus" (*Demon* 93). Not only does Gaea not have direct control over what her body produces; she doesn't seem to care about it much. These hybrids, and Gaea's lack of control over their production, are suggestive of the blind element of the Darwinian process that is most often characterized by mutation. The fact is, Gaea is a completely disinterested – or perhaps blind – mother and that is part of what makes her motherhood so terrifying.

The horrific nature of Gaea's motherhood is exaggerated in many ways, but the idea that lies behind it, the basic fear of the maternal, has been a critical consideration for a number of years. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva notes that the "fear of the archaic mother turns out to be essentially fear of her generative power" (77). To Kristeva, the very fact of being able to reproduce makes the



mother an object of fear that “patrilineal filiation has the burden of subduing” (77). In this analysis, reproduction must be controlled, and it is therefore advantageous to those who seek control to make the mother an object of fear. This desire for control emerges out of what Adrienne Rich recognizes as the masculine mind being “haunted by the force of the idea of *dependence on a woman for life itself*” (11, emphasis in original). Thus, the mother becomes of figure of almost inestimable power as the source of all life, a role that the earth goddess epitomizes. Jane Caputi recognizes in this anxiety the source of demonization of the mother goddess figure as “female potency, motherhood, and natural death are so feared that they must be denied and reconfigured into a fantasy about a monstrous goddess” (319). It is worth noting that Caputi associates the fear of the maternal with death, drawing the conclusion that the ability to create life is, in and of itself, a reminder of the inevitability of death.

The fear of Gaea’s motherhood is, in many ways, an amplification of the fear of the maternal that Caputi and Rich describe. It is possible that Gaea will bear a creature that is able to destroy her human adversaries, but what is more frightening are the monsters that she creates blindly (in the Darwinian sense), and the lack of concern about the effects of those creations on the larger environment of Gaea that her blind births suggest. While a primary feature of motherhood is nurturance, Gaea does not have any concern for her children after she has borne them, and the fact that many of them die is of little or no concern to her. The camel that Gaea bears after her encounter with King Kong is eventually turned into camel puree; the monstrousness of that birth is not the result – camels are

rarely thought of as horrific – but the seemingly impossible production of the creature in the first place and the total disregard Gaea shows for it make the entire process disturbing.

Motherhood on Gaea, and for Gaea, is not a process through which women are connected to and in control of their bodies. Rather Gaea's monstrous births are emblematic of the way that motherhood is viewed by a patriarchal system in which the maternal power is explicitly associated with the dangerous and uncontrollable. As Robin Roberts explains "it is the female alien's ability to reproduce that makes her so threatening," and there is the chance that even if the female alien is conquered one of her children will take her place (20). In this way the female alien's ability to reproduce can be seen as an act of war, and this is what is suggested by focusing the fear of Gaea on her reproductive capabilities. There is no danger to be had from the camel that Gaea bears, but the very fact that she is able to bear children blindly, without any ability to control the products of these births, is threatening.

In many ways, this ability to bear children is most intriguing thing about the fifty-foot tall Marilyn Monroe incarnation of Gaea; after all, the potato-faced earth goddess figure was not able to bear children, or if she was there is no evidence that she ever did so. Therefore, when the larger sentient being that is Gaea constructed this stronger self-representation, she intentionally created a being able to bear children. She created a giant Marilyn Monroe to strike fear into the hearts of her enemies and at some point decided that being able to bear young was very much a part of creating this image of horror. The fact that the young

Gaea bears are not particularly horrible in and of themselves, further supports the idea that it is the potential to reproduce, and not the act of reproduction itself, that is so horrifying. This creation of the maternal as monstrous is accomplished only because the maternal is recognized as a source of power that is threatening to a patriarchal structure; as Marlene Barr suggests “the feminist reality is no less threatening to patriarchy than the feminist fiction. Both equate pregnancy with female power” (128). The power to create life is an undeniably female power, and the vilification of such an ability is merely proof that a distinctly feminine power is dangerous to those seeking to maintain patriarchal dominance.

To what end, then, does Varley turn Gaea into a giant, terrifying, villain? What purpose is served by showing the negative nature of the feminine archetypes Gaea embodies? Is this just another example of SF using feminine figures to discredit the feminine?

The use of familiar feminine archetypes in the creation of the Gaea character falls in line very well with accepted SF tropes; the earth goddess and the sex goddess in particular are very popular in SF, and they most often turn up as antagonists. However, Gaea is not your typical SF antagonist; she intentionally takes up the title of villain, and after she has assumed that role she changes her behavior to reflect what she thinks a villain should do. The first presentation of Gaea (a giant green goddess) is designed to intimidate, but it also serves to make the next tool of Gaea (the frumpy Gaea) more sympathetic by contrast. The frumpy Gaea who seems so unassuming also serves a purpose: to appear relatable to humans, and to become a back drop against which the next incarnation of Gaea

is judged. The fifty-foot tall Marilyn Monroe Gaea is all the more terrible because she epitomizes so many of the things that it seemed the frumpy Gaea could never be: sexy, powerful, generative, and above all dangerous. Those are the traits that Gaea associates with human villains from her experience with Earth media. Those also happen to be the traits that most often characterize the female alien in the golden age of SF from the 1930's through the early 1960's. Thus, Varley's creation of a female alien that is also a villain and embodies a number of feminine stereotypes can be seen as the result of the inclusion of this type of character in SF. The fact that Gaea knowingly constructs her identity to include these characteristics, and that she does this with the express purpose of making herself into a villain, suggests that she is also a reaction to the vilified earth goddesses who came before her.

