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The Goddess as Archive: Feminine Survival and Cryonics in *Goddess in the Machine*

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Abstract: The novel *Goddess in the Machine* by Lora Beth Johnson presents a reimagining of divinity through the convergence of advanced technologies. The main area of focus is on the exploration of the cryo-sleep as a form of suspended survival, making readers question whether this form of survival is a continuity of consciousness or merely a technological afterimage. The cryonically preserved female body is seen as a living archive through which memory, history, and civilization are transmitted into the future. cryogenic suspension functions as a preservation technology that transforms survival into storage, that converts the human body from a site of lived experience into a vessel of delayed meaning. The novel portrays a posthuman goddess figure whose existence is supported by machines and suspended technology. Cryonics in the novel functions as a narrative device that postpones death thereby redefining immortality as a technological condition. This transformation moves to techno- mythology, where technology assumes the role of creator. The new land represents symbolizing a future techno scientific world where becomes ‘an area’ where ancient goddess myths are rewritten through posthuman logic. The study foregrounds how this archival goddess embodies a specifically gendered mode of survival, wherein the female body is burdened with cultural continuity and collective memory. The paper positions the readers to question the boundaries between life and preservation, autonomy and control, humanity and machine-mediated existence.

Keywords: *cryo-sleep, posthuman, cryonics, techno-mythology, autonomy*

Introduction

Cryonics is the practice of preserving human bodies at very low temperatures in liquid nitrogen after legal death in the hope of future revival. This is placed in a liminal space between science and philosophy. This technique emerged as a technical proposal in the mid-twentieth century and popularized by Robert Ettinger in his book titled *The Prospect of Immortality* in 1962 and subsequently started cryonic institute in 1976. He is considered as the father of cryonics. The organization provides cryopreservation services where bodies are cooled in liquid nitrogen temperatures and stored in specialized tanks. This cultural imagination is popularized in laboratory practice as well as literature. The novels transform cryonics from a technical procedure into a narrative structure through which the authors explore temporality, mortality, capitalism, identity, posthuman and transhuman aspects.

In Popular American fiction, cryonics often symbolizes the human refusal to accept the condition of mortality. The earlier cryonic fiction includes *The Sleeper Awakes* by H.G Wells, *The Door into the Summer* by Robert Heinlein, *The Ice People* by Rene Barjavel, *The First Immortal* by James L.Halperin, among numerous other works. The emergence of transhumanist movement, which advocates the expansion of technological and scientific progress to enhance human abilities contributed to the development of cryonic-themed fiction. These represent suspended animation as a means of temporal displacement, making protagonists to awaken in radically transformed futures. In young adult and dystopian narratives, cryonics becomes a mechanism for estrangement, dramatizing shock of awakening into unfamiliar social orders that make the characters unfit for a new planet.

The popularization in fiction is closely associated with transhumanist discourse and broader anxieties about market-driven medical systems. The actual practice of cryonics in real life is a controversial topic and has been normalized it as a powerful metaphor for humanity's technological longing for humanity's aspiration toward posthuman continuity. It is believed that cryonic institute exists as a real facility and organization that performs cryonic preservation but remains a highly experimental and controversial practice as of now.

The novel *Goddess in the Machine* by Lora Beth Johnson published in 2020, blends cryonics, artificial intelligence, and posthuman themes. The story follows Andra, who has been cryogenically frozen for hundred years but awakens thousand years later on a distant planet. The society, she encounters worships her as divine entity, attributing her perceived transcendence to the advanced nanotechnology embedded within her body. As she struggles to understand the gap between her past and present, uncovers political conspiracies and questions about her memory, identity, and technological control. The story is set in 3102 in a futuristic planet called Eerensed, and she finds herself waking up in a

completely unfamiliar place and time. Andra was meant to be awakened after hundred years from her stasis instead overslept for thousand years. She has been attributed as the third goddess by the people of Eerensed. The planet Eerensed is depicted as a metropolis in which advanced technology is reinterpreted through a mythic framework, cryopods are perceived as graves, biodome as god's dome, as angels, DNA sensors as blood magic, and sorcerers as the custodians of technological authority. She meets another character named Zhade who controlled her in every aspect and speaks a language that she can't understand. As a goddess, she is assigned the task of constructing a new biodome. After a series of incidents, she discovers that Zhade is the true prince of Eerensed, however, as an illegitimate son, he is not publicly acknowledged. Later, she encounters the second goddess in prison named Rashmi, a humanoid AI, whom the people believe was executed by Marrat. By the novel's conclusion, Andra recognizes that the world she had idealized prior to cryo-sleep was structured by manipulation and concealed power struggles. She chooses truth over blind faith and rejects the imposed identity of a goddess. The novel concludes with her reclaiming her humanity while redefining her role in a technologically dominated society, stressing autonomy, domination and hidden power structures. She chooses truth over blind faith and rejects ethical responsibility.

