

Female Beauty Systems:

*Beauty as Social Capital
in Western Europe
and the United States,
Middle Ages to the Present*

Edited by

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CHAPTER NINE

BEAUTIFUL MONSTER: PLASTIC SURGERY AS CULTURAL METAPHOR

JENNIFER COGNARD-BLACK

We overlook only too often the fact that a living being
may ... be regarded as raw material, as something plastic.
(H. G. Wells, "The Limits of Individual Plasticity," 1895)

"There is no such thing as the essential self," said Mr. Ghengis.
"It is all inessential, and all liable to change and flux, and usually the better
for it."
(Fay Weldon, *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*, 1983)

I am not real. I am theater.
(Lady Gaga, 2011)

Within contemporary beauty systems, plastic surgery is both a bodily practice as well as a pervasive cultural metaphor—simultaneously real and surreal. In both its physical and visual forms, plastic surgery represents humanity's desire for beauty and its anxieties over the monstrous, a monstrosity that sometimes results from transformation and is also the necessary opposition of anything lovely. For while promising the possibility of perfect beauty, such operations also inevitably carry the threat of monstrous mistake. In this way, the practice and the idea of plastic surgery are able to contain contradictory images of both Venus and Frankenstein's creature—images that have been historically understood in the Western world as wildly different outcomes of such surgeries, one hoped for and one feared. And yet, in the past two decades, another rich and strange idea has surfaced around the potential of plastic bodies in Europe and America. This idea (or, perhaps, ideal) is of a beautiful monster—though not a Siren or a femme fatale, a figure of gorgeous evil. Rather, this beautiful monster of the postmodern moment isn't "beautiful"

in a traditional sense. And it is the liquid, shape-shifting quality of this image—its very plasticity—that makes it compelling.

Across Europe and the United States, plastic surgery is pervasive and powerful. According to the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, in 2011 there were almost fifteen million cosmetic procedures worldwide, with 53 percent of these occurring either in Europe or North America.¹ As a physical practice, then, plastic surgeries impact millions of people, but as cultural metaphors, they influence billions. Moreover, plastic surgery is deeply gendered. The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery has noted that, in the United States, the number of cosmetic surgeries for women increased over 252 percent from 1997 to 2012 and that 90 percent of all procedures were performed on women.² This feminization of plastic surgery isn't just about numbers or kinds of surgeries, however. As a beauty commodity, the textual and visual discourse of plastic surgery is packaged and sold to *all* women, in any household that can receive a television signal or connect to a wireless router. As feminist theorist Virginia Blum argues, "[t]he bodies of women in a postsurgical culture are all compromised regardless of whether [they] choose or refuse surgical interventions [Women] are hailed by cosmetic surgery as a practice to which [they] must respond."³

This essay, then, traces the cultural metaphor of such "plastic practice" across four discursive sites of historic and contemporary resonance: first, as part of the Before / After images so rife in American popular culture; then examining the medical history of cosmetic procedures as developed in Anglo-America; next by considering how allusion functions as metaphor in a surgical novel by Fay Weldon, a modern British author; and, finally, as part of what might be called the "plastic theatrics" enacted by Orlan and Lady Gaga, two contemporary performance artists from France and the United States. In considering these four discursive sites—all of them steeped in both text and image—the intent of this essay isn't to offer a comprehensive study of how plastic surgery has become a widespread metaphor of either idealized beauty or dreaded monstrosity or both. Instead, these four sites should be understood as "spots of time" across place and space that serve to interrogate the language and image of plastic surgery as a discourse full of both possibility and peril, allure and hideousness—i.e., of beautiful monstrosity. Moreover, this essay makes clear that plastic surgery is a beauty phenomenon that continues to impact women more than men and one that is propelled primarily by representations of ideal beauty that are generated out of North America and Europe. It is a given, of course, that men and those living in countries other than the United States and Europe must grapple with the

consequences of our surgical age, but neither of these populations are the focus of this piece.