The purpose of creating such a character is to respond to the very tropes that make her construction possible. Further, the construction of such a character would only become possible after second wave feminists began to question the perception of gender as natural. Gaea is exaggerated in all of her forms, and it is her various exaggerations that comment on the performances of which her constructions are comprised. The construction of feminine archetypes is the compilation of the stereotypes that came out of the kind of circular science that Barbara Fried and Marian Lowe called into question, stereotypes that were rooted in the idea that women were naturally inclined to certain kinds of behavior. We may laugh at the idea of a giant Marilyn Monroe forcing sex on King Kong, but this exaggeratedly dangerous sexuality plays into the stereotype of female

sexuality being dangerous and uncontrollable. Frumpy Gaea may amuse, or sadden, us as she sits in her run down rooms and watches movies, but her inability to act on her own, her stagnation, reflects the ancient Greek myth of the static Gaea unable to save the children her husband consumes or locks up. The green goddess with her blazing eyes and tree trunk legs may seem like a metaphor gone out of control, but she epitomizes the creation of the feminine as Other.

By using these archetypes, John Varley has destabilized and defamiliarized the inclusion of stereotypes into the behavior of feminine characters, but Gaea's defeat is Varley's strongest argument against feminine archetypes. Gaea is not defeated by a human male; she is not even defeated by the masculinized woman Cirocco. Rather Gaea is ultimately conquered by Gaby. Gaby spends most of the first novel in the trilogy, *Titan*, as a kind of sidekick to Cirocco; in fact, she fills the role of female hanger on quite well, even falling in love with Cirocco and following her on her journey to go see Gaea in person. In the second novel, *Wizard*, Gaby has become the driving force that moves Cirocco through a disillusioning life as Gaea's Wizard. While Cirocco carries the title and is Gaea's representative to her creations, Gaby fixes the problems of the world, a sort of maintenance engineer to the declining planetoid. By the final novel, *Demon*, Gaby has lost her human body but has somehow managed to keep her identity intact within the body of Gaea, and this disembodied Gaby is able to defeat the, by now, monstrous Gaea. This is where Varley has broken the established SF narrative pattern, and it is where the reader can find the meaning behind the careful construction of this colorful villain.

Gaby, the new ruler of the planetary body known as Gaea, is a new kind of goddess, a goddess designed to address the concerns of a feminist culture that found itself without symbolic representation even as it denied the need of such a figure. Donna Haraway described what she felt should be the next phase of feminism as a “cyborg myth” that was about “transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities” (154). Haraway’s call to fusion is a response to the fragmented nature of modern feminism, a fragmentation that began during second wave feminism. Gaby, created a decade before Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto,” represents what a cyborg goddess might become. Gaby was human, but by the end of the *Gaeian Trilogy* she has become something more than simply human. She is literally a cyborg: she has become the governing intellect of the constructed planetary body known as Gaea. Gaby is a blend of human, machine, and all of the organic material – sentient and otherwise – that lives inside that machine. While this may seem the ultimate wish fulfillment – she is essentially the god of her own private planet – Gaby sees her new role as a dangerous one, a danger that can only be mitigated by her ability to continue her friendship with Cirocco. Gaby recognizes that the work of being god drove Gaea to the lunacy that brought about her demise, and she suggests to Cirocco that the only way to survive such a life is “for two people to be up here to keep each other honest” (*Demon* 463). This moment at the end of the trilogy exemplifies the lesson to be learned from the deconstruction of feminine archetypes and points to the steps that must be taken in creating a new feminism for the future. The stereotypes built on faulty logic must be set aside, but that alone is not enough, since it is

essential to recognize how such figures come into being. That is the purpose behind the creation of Gaea. Gaby represents the next stage of feminine construction in which new realities of identity are constantly being brought together while still maintaining their integrity as individual pieces, a sort of Gaia Hypothesis for feminist identity. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, these new archetypes of femininity are deeply rooted in the strength of interpersonal relationships between women and the reality that such relationships represent. The difficulty presented by the fragmented nature of modern feminism, as represented by the cyborg goddess, is mitigated by the refocusing of attention away from the individual woman towards relationships between women. The component parts of the cyborg goddess give her the ability to relate to a variety of women, meaning that the fragmentation that threatened to alienate her is the point from which new relationships can be built. This is a new kind of feminine archetype: a fluid archetype that encompasses the many faces of modern feminism and brings those multitudinous parts into harmony through the creation of interpersonal relationships.

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