The people of Eerensed, the new planet, a small portion of other planet Holymath, treat her as a divine being as they were waiting for the goddess due to the advanced nanotechnological enhancements integrated within her body, which were interpreted as manifestations of divine authority. Since their society has lost access to advanced scientific knowledge, they interpret technology as divinity. Most villagers approach her with awe, fear, and blind devotion. She feels totally alienated because no one sees her simply as a human being and shows how power can be maintained through myth.

However, this devotion is politically manipulated by Zhade, who treats her with a mixture of reverence and control. While he claims to honor her, he also restricts her freedom and withholds information. His attitude shows how power structures exploit symbols of faith. The main objective is to understand blind faith and examine the identity surviving across time, memory loss, and mechanization. It ultimately foregrounds human agency within posthuman evolution.

This offers compelling narrative reconfigures cryonic preservation not just as a scientific experiment but a deeply gendered site of memory, identity, and power. The novel invites interpretation through the metaphor of the archive which means an embodied repository where history, trauma, and knowledge are preserved. The goddess is not only revived from suspension, she emerges as an archive of a lost civilization, carrying within her remnants of a silenced past.

The female body is converted into an archive and the author critiques the vision of technological immortality. It suggests that immortality achieved through cryonics may not guarantee empowerment. It warns that preservation without power risks turning survival into a new form of

confinement, where the future claims authority over the past and a revived person struggles to reclaim the voice.

The Body of Andra as the Living Archive

Archival theory focuses on the preservation of official records usually of the state that is remembered and erased. When applied this to a female body, the archive acquires corporeal and gendered dimensions. The survival is operated in different levels as corporeal survival through cryonics, cultural survival through archived knowledge and ideological survival through resistance to mythologization. The novel reveals how technology intersects with gender to produce new forms of authority and vulnerability.

Andra is a literal vessel of the 21st century. The inhabitants of the newly settled planet Eeresnsed do not value her as an individual. Zhade the male protagonist extract value without her consent, showing typical patriarchal history often uses women's stories to promote a specific narrative while ignoring women's actual voice. Derrida's theorization of archive fever demonstrates that the archive functions not simply as a repository of memory, but as a contested site where power governs the production, preservation, and interpretation of knowledge. By turning Andra into a goddess figure which she hates, the male-dominated structures of the future are essentially archiving her to a statue. Throughout the novel she asserts her humanity, flaws, confusion and destabilize archiving her.

The concept of medicalized archiving wherein women's bodies are treated as data sets rather than humans. Her internal monologue acts as a real-time translation service. As she hears the corrupted future dialect, the inner voice archives the original meaning of words. This demonstrates linguistic survival, that she wanted to retain her native tongue rather than future version. The world which she lives value her for what she can do while the internal archive values what she has lost. "I am just a girl" reflects the fear that she is losing herself and she hates the role as a goddess. She wonders if original Andra is being deleted to make room for the goddess. This represents the violence of the archive where the official record is so heavy that it crushes the originality supposed to show.

Andra has been cryonically frozen for a thousand years; her body becomes a storage of memory in a lost civilization. She is repeatedly referred to as a goddess, not because of divinity, but her body carries the knowledge of a world they mythologize. As she continuously repeats "They think that I'm a goddess. But I'm just a girl who slept too long" (Johnson 23), this reveals that the tension between her human vulnerability and symbolic weight imposed upon her physical existence. She notes that she was saved for something suggesting intentional preservation, as though she were a time capsule sent forward. Thus, her body becomes archived in two senses: it stores genetic continuity and carries the epistemic remnants of a technologically sophisticated society.

Memory survives in flesh as much as in data. The body of Andra becomes a contested site where science, faith, and politics meets, exposing how the preserved human forms can function as both historical documents and ideological conflicts.

When Zade claims “You speak with angels. You rose from the grave. Admit it. You exist a goddess.” (14) mythologizes her cryonic preservation as resurrection. Andra’s physical presence destabilizes the present because she is an evidence to depict that history is not dead but incarnated. She remembers the earth, technology, and scientific advancement. Her body therefore becomes an archive that cannot be destroyed or rewritten easily. She speaks, questions, and remembers selectively. In this sense, Andra embodies archival survival as memory preserved in flesh, contested in ideology, and activated through voice.