Before / After: The popular culture of plastic surgery

As a bodily practice, plastic surgery iterates and extends the traditional idea that beautification is best achieved through physical alteration, wounding the ugly flesh in order to heal it into loveliness. As with traditions of Chinese foot-binding or African scarification, plastic surgery disciplines a woman's body into beauty by altering it to reflect accepted standards of loveliness. Yet within such international and seemingly culture-specific practices, the beauty standards specific to the surgically altered body are derived primarily from a European aesthetic, regardless of the ethnicity or nationality of the surgical subject. Not surprisingly, this aesthetic is largely codified and globalized through American and European popular media. In her history of plastic surgery, *Venus Envy*, Elizabeth Haiken notes that "plastic surgeons [have] reproduced and replicated a definition of beauty that clearly derive[s] from ... Caucasian, even Anglo-Saxon, traditions and standards [I]n their readiness to label certain nose shapes and types as deformities, surgeons helped cement not just standards of beauty but standards of normality and acceptability."⁴ Thus, the silicone implants meant to add volume and curve to a Colombian woman's breasts or the surgically modified eyes of a South Korean woman imitate a beauty ideal that is patently, even emphatically, Western.⁵ And even though many plastic surgeons claim that they suggest aesthetic "improvements" geared to each patient's specific ethnicity, the popularity and outcome of the most sought-after operations—facelifts, nose jobs, eye jobs, boob jobs, and liposuction—tell a different story.

Indeed, although advertisements for plastic surgery repeatedly suggest that modifying one's body is a measure of one's individualism through consumer choice, in point of fact women worldwide are being cut into wide-eyed, slim-nosed, big-breasted clones. The promise of creating a distinctive look through surgical alteration has actually led to cookie-cutter conformity: procedures that collapse race, class, age, and sexuality into a single visual ideal of Western femininity. Inevitably, this attempt to control the ugly body through surgical modification, molding it into a beautiful clone, not only produces bodies that imitate and replicate each other. It also produces maimed bodies, for inevitably some patients are disfigured, some killed, and many are scarred permanently.

In other words, the material and the metaphor of plastic surgery represent a paradox of promise and peril. As promise, such surgeries trade

on the mystique of the makeover: that transformation of an ugly duckling into a beautiful swan with the dual possibilities of perfection and agelessness. As peril, however, such operations articulate powerful fears of monstrosity and death—what it might mean to wake up in Dr. Frankenstein's workshop and find oneself a hastily stitched assemblage of decaying body parts, "yellow skin scarcely covering the work of muscles and arteries beneath ... [a] shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips."⁶

To understand global plastic surgery within these contradictions is to understand that cultural "flesh wounds" abound in both senses of that phrase. On the one hand, such surgeries result in nothing more than surface injuries, ones that heal quickly and easily and with miraculous results. In any fantastic narrative in which the ugly suddenly becomes the beautiful—not just the unattractive duckling changing into a swan but also Cinderella reborn from her cinders into a Phoenix-like belle of the ball—the somatic and psychic pain of such transformation is supposedly minimal, the results maximal. Consider the verbs used to designate various types of elective surgeries and to describe the actions of how they're achieved. Skin is "nipped" and "tucked"; hips and stomachs "contoured"; and faces, breasts, and even "bra fat" under the armpits are all potentially "liftable." In this lexicon of surgical transformation, serious operations—ones that necessitate general anesthesia, that carry risks of infection and complications, and that will inevitably leave behind scars—are equated with everyday actions such as "lifting" a curtain, feeling old man winter "nipping" at one's nose, "tucking" a loose blanket around a baby, or making a "contour drawing" by sketching the outline of a bowl of fruit. These verbs and the actions they imply are as innocuous as a fairy godmother waving (or perhaps lifting) her wand.

Moreover, if the popular language of plastic surgery masks its surgicity, its attendant visual discourse iterates and underscores this magical thinking, particularly the popular genre of Before / After pictures across many forms of media. The placement of "before" on the left and "after" on the right imitates how Western readers read: whatever is on the left (words, pictures) is always already in the past—what must be left behind in order to get to the next sentence, the next page, the next photo. The right, then, is the space of either the future (before arriving) or the now (once arrived). It's the place of immediacy and freshness. In a sense, then, the right-hand side of any Western text "turns back the clock." In Before / After photo sequences, this creates a visual chronology that suggests people can become more youthful. And within this visual rhetoric, it's as if the interstitial space between the Before and After images—somewhere within that slim white line—is where all the

surgeon's nipping, tucking, contouring, and lifting is performed. Abracadabra and bibbidi bobbidi boo: plastic surgery is just a flesh wound, a mere scratch, and nothing to worry about.

