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For your Glaze Only: Imperfect Divinity

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# For your Glaze Only: Imperfect Divinity

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*Abstract: Images are consuming the human-ness of the body. Present reconfigurations of humanity's goals have targeted the human body as a malleable tabula rasa formed by the etchings of an image-based consumer society, the society of the spectacle. Sculpting the body as a medium of transcendence and idealizing its form as attainable perfection—the parameters of which come to us via Western paradigms of artistic beauty (from high art, to cinema, to commercial advertising)—are practices that drive us towards a very contested post-human realization. With the associated abandonment of ethical premises that once constituted the basis for social cohesion, Western societies are reformulating citizenship: social beings are defining their individual identities according to lego-aesthetics that, in fact, deny human individuality and encourage composite identities constructed on predetermined models of acceptability. Our virtual presentation (paper) will expose such practices, through a theoretical analysis of two different cultural texts: the first, a video commercial about plastic surgery (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ua3sm5NhJ3s&feature=related>) and the second, an x-ray pin-up calendar ([http://www.repubblica.it/tecnologia/2010/06/18/foto/calendari\\_ai\\_raggi\\_x-4945752/1/?ref=HRESS-2](http://www.repubblica.it/tecnologia/2010/06/18/foto/calendari_ai_raggi_x-4945752/1/?ref=HRESS-2)). These texts illustrate the processes of exposing and colonizing the “inner-self”. The video promotes plastic surgery for its potential to deliver the human body's own while the pin-up eroticizes the female skeletal structure. These image-based constructions of reality have embarked upon phantasmagoria/immateriality as the body's final destination. We will expose these contemporary practices and transformations of social perceptions and representations of the body, through a critical and theoretical analysis.*

Keywords: Female, Body, Post-human, Image Technologies, Representations, Beauty, Aesthetics, Ethics, Citizenship

*In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas corpora.*  
(Ovid)

## Hecate: A Tripartite Introduction

**A** WITCHES' BREW is haunting the globe: a heady brew of consumed bodies, specters of the spectacle. Notwithstanding the millenarian impulses to realize the final reconfiguration of *Homo sapiens*' lofty aspirations, one continuous strand pervades the human embodiment as the final rupture. The disappearance of the human body as the impediment to immortal enlightenment has emerged as a diffused discourse throughout North America from the age of the Atom Bomb/Holocaust, a cultural information turn without return, thanks to standardized technologies of communication.

Braiding together three strands of discourse – the technological, the religious and the economic – the fluid honey-trap has made headway into the *lifeworld* where disenfranchising the human subject is the means, and removing the mind from its body, the ends. Why else

the emphasis on mind-body split, if not as a spiritual response that cements this artificial, abstract divide as the natural goal to pursue? As such, the technological discourse must be considered as a derivative of scientific development in its utilitarian applications to improve the everyday life. Of course, this sense of amelioration in the last twenty-odd years has exponentially increased the sense of ubiquity, or *instancy*,<sup>1</sup> through communicative technological apparatuses that have extended limitless *presence* throughout the world.

What television envisioned at its inception – in other words, our ability to experience the world at large while on the comfort of our own couches – has been actualized through its communicative material derivatives, be it the PC or the iPod, that create a phantasmagorical presence beyond the body, projected into the world at large, through whatever point of connection available. Having moved from a window onto the world to multiple stages, where we perform and are diffused into the world, we are watching ourselves as we happen. This exponential narcissistic worship of one-as-spectacle de-materializes presence while sustaining consciousness, lending credibility to the body-mind dichotomy and ultimately positing the technological transcendence of this mortal coil. The spiritual/religious lure of this process is inescapable and actually profitable since it allows subjectivities to live in the world but not be of the world. Ultimately, who is responsible for ecological disasters, if we are sustained by a system of beliefs that grant us the world as our exploitable playground? This transient place for the true believer to occupy before s/he joins his/her deity in the heavens, fundamentally, is the world having become a possessive pronoun.