Cryonics as a Glass Capsule

Cryonics is believed to be a leap of faith into the future. Andra is portrayed as a betrayal of embodied agency. It is presented as a miracle of science but as an errant, cold machinery that strips of her era, as an immortal icon. The title of goddess is an ironic burden for the young women trying to survive in a patriarchal structure that worships her but doesn’t listen to her.

The cryonic chamber becomes both an archive and a prison. It preserves Andra’s physical self, but it also erases her social identity. When she awakens, she is treated as a goddess, an antiquity from mythologized past. The sarcophagus thus transforms into a shrine, thus her frozen self-contained technological faith, and her revived body becomes a political and spiritual symbol. Cryonics is depicted as less of science and more about power who controls time, memory, and narrative. “They think I’m their goddess. But I’m just a girl who went to sleep and woke up in a nightmare.” (48)

The tension between preservation and transformation is reinforced here. Andra was sealed away with the promise of future revival. Therefore, the cryonic pod operates symbolically as a tomb that produces divinity instead of death. The novel highlights the paradox of preservation. A sarcophagus traditionally signifies death’s finality, but cryonics deviates from this perspective of finality. The pod suspends death without guaranteeing life. It preserves flesh but cannot preserve context, relationship or meaning thus transforming a girl into mythology. It also reflects fear of the oblivion of time and loss.

The line “I’ve been looking ever since they pieced me out. You, my reluctant little goddess, are my mark back acity.” (56) suggests fragmentation and reassembling, echoing the ritual handling of preserved bodies in ancient tombs. The sarcophagus seems to be a cryonic chamber that entombs Andra in suspended animation, sealing her between life and death. Her preserved body becomes both a coffin and vessel which enclosed space safeguarding memory, identity, and potential resurrection. Cryonics thus functions as a technological burial that anticipates revival.

The Architecture of Memory

The memory is not a concept; it is the physical and digital scaffolding upon which the entire plot and Andra's identity are constructed. Memory functions as a tri-layered system comprising of biological storage. Her memory is a hard copy from the past. The biological architecture has caused some problems within her own mind, making her an unreliable narrator of her own history. This creates tension between what she remembers on earth and the divinity thrust upon her. The evolution of the new dialect shows how linguistic memory erodes over time, creating a barrier between intent and understanding. The goddess persona is an architecture built on the perceived memories of others, rather than Andra's lived truth. The other characters like Zade and Rashmi provide a sharp contrast to Andra's frozen memory. Zade's relationship with memory is defined by cultural inheritance. Zade doesn't value memory as a personal recollection but treats technological remnants as holy.

The novel constructs memory not as passive recollection but as a built environment that is layered, preserved, fragmented and strategically controlled. When Andra awakens after a thousand years, her memories become the only surviving architecture of a lost civilization.

She reflects "I am a thousand years old and I do not know what the world has become." (108) Her memory becomes a bridge between past and present, yet that bridge is unstable. The preserved body contrasts with the fragile continuity of memory. Andra repeatedly insists on her identity as a human from the past as "I am not a goddess. I am not a machine. I am human." (214). The memory functions as a resistance. In a society that mythologizes her as divine technology, her recollections serve as structural pillars holding together her sense of self.

Cryonics and Transhumanism

Cryonics and Transhumanism presented in the novel is not only a scientific possibility but also political and philosophical that shape identity, power and survival. The cryonically frozen girl who wakes up after 1000 years into a technologically saturated world. The experience narrated is a depiction of promises and dangers mixed in transhuman thought.

Cryonics, in the novel functions as both preservation and displacement. Andra's frozen body becomes a temporal bridge between past and future, symbolizing humanity's desire to conquer death. However, her awakening reveals the fragility of that ambition. She emerges into a society that mythologizes her a goddess rather than returning to the familiar world. This ironic shift exposes cryonics as an uncertain gamble rather than a promised world. The novel deepens our thinking, whether technological preservation truly safeguards identity or merely biological shell. Andra struggles to assert her identity and humanity, which emphasizes the emotional and existential dislocation caused by technological intervention in natural life cycles.

Transhumanism appeared through advanced artificial intelligence, automated systems and the near-deification of lost technological knowledge. The figure of Zhade, for instance, embodies a generation shaped entirely by technological myths, revealing how transhumanist progress can produce new hierarchies and epistemologies. Technology becomes sacred, replacing older religious frameworks, reflecting transhumanism's aspiration to transcend biological and cognitive limits.