On the other hand, however, not only is the flesh deliberately wounded as part of elective surgeries, the flesh itself *wounds*, meaning it hurts and harms, maims and mutilates its owner. In the surgical attempt to achieve ideal beauty, the material body presents obvious scars, the kind that have signaled Gothic monstrosity in the Western world for centuries. Again, one need only think of Frankenstein's monster and his "deformities," metonymically translated into facial scars when the novel was first turned into the now famous 1931 film directed by James Whale. And despite the fact that it was Whale who added these scars—as well as the bolts and even the green skin (which cast the desired gray color within his black-and-white film)—it's the marks on the monster's forehead and along his cheek that both literally and figuratively represent the required wounding when any body is transformed through surgery. Thus, a body remade through plastic surgery is always a scarred body, and its flesh wounds tell this transformative tale. Such scars also signal that the body has been modified artificially, which becomes evidence of its monstrosity—since Gothic monstrosity is a kind of embodied horror, defining the Other against what is "natural."

Indeed, against plastic surgery's magical lexicon is a concomitant vocabulary of monstrosity. Reading through all of the articles on plastic or cosmetic surgery since 2010 from the *New York Times* and *The Guardian* respectively, we see that phrases such as "scalpel slaves," "drastic plastic," "surgery junkies," "surgery shocks," and "buyer beware" abound. These articles discuss aging as a "deformity" and offer treatments such as "vampire facials" and "Dracula therapies"—procedures that supposedly reanimate the face through repeated injections of the patient's own blood. Junkies, slaves, the deformed, vampires: such is the stuff of Othering that propels stories of monstrosity and that also creates monstrous bodies.

The visual discourse also contains a corollary dark side, for the classic Before / After sequence trades in black magic as much as white. Indeed, a significant part of this visual discourse is the fear of "surgery gone wrong"—a phrase that, if typed into a Google image search, garners about three million hits. Many of these Before / After images are of celebrities touted as "scalpel slaves," meaning those who desire too much "work" to preserve their youthful beauty and so wind up with faces both recognizable yet also illegible, alien and uncanny.⁷ Other Before / After sequences, however, are representations of everyday people who "chased

vanity," failed as conscientious consumers, and therefore received botched operations.

Inevitably, it's not just the soma but also the psyche that is damaged or "scarred." For instance, current researchers on plastic surgery warn doctors not to take on patients with Body Dysmorphic Disorder—a mental illness in which an individual is obsessed with perceived physical "defects," i.e., usually minor or even imagined flaws that result in acute anxiety, depression, and isolation.⁸ Moreover, there are additional cautionary tales on the hubris of some cosmetic surgeons whose God complexes propel them to attempt dangerous procedures: "butchers" who leave behind mentally and physically damaged patients.⁹ Across all such cases, both the written and visual discourse of the Before / After become the stuff of horror—mad doctors who wound flesh and create fiends.

Cultural plastic: The historical discourse of plastic surgery

These paradoxes of plastic surgery—that it represents both the material and the metaphoric, the magical and the monstrous—derive, in part, from the history of such surgeries in Europe and the United States. In and of itself, the choice of the label "plastic" is instructive. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the phrase "plastic surgery" was first used in 1838 by a German surgeon, Eduard Zeis, in his *Handbuch der Plastischen Chirurgie*. Zeis himself claims, "As far as I know[,] I was the first to use the words 'plastic surgery.'"¹⁰ However, it wasn't until half a century later that an understanding of the potential plasticity of bodies became more widespread.

Across Europe and America for much of the nineteenth century, the traditional assumption held that one's body betrayed one's soul: a beautiful person was a good person, an ugly person was evil. Because of this assumption, any instance of people crossing barriers of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality created a good deal of anxiety—and, too, generated many thrilling and fascinating novels with boundary-crossing figures as their main characters. Within this milieu, many people believed that, say, the sexologist Havelock Ellis could determine whether someone was a sexual "invert" based on his genitals; or that the eugenicist Sir Francis Galton could delineate specific physical "types" of criminals, prostitutes, or the insane by showing commonalities among the shapes of their ears, noses, and eyes.¹¹ In other words, there was a widespread desire to be assured that one could judge the human book by its fleshy cover.