The unholy alliance between the technological discourse and the religious discourse is explicated through an act of absolute presence, which is outside of history and has at the same time erased history as a component of experiential life. In its place, this absolute presence has nurtured instead a state of chronic infantilism. This eternal present/presence, is entombed by the entrapments of consumer life that can only be achieved once one has been fully phagocytized by neo-liberalism, the last vestige of capitalism's development. Of course, the picture would not be complete in presenting neo-liberalism without insisting on the fetishistic relationship-developed with and through technological goods: i.e. present communicative environments. This fetishism alters and is altering the perception of the body as the actual self, the human subject.

Before embarking upon distant lands, faithful to the slogan, “think globally, act locally,” one particular 2010 television advertisement destined to citizens in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, but easily available to the rest of the world on YouTube and which is promoting aesthetic medical practices that have become rampantly for sale around the world, requires attention. The ad for Dr. Barry Lycka's laser assisted liposuction, called *lipo sculpting* and *lipo dissolve* in the ad itself, seduces the viewer (targeted largely to women) into an ontological overcoming.

Up to the moment of this ad, the common-sense approach to the divine, also postulated by many Fathers of the Church, rested on one basic act of faith: the perfection of divinity. The incorporeal representation of divinity has, throughout the millennia, stressed that God is perfection itself: ubiquitous and all-powerful, a continuous presence that governs the

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<sup>1</sup> In another of our articles titled “Technologies of Memory, Identity and Oblivion in *Persepolis* and *Waltz with Bashir*” (forthcoming) we use the terms “the age of communicative instancy” and “the age of immediacy gratification” to indicate the current sociocultural conditions created by technology, which allow, on the one hand, for people to be in multiple spaces simultaneously and, on the other, permit for the grand narrative of postmodernism that has transformed History into a plethora of diluted/deluded narcissistic performances/stories for commercial use.

universe and is both in time and outside of time. This all-loving being has never been tarnished in terms of conceptions of perfection linked to *his* status. Although some have posited an imperfect being, the demi-urge, to reconcile the contradictions between the divine and its fallible material consequences (pain, mortality, etc.), the very notion of divinity has always been impervious to any mortal criticism. Although other thinkers have postulated God as actually man's or humanity's alter-ego – an act of imagination – for some believers, an ideal to strive towards, for others, a father-like figure for a child-like humanity, divinity itself has maintained its impervious, perfect status.

The representation in the commercial, from its inception, lures the viewers' attention to the screen, not only through the use of famous and beautiful cultural world masterpieces such as Botticelli's *Primavera*, or Donatello's *David*, and artistically lit and posed images of nude male and female bodies, but also through the use of the aural. The use of audio to make cultural allusion to yoga and other such eastern, naturopathic philosophies regarding the body gives the viewer comfort as they are entranced by the hypnotic soothing music, and the lilting female voice over:

The human body. Divine, but far from perfect. Some areas take a bit of work, while others, a little modern day magic. Fool Mother Nature by removing unwanted fat from specific areas. Sculpt your body with the help of Dr. Barry Lycka's lipo sculpture and lipo dissolve options. (Laser Assisted Liposuction with Dr. Lycka)

Milan Kundera, in his famous novel (also, screenplay) *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* strives to indicate that the modern malaise is the sense of gravity that permeates Western culture. The opening spell of the ad contains the liquidation of this malaise by melting away unwanted fat, rendering the body beautiful and most importantly, lighter. This lightness that can be achieved through laser technology contains within it three contrasting categories, which the ad is able to amalgamate as part of a congruent sales-pitch: 1) religion, 2) magic, and 3) technology. These three categories are sustained via the valorization of artistic representation as the ideal of the body.

The process of excreting from the body unwanted mass, refuse, has a number of different implications. As already identified, fat is translated into the weight that impedes the subject's ability to achieve ephemerality: in this case, the ephemeral becomes a permanent state. This sense of *ephemeral permanence* is the means by which youthfulness is immortalized. Going back as far as the Greeks, it was believed that those whom the gods love die young. Reiterated in Shelley's elegiac poem to Keats "Adonais", more popularly expressed by Billy Joel in his song "Only the Good Die Young", the heroic celebration of dying young, is a fortifying, rhetorical strategy. Youth is declared the most important stage of life, and a romanticized, consumable, reality is translated into virtual goods.