The novel does not celebrate technological transcendence uncritically but exposes ethical ambiguities. Cryonics becomes a tool of manipulation and control lies under the control of elites. The contrast between the technologically advanced civilization that cryonically preserved Andra and the regressed society that reawakens her bring into focus the inherent instability of modernist narrative of progress, revealing its tendency toward cultural fragmentation.

“When Anromeda woke, she was drowning...she'd just been put to sleep, and now she was drowning.” (2)

This suggests that returning from cryostasis is deeply unsettling. The technology resurrects her body, but it disorients her mind and self. The sensation of drowning evokes both biological panic and technological malfunction as her cryonic sleep, intended as preservation becomes violent. The narrative presents transhumanism as the process by which her identity shifts from that of an ordinary human to a deified figure, enabled by advancement of technology through mythic misrecognition. Her revival collapses death and life, past and future, human and posthuman. Thus, Andra's drowning is not just physical but existential, symbolizing the fragility between preserved humanity and a technologically altered self.

“Hundreds of them ...all dressed like Andra ...the crowd instantly quieted, and then, as one, they fell to their knees, murmuring a single word... Goddess.” (83)

This frames that transhumanism is not merely as technology but as ideology and religion that society constructs around transcendence. “She was on Holymath, the colonists were dead, and the year was still 3102” (62). This suggests that technology does not function as a mechanism for restoring or recovering the past, rather, it, generates an alternative reality in which human agency is reconfigured and, in some cases, it is displaced.

The aspect of cryonics and transhumanism is the loss of autonomy and ethical accountability. The cryonic preservation of Andra was meant to secure her survival, yet she awakens into a society that weaponizes her existence for religious control. The transhumanist ambition, when driven by power rather than compassion, risks dehumanizing individuals and transforming scientific progress into a tool of oppression rather than liberation.

Conclusion

Lora Beth Johnson exposes the darker implications of cryonics when read through the metaphor of the female body as archive. Although cryonic preservation appears to promise survival beyond death, the novel complicates this promise by revealing how such preservation can become a form of control and manipulation. The preserved female body, rather than symbolizing empowerment, risks becoming a silent repository as stored, accessed, and interpreted by external agencies.

When Andra wakes up after a thousand years, she does not regain her independence. Instead she enters a world that turns her preserved body into a myth. She is renamed, reinterpreted, and elevated as a goddess, but this divinity performs less reverence and more appropriation. Her cryonically preserved body becomes evidence of a lost civilization. In this sense, cryonics transforms the female body into a technological relic, preserved yet stripped of historical voice. The archive metaphor becomes unsettling as archives do not speak for themselves because they are curated, classified and controlled.

Thus, the novel critiques the transhumanist fantasy that technological suspension guarantees liberation. The survival without power on oneself becomes another form of captivity. The cryonic chamber, imagined as a site of salvation, resembles confinement. Preservation delays decay, yet it also freezes a person in a state of vulnerability that depends on future societies for revival, and legitimacy.

From a gendered perspective, this condition becomes particularly troubling as it reinforces the historical regulation of female bodies through technological authority. The author extends this critique into speculative futurity that even advanced technology does not erase the patriarchal tendency to silence and instrumentalize women's bodies. Andra's transformation into a divine archive echoes the longstanding cultural pattern of normalizing women by converting them into symbols. Immortality is depicted as a form of imprisonment in a new planet.

Cryonics destabilizes embodied continuity. The preserved body may survive biologically, but identity fragments across time; her memories become a museum that no longer exists. The novel suggests that technological immortality cannot be restored in the social and emotional ecosystem that constitutes personhood. Instead, it produces existential alienation.

The metaphor of the "goddess as archive" ultimately reveals a paradox as cryonics promises control over death but relinquishes control over meaning. The future claims authority over the preserved body. Cryonic technology here exposes new forms of dependency on institution, interpretation, and power structures that no person's revival matters. Through the protagonist's experience the novel foregrounds the idea that mere survival does not equate to genuine freedom.

Although the character continues to live, her existence remains constrained by technological control or external authority.

Lora Beth Johnson's narrative therefore unsettles the visions of cryonic transcendence. The cryonic character survives, but under conditions shaped by others. Immortality becomes a suspended state of dispossession that can become a new form of imprisonment rather than a path of liberation.

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