By the 1890s, however, plastic surgeries were becoming more prevalent, and some physical markers of class-, race-, and sex-based boundary-crossing or "deviance" were being altered to conform to middle-class, white European markers of hegemonic beauty and "normality"—although usually without acknowledging the surgical mediation. The first procedure to straighten an African-American "saddle nose" was performed in 1892, while the first Japanese eyelid surgery as well as the first operation to alter a Jewish set of "Moritz ears" both occurred in 1896.¹² As might be imagined, such plastic potential excited both fascination and fear, conflicting emotions articulated in Before / After horror novels from Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to H. G. Wells' 1896 *Island of Doctor Moreau*. In a short essay entitled "The Limits of Individual Plasticity," written the year before he published *Moreau*, Wells argues, "We overlook only too often the fact that a living being may ... be regarded as raw material, as something plastic, something that may be shaped and altered ... and the organism as a whole developed far beyond its apparent possibilities."¹³

While *fin de siècle* writers expressed an uneasy fascination with altering and adapting the body as "plastic," with the advent of World War I, the phrase "plastic surgery" became more widely and openly adopted by British and American military doctors. These surgeons developed pioneering operations to reconstruct the destroyed faces of trench soldiers and badly burned bomber pilots. Called the miracle men of the Western Front, surgeons such as Harold Delf Gillies in England and John Staige Davis in the United States used skin-flap techniques to refashion eyelids or noses that had been burned away as well as bone grafting methods to rebuild jaws blown off by snipers.¹⁴ For this revolutionary work, Gillies was knighted, while Davis became the first Chair of the American Board of Plastic Surgery.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, this branch of medicine became both recognized and professionalized. As such, it seems fitting that these practitioners would designate their work as "plastic," thereby evoking the Greek *plastikos*, meaning "formed" or "molded," meaning that these surgeons were akin to sculptors, their medium flesh rather than clay or stone.¹⁵ In reimagining the healing of profound injury as an art form, plastic surgeons also could be viewed as creative geniuses, thereby linking the term "plastic" to its seventeenth- and eighteenth-century meaning of innovative understanding, a "procreative principle" of the mind.¹⁶ Unlike "cosmetic" procedures hawked by "beauty doctors"—phrases that were circulating in the popular culture at roughly the same time—"plastic surgery" delivered by "plastic surgeons" could be separated

from a desire to beautify the body through merely cosmetic, or superficial, means.¹⁷ Even now, there remains a professional distinction between plastic and cosmetic surgeons. The medical meritocracy—such as members of the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons—recognizes the former and yet regards the latter as suspect, citing cases of otolaryngologists performing facelifts or gynecologists offering Botox.¹⁸

Throughout the twentieth century as plastic surgery moved from the battlefield to the bedroom and its primary patient changed from soldiers to “plain” or “ugly” women, this distinction between the surgeon and the charlatan became a pervasive theme. When plastic surgery was deemed necessary by military doctors to heal catastrophic injury and restore a modicum of self-esteem to wounded soldiers, no one discussed whether these surgeons were qualified to perform these operations. However, once healthy features were said to be mutilated by metaphoric battle—women ravaged by the shrapnel of time—then inevitably unscrupulous or ill-trained surgeons stepped into the breach in hopes of trading on women’s bodily insecurities. Certain surgeons started to medicalize nonmedical conditions—such as the “racial noses” that Sander Gilman studies in great detail in his book *Making the Body Beautiful*—and they started to peddle their surgical wares through advertisements.¹⁹

For example, one American “beauty doctor,” John Howard Crum, was an early master of using the metaphor of plasticity to commodify surgery into the consumer product of perfect beauty. Crum’s advertisements from the 1940s and 1950s package his surgeries within a written and visual discourse that now has become iconic, including those powerful Before / After images as well as the fragmentation of the female body into generic sites of anxiety and excess (“skin – ears – eyelids – lips – breasts”) as well as Crum’s powerful construction of a woman’s face as a piece of “plastic” that might be “reshaped,” “lifted,” and “corrected.” In his 1929 book, *The Making of a Beautiful Face*, Crum called the female face a “distinct asset,” arguing that “Face Value” wasn’t a “mere phrase” but that “[a]n aging and unattractive face will often have as disastrous an effect on a woman’s life as would some physical deformity.”²⁰ Here and elsewhere, Crum adopts the language of illness—particularly “defects” and “deformities”—in service of pathologizing health as ugliness to sidestep the dictum that doctors should heal the sick and spare the well. He also manages to objectify his patient’s bodies in two crucial ways: as a kind of currency (an “asset”) with purchasing power on the marriage market and as an assemblage of seemingly disconnected parts, each of which might need correction, thereby allowing for multiple and seemingly endless procedures.