To be able to freeze youth in time is ultimately the power to freeze time, since time is materialized in and by the body. Remaining forever young is the final mastery over time. In this sense, postmodernity, by declaring control over one's narrative – not "I am a camera" (Van Druten), rather, *I am my story* – has ultimately determined that experiences, delimited by the body, are the story. And, the story must always be beautiful, heroically so. Having forgotten "how to do things with words" (Austin), living through the age of the image we must sustain our story to avoid death: a *cogitus interruptus*. In suspending the story in its incipit, what is offered is the model of immortality. In *Henry IV*, Shakespeare tells his recept-

ive public: “But thought’s the slave of life, and life’s time’s fool./And time, that takes survey of all the world,/Must have a stop.” Centuries later, the dictum by the great American sport philosopher, Andre Agassi, *image is everything*, resounds with Kermode’s “sense of an ending”, as if the image-world were a creation in *illo tempore*.

In this first aspect, it is then possible to target time in terms of fat. In other words, fat becomes the undesired temporality the body carries within – fat as the blob-deposit of time. By liquefying fat, time is transcended, lightening the body and reinstating youth. This malleable substance, fat, contains within it also the sense of gravity, so that it is both time – a metaphysical experience – and gravity – an invisible force – which are allies in the processes that mortalizes the body and steal its potential: youth. Understood within this construction, youth is then more than simply a stage in life, it is the apex of life, since it contains within itself lightness and innocence.

From a religious point of view, to be able to lighten the body is to re-conquer the terrestrial paradise before the moment of its transgression: knowledge. The mythical transgression is evidenced through the acquisition of knowledge, for Eve and Adam, consume of the Tree of Knowledge, which the deity had prohibited. Is this a case of blissful ignorance, a magical *modus operandi*? Claude Lévi-Strauss has illustrated that magic thought nevertheless partakes of the scientific making-sense of the world, which ultimately translates as any attempt by which human beings try to control their environment as masters of their own destiny.

The expulsion then, from the body, of time and gravity freezing the body in its perfectible status – youth – points to the simplification of daily experiences in terms of attainable lightness. This translates then, paradoxically, into knowledge, not as a form of self-realization but in terms of an instrument that can implement the freeing of the experience of life from any sense of responsibility (i.e. social commitment), except for what is gratifying. Reading this process from a critical point of view, it is possible to postulate that to liquefy fat, so as to sculpt the body to its achievable perfection is to re-conquer humanity’s potential divinity. However, this cannot be done through willing it to be: intentionality must be sustained by actual, practical intervention.

Modern magic, in terms of the ad, has superseded actual scientific knowledge. In so doing, it is technology, void of knowledge, which can be recast as magic: it is not necessary for consumers to know how *lipo sculpting* and *lipo dissolve* work. What is important to know is that the body *can* be transformed, as if an enlightened cannula is the fat-dissolving wand. Merlin of a re-medievalized world, the doctor can now turn any toad into a light-leaping Prince-ss. The underlying mechanism evinced from this somewhat insipid commercial has a number of essential characteristics that point to the mystification of everyday experience as an incomprehensible reality that can only be managed through the obfuscation of the new alchemists for a new age. In so doing, the notion of progress and conquest of knowledge, which has accompanied modern Western history from the Renaissance up to postmodernity is vanquished in the time it takes to invoke *abracadabra*. Finally, would-be-gods cannot accept the constraints of Mother Nature; for however, nurturing she may be, she is nevertheless fallible. How to reconcile the offspring of Mother Nature with her fallibility? The only answer possible is to “fool” Mother Nature.

In a Canadian province – Alberta, where the ad proliferates – that has already taken upon itself the domestication of the environment for profit (here read Tar Sands and extraction of oil) at the cost of human life (here read Aboriginal populations first and to a lesser degree the ramifications on the general populations), it is simply the next step to begin extractions