As Euro-American popular discourse around plastic surgery shifted from a reconstructive, masculinized one of healing war wounds into a cosmetic, feminized practice of injuring healthy flesh for the sake of beauty, the term “plastic” also altered in meaning from creative artistry into scientific utility and artificiality. The classification of organic polymers as moldable “plastics” was first used in 1909 in the *Journal of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry*, which means that, even in the period leading up to World War I, the word’s connotation underwent a radical change. In both Europe and America across the twentieth century, the word “plastic” came to designate any synthetic material that could be molded at high temperatures (1909); a kind of explosive (1945); something artificial or insincere, such as dubbing Hawaii a “plastic paradise” (1963); a vinyl record for recording and replaying music (1969); and, of course, a credit card (1975).²¹

Ultimately, this linkage of “plastic” to fake female beauty is underscored in the parlance of contemporary pop culture. After the 2004 release of the American film *Mean Girls*, calling oneself “plastic” became equated with high-class pretension and Barbie-doll beauty. Within this film, the clique called The Plastics are the “mean girls”—as one character quips, they are “cold,” “shiny,” and “hard.”²² And yet their kind of materialistic, perfectionistic, and image-obsessed lifestyle often has been embraced as one worthy of emulation. For instance, this ideology of plastic perfection is now celebrated with such international events as the 2004 “Miss Artificial Beauty” pageant in China and the subsequent 2009 “Miss Plastic Hungary” pageant held in Budapest.²³ As cultural critic Susan Bordo points out in her book *Unbearable Weight*, the postmodern, posthuman female body is now defined by “fantasies of rearranging, transforming, and correcting, an ideology of limitless improvement and change, defying the historicity, the mortality, and, indeed, the very materiality of the body. In place of that materiality, we now have ... cultural plastic.”²⁴

Now, in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, beauty surgeries have received worldwide acceptance. They are no longer considered shameful or inauthentic or even problematic—which brings the term “plastic” and the global representations of plastic surgery full circle. Indeed, “plastic” is now a term that contains multitudes: it is figurative and literal, psychic and somatic, gorgeous and grotesque, authentic and fake, surface and substance, the doctor and the patient as well as both the advertisement and the commodity. Interestingly, the word is now also employed as an adjective and as a noun—and, colloquially, sometimes even as a verb, as in “You just got plasticked!” Plastic is a moldable,

flexible term—and, as a result, a potent metaphor for the idea of human transfiguration.

Beautiful monster: Literalizing metaphor within plastic surgery novels

Metaphor is the purview of the poetic; it is inherently figurative, where one idea or thing stands for another. The etymology of “metaphor” is the Latin “metaphora,” meaning “to transfer.”²⁵ As such, a metaphor must contain two elements—a specific meaning in one word that is transferred to an analogous meaning in another. To extend the cultural metaphor of plastic surgery into the realm of the literary, it’s instructive to consider allusion as a kind of metaphor. As one literary critic has argued in studying the works of D. H. Lawrence, allusions “have two elements, a locus in the text and a parallel locus in another text. These two are ... bent towards each other or even bound together; certainly they modify each other. Like metaphor[s,] [allusions] establish something new, yet they are a product of memory and association.”²⁶ Through allusion, books talk to and with other books, and this dynamic is particularly rich within plastic surgical novels of the modern moment.

To discuss surgical allusions as cultural metaphors within these novels, there is a plethora from which to choose: Olivia Goldsmith’s romances *Switcheroo* and *The First Wives Club*; sci-fi books such as Brian D’Amato’s *Beauty* and Scott Westerfeld’s *Uglies* series; and Chuck Palahniuk’s disturbing yet literary *Invisible Monsters*, among others. All of these novels engage what it means to remake and unmake the body through surgery and how doing so impacts both material and metaphoric bodies. Yet it is Fay Weldon’s brilliant comic romp—*The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*—that deserves special consideration for how it parallels what has become a kind of literalization of the metaphoric within the postmodern and posthuman surgical body.