on our own bodies to rid them of unwanted refuse.<sup>2</sup> To sustain this analogy, the transformation of the Tar Sands into crude oil is the transformation of ugly nature into its beautiful results, in so far as it maintains the neo-liberal machinery without humans having any clue about any workings of these transformations. In fact, one concerning outcome of technology is that it has developed the communicative strategy implicit in aesthetics that allow for the recuperation of resistance through the image by beautifying disastrous spaces. The Ottawa City Hall Art Gallery, in 2010, has hosted the exhibit “Beautiful Destruction - Alberta Tar Sands Aerial Photographs”, where photographs were exhibited, according to the website, with comments from the artist. However, those comments, which may have provided context for the images, are not available to viewers who access the exhibit via the website: ultimately the internet being the largest platform of diffusion for the images. Without textual context, these images communicate solely the power of the image to anesthetize critical participation. This severs the viewer from the object-context relationship and transforms the object into a self-referential visual *dispositif* embedded in postmodernist aesthetic discourses. Irony, meant to motivate active criticism through distancing, is replaced by the *auratic numbness* created by technological aestheticization, a detachment that allows the image to become a self-contained object.

As if by magic, with none of the side effects that might be produced by actual science or medicine, by taking a magic pill called *oblivion*, cars are filled with the elixir of capitalism: *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious-ly*, we are off and away, as long as we own a vehicle or two. Otherwise, like Dominic Green in *Quantum of Solace*, we might find ourselves stranded in the desert without water, holding a can of oil, liquidated. The domestication and control of Mother Nature is possible only for one species: *Homo Pygmalion*.

Duplicitous by nature, technology, has been repeatedly characterized as the extension of the living into the world, – however erroneously – as transcendent to ideology, immune to the many pit-falls and fly-bottles of language.<sup>3</sup> Yet, what is the Tower of Babel if not berserk<sup>4</sup> technology? Those who refer(red) to the Bible as the source of understanding, must have intuitively realized the following: the advancement of systems capable of possessing the world inexorably carries within it multiplicity – of languages,

<sup>2</sup> At the combined 2010 annual meetings for the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association and Association for Canadian Studies, we discussed this issue in a paper entitled “Oil as Social Determinant for Participatory Citizenship: Alberta’s Tar Sands and Aboriginal Communities.” In that conference paper, we argue the following:

Embedded in the discourse of sovereignty, as definable through Giorgio Agamben’s analysis of the *state of emergency* by which sovereignty defines itself as power, the Homo Sacer is the designation of the disposable Other. Read through this process the subjugation of aboriginal peoples is ongoing: first through practices of colonization, second through land rights that reconstruct the public imaginary in favour of revisiting national history, and third through the consistent erosion of Aboriginal life. An ongoing process through the practice of dismissing land rights by trespassing and using Aboriginal territories to extract and transport oil, overriding Aboriginal authority and autonomy, bulldozing Aboriginal ways of life, and simultaneously making individual Aboriginals complicit by having them participate in oil extraction. (Anselmi & Wilson, 2010)

For more information, please see [www.csj.ualberta.ca/swilson](http://www.csj.ualberta.ca/swilson)

<sup>3</sup> The original contained the following footnote: “The reference is to Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, (1978), who saw his aim as a philosopher “to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle” (103), that is philosophy as language therapy” (Anselmi & Wilson, 2011.)

<sup>4</sup> Ironically, Fred Saberhagen’s *Berserker* series is one of the most successful science-fiction sagas and it deals with technology’s intent to wipe out humanity.

and ideas about the world. If the mandate was to give order to the existent, then in controlling it the paradox erupts irremediably, not one system, but many processes pertain to this ordering. Not one law, but oscillating laws since language inhabits each tool, each instrument meant to keep Khaos at a distance. Not quite the Hobbesian exercise, the many cadences of *téchnē* are ideally inscribed into a practice of domination through the auspices of the originating technology: culture, as the manifest realization of communicating, self-aware beings. . . No matter the many Hypatia, which have been silenced throughout the history of Western thought, knowledge has been promoted as man-made, dependent on technology – language and communication media environments – at the same time self-referential and originating the Other/God. (Anselmi & Wilson, 2011.)

From the consuming body's perspective, oil is the fat of the land. The process being advertised in the commercial in question encourages individuals to sculpt the body, remove the natural fat, since, implicitly, other processes will be available whereby consumers can then implant petroleum-based products to enhance their living art projects.<sup>5</sup> The notion that bodies contain our narratives implies that most important to that narrative is the *imago*-byte that promotes it. We are cornered, as full participants in the current neo-liberal *reality* to use our bodies as canvases on which to carve out or sculpt or implant our identities. However, to sculpt one's identity means to whittle away, or in this case melt away, the unwanted raw, rough edges, so as to better fit into a bikini. Who would have known that Fat Man and Little Boy were to achieve fame by directly indicating an atoll: the Bikini Atoll, where the apocalyptic power to liquefy and vaporize the human body that made the place famous also becomes by an aesthetic linguistic displacement a sustainable fashion? Art too has been domesticated in this ad, as the mirror images or ideals that must be reintegrated into the bodily form that we possess. The commercial democratically suggests that all bodies possess the hidden, rough potential of a *Primavera* or a *Davide*; the stifling patina must be dissolved by light, by the laser of the technician turned art restorationist. What is left of a body minus fats – healthy or unhealthy becomes insignificant – is the structure that defies gravity, exposed by the light.

## Revealing X-Rays as Structural Beauty

*“The answer is so simple. Death needs time for what it kills to grow in”*  
William S. Burroughs

In June 2010, the Japanese company Eizo, used a German ad agency, Butter, to promote their precision x-ray technology. According to a variety of articles that appeared on the subject, neither company was interested in making social commentary. The idea, rather, was to illustrate “that female beauty is indeed more than skin deep” (Haines) and to attract the attention of male medical practitioners with the buying power to purchase the equipment. The official comments from the company are as follows:

“EIZO medical imaging high precision displays for the examination and diagnosis of radiographs. Whereas craftsmen are showered with pin-up-calendars at the end of every

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<sup>5</sup> This process has already been represented in an ironic analogy by the film *Fight Club* (1999).



year, this kind of present is less popular among medics. EIZO breaks this taboo. This pin-up calendar shows absolutely every detail” (Cherredar)

The promotional ad is a pin-up calendar of a stiletto clad female model,<sup>6</sup> ex-rayed in various poses. Her flesh is only faintly visible in the negative images. Her skeletal structure is eye catching as we are provided an intimate view of how a woman’s bones are arranged when she is posed in various erotic positions. While the marketing strategy is promoted as breaking advertisement taboos, given that private shots of the body are not available for public consumption, the calendar is actually commodifying taboo, an investment in the sacred.

In keeping with the time portrayal of the model – that is the cyclical temporalization of the model illustration – it is possible to solicit from the calendar itself a number of stories that are revealed through the visual narrative constructed by the movement of the body over the 12 months. For example, time leading unto death. Traditionally, in many cultures, death has been portrayed as female. The female gender has been characterized as constructive and destructive. It is constructive in that it creates life: gives birth. It is destructive in that within the patriarchal social structure *she* is the unstable factor. Logos is of man; chaos is of woman. The binary of rational-irrational, civilized-uncivilized, is played through the construction of gender, which also works to characterize other societies as either civilized or uncivilized. The feminization of Other societies is the domestication of cultures, constructed for imperialist reasons, as inferior structures. Thus, portraying a female model through x-ray vision plays at once with the notion of death – the bones – and the penetrating vision that domesticates and rationalizes the chaotic element. By revealing the innate structure of the body, the viewer is given instruction as to what is necessary to the containment of that particular body: i.e. the female body. We could quote the title of a movie *Death Becomes Her* (1992) to comically illustrate this predilection for death as female. As well, the calendar illustrates the power of the penetrating gaze. Laura Mulvey, in her 1975 article, articulated the power of the gaze as it scripts the female body for male pleasure, which, notwithstanding critical recuperations still retains its original intent. In terms of the calendar, it achieves the ultimate power of revealing the intimate structure of the body. It cleanses the body of its weight (lightening it), and portrays the model’s body as what is essential to the pleasure of the gaze – its bareness. This aestheticization of dynamic death, in so far as each pose is inscribed into a space, is parceled as a time sequence, in itself cyclical, and a parody of the cycle of life as a series of pin ups. At the same time, without flesh, there is no life for the body. Purified, the hygienic body is reduced to its skeleton – the Western symbol of death par excellence.