In Weldon’s dark comedy about female envy and sexual competition, the novel’s antihero, Ruth, undergoes extensive plastic surgery to transform her tall, lumbering frame into the spitting image of her husband’s mistress, a slim and dainty romance writer named Mary Fisher. Ruth’s transformation is extensive. Her cosmetic dentist extracts and grinds down her teeth, while her plastic surgeons, Mr. Ghengis and Dr. Black, break her jaw and cheekbones; cut and re-stitch the skin along her forehead, arms, stomach, and rump; tighten her vagina; saw four inches out of her femurs and shins; and even graft new eyelashes onto her eyelids. When Ruth’s metamorphosis is complete, Dr. Black compares her to an

enchancing, newborn Venus, “risen freshly from her conch shell,” while Mr. Ghengis cries out, “I am her Pygmalion,” thereby constructing Ruth as Galatea as well as the goddess of beauty who brought this statue to life.²⁷

Weldon, of course, is thoroughly enjoying her allusions here, riffing on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* to poke fun at Black’s desire for the perfect woman as well as Ghengis’ God complex. Yet Weldon’s humor also exposes the power of the Pygmalion mythos, particularly as part of the culture of plastic surgery. As Virginia Blum and others have pointed out, real-world plastic surgeons fall prey to the Pygmalion Effect, advertising themselves as artists and sculptors and/or representing their female patients as works of art.²⁸

Even more telling, some male surgeons actually do fall in love with the female patients of their own creation. In a recent article in *The Huffington Post*, journalist Amanda Scherker retells the love story of a couple named David and Veronica Matlock—a California plastic surgeon and the patient who came in for a vaginoplasty and wound up with an engagement ring. Not only did Veronica get a remade vagina, it turns out that Doctor Matlock also talked her into what he calls his “Wonder Woman Makeover”: liposuction of the chin, arms, and thighs. As Scherker puts it, “The doctor proposed on the first date and has been using his Michelangelo-like sculpting skills to make [Veronica] more beautiful ever since.”²⁹ And if David Matlock is a modern Michelangelo, then it’s not figurative but literal to call Veronica his Galatea—a living statue.

In addition to this Pygmalion Effect among some plastic surgeons, there is also a pervasive Venus discourse within contemporary surgical culture, suggesting that operations can turn everyday women into Aphrodites. For instance, there are numerous cosmetic surgery centers and medi-spas that sell themselves under the name of “Venus” and/or offer “Venus Makeovers,” such as the “Venus Treatment” company that hawks a “Venus Freeze” treatment, one that supposedly reduces cellulite and wrinkles using radio frequencies to restore and revise the female body into perfect beauty.³⁰ If Mattel’s Barbie doll may be understood as a contemporary iteration of Venus (for over half a century, her emphatic femininity has been marketed successfully in 140 countries as an icon of ideal beauty³¹), then even the women who try to transform themselves into human Barbie dolls—such as Ukrainian model Valeria Lukyanova and American self-styled surgery consultant Cindy Jackson—are also following the literalization of the Pygmalion mythos with a similar literalization of the birth of Venus.³²

The literalizations of these allusions, however, articulate only half the surgical story. In Ovid’s version of Pygmalion, of course Galatea’s cold

ivory becomes warm flesh. The fixed statue enters the dynamic chronology of human life, thereby giving up the possibility of eternal youth. Within contemporary surgical culture, however, flesh is the artist's medium—not ivory—and the intent is to render it static, to kill the imperfect woman into perfect art.³³ The flesh proves too resistant, however, and the surgically beautified woman is both bound to a lifetime of cosmetic procedures as well as striated with the scars of her transmutation, manifested within Weldon's novel as multiple marks, or "a tracery of fine white lines," all over Ruth's body.³⁴

Thus, as Ruth's multiple procedures spin out over a number of years, the narrator moves away from allusions to Pygmalion and Venus and, instead, evokes freakery—specifically Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Ruth's surgeons evolve into mad scientists, striving to tame nature, to make scientific history. Dr. Black's wife even starts to call him Dr. Frankenstein, and, on the eve of Ruth's final