The fact that the body itself is voided of its internal organs, where the internal organs become the waste of the body as they bind to the actual trajectory of life made of smells, fluids, excretions etc, is an act of aesthetic purification. The x-ray eliminates that bridge and, in a sense, subverts the typical binary death-life as death in life: a puritanical approach that cannot escape its religious overtones, since it is all those elements (excretions, dejecta, etc.) that render our passage mortal. So that, having eliminated from our gaze such a process, paradoxically given, is the immortality of the structure: the glazed bones.

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<sup>6</sup> It is possible to assume that the calendar features twelve pictures of the same female model. The shoes are consistent in ten of the twelve of poses. In addition to the shoes, there are other semiotic indicators such as size, skeletal pattern, glazed organic matter overview, etc. that the model is consistent throughout the calendar.

The domestication process alluded to in the previous point is that through hygienics, the model is transformed into a patient that can be possessed through the gaze and who can be instructed into action. As such, each particular position is a parody of an erotic position. Though they be parodies of actual pin-up poses, they nevertheless expose the morphology of the limited number of poses that the female body can take in presenting itself as the recipient of desire. This pin-up, marketed to a specific demographic of non-doctors, but members of the medical field, plays on the classic erotic fantasy of “playing doctor.” The calendar illustrates this fetishistic dream by rendering the model the extension of desire so that each position is the result of the viewer’s will to power, as gratification. The viewer’s gaze is legitimized as the gaze of the all-knowing doctor, which acquires a penetrating divine power in its ability to know and control the human body. In short, this is the valorization of the mechanics of sex: an attempt to revisit a banal sequence of actions through the x-ray, in order to provide new phantasmagorical erotic stimuli to the image of the *dead* body.

In keeping with the mystery of science and technology, given that terms of scientific progress are known only by an elite few, and even then, that group is subdivided into specialties, such a process is rendered phantasmagorically present. In terms of the general public, and its degree of acculturation, to know how different instruments work, the principles that make them possible are, at best, a generic understanding of the various functions. Public understanding of technology is generally based more on the faith that instruments will operate and conform to our demands, than knowing how those processes occur. The calendar then, at the same time that it reveals the inner structure of the body, also exposes our sublime ignorance of the ways that the body works and the ways that science work (as it applies to the body). This particular frame, then, instructs the viewer to pay homage to superior knowledge and technology that can be manipulated by superior beings (radiologists, scientists, doctors). The calendar itself re-proposes a hierarchy of power within a so-called democratic society, via advertisement itself. In other words, those who deny the political value of the media fail to see, actually, its mechanisms, which are so well illustrated through the domestication of the Other (the woman) and the ideological rendition of the calendar.

The points illustrated so far bring to the fore the way that the public and the private spheres have been integrated into the society of the spectacle. What is private, i.e. the patients x-ray results, are aestheticized and rendered public as erotic illustrations of the power of the machine. Accepting, *de facto*, the erasure of the boundary between the private and the public sphere is itself a political image-manifesto. It ties itself into Reality TV programming, which has become the television standard, across the West, in the last decade or so – a form of communication that is very low in producing costs and very high in returns. The calendar inscribes itself within this process and within the processes of valorizing and accepting the loss of privacy within the mediatic sphere. For example, Facebook owner and founder, Mark Elliot Zuckerberg (born ironically in 1984), has recently stated that the notion of privacy is becoming outdated as a form of social evolution (Kirkpatrick). Granting this youthful tycoon the power of not knowing how to make choices, the elimination of privacy is certainly not a positive development for political subjectivity. Lacking any political acumen, Mr. Zuckerberg actually serves the purpose of an ever-controlling system that is disposed and diffused through the mediascape so as to imprison the body within an always-on aesthetically-enhanced panopticon, as the ultimate means of control, freezing us into identity constructions that cannot easily be dissolved, or deleted. Nazi-fascism, as illustrated in P.P. Pasolini’s 1975

film *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom*, clearly illustrates the collapse of the boundary line between the private and public sphere and its deadly political consequences.

One aspect of the photo shoot that has not been addressed is that the model would have been exposed to inordinate amounts of radiation in order to complete a photo shoot that produced twelve worthy shots. The fact that her health is seemingly not taken into consideration suggests that she is a disposable film/pellicle-residue, the sacrificial element of a larger vision. This, in total contrast to the hyper-hygenization of the body itself, is the schism of the personae versus the body. In a sense, what is left untouched is the mind. This means, in turn, that the body is consumable and renewable, thanks to progress and technology's inceptions. As if, waiting behind the technology – the x-ray – is the possession of a new and better body. Ironically, it is precisely this process and intention, which is contained in the framing of the calendar as an advertisement for this state of the art machinery. If the body is consumable, then immortality is the subtext granted the mind: the embracement of this new technology promises to carry through the actual natural limits of the body per se. The x-ray then, is an extension toward immortality of the skeletonized body: i.e. the aesthetic goal of anorexia; in rendering the model inconsequential, this dynamic, of which the calendar partakes, promises the ultimate transformation of the human species.

### **Hecate: Parting Nod**

Religion, magic and technology, in the contemporary world have become equivalent to one another, so that in losing the boundary lines that constitute the difference between a rational and irrational society, leads the critic to envision not only a post-political but also a post-rational society. Not quite *King of Hearts* (1966), the dynamics presently at place within western societies are indicative of a total transformation of the human subject in terms of the body and the society that that body is able to construct and reconstruct. It is not only a paradigm shift, but also the ironic implementation of a late twentieth century anti-globalization slogan: “another world is possible.” As has been the case in the last two centuries, perhaps starting with the historical avant-gardes, capitalism is that process which in emancipating itself from human control—and thus achieving that “invisible hand” status of Smith's fame—is able to continuously recuperate and transform into an economic viability whatever opposes its dynamics. What is capitalism's final frontier—to borrow from 1960s cult TV – is the human body. For, the impediment to capitalism's total emancipation is by necessity the transcendence of the human body. It is at this historical juncture that religion, technology, and capitalism become one, reproducing the alchemy of magic: the promise being to live and reinstate paradise on earth, *hic et nunc*, by purifying earth and the body through the alchemy of divine technical-medical intervention.

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William Anselmi is Full Professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies at the University of Alberta, Canada. He has co-edited and co-authored a number of books on ethnicity, multiculturalism and media representations. His work addresses a broad range of areas, from Italian and Italian Canadian literature and culture to a focus on cinema, media and television studies. Recent projects involve the exploration of narcissism and immortality in the deployment of post-human technological apparatuses. Dr. William Anselmi and Dr. Sheena Wilson are working on a book project to address contrasting and/or collaborative modes of representation in documentary and mainstream feature films. Two recent articles linked to this larger project include “Slumdogging It: Rebranding the American Dream, New World Orders, and Neo-Colonialism” (2009); “Performative Radicalism in Contemporary Canadian Documentary Film” (2009); and “Technologies of Memory, Identity and Oblivion in Persepolis” (2007) and “Waltz with Bashir” (2009). (forthcoming). They are two of the co-founders and managing editors of an online open access journal called *Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies*.

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Sheena Wilson is Assistant Professor and Director of the Bilingual Writing Centre at Campus Saint-Jean, the University of Alberta’s Francophone faculty. She is the author of numerous journal articles and she has co-edited a collection on marginalized languages, cultures and literatures titled *Writing After the Gaze: the Rupture of the Historical* (2007). She is a co-founder and co-managing editor of *Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies*. Her research interests involve an interdisciplinary approach to the study of human/civil rights abuses in cultural representations, and the relationship between the written word and the image as discursive referents in socio-political contexts. Related areas of interest include patterns of exclusion exercised on non-dominant communities within the paradigm of state-multiculturalism. She is particularly interested in how women writers and filmmakers represent marginalization, the reception of ethno-cultural media representations, as well as women in the rhetorical tradition. Her edited collection *Joy Kogawa: Essays on Her Works* is forthcoming with Guernica Press in 2011. Dr. Wilson and Dr. Anselmi are conducting related research on the de-politicization of film as an instrument of social change through specific recent practices in documentary and mainstream film. As well, they have and continue to develop theoretical discourses and analyses with regards to the relationships between the organic world and technologies of the body as represented in media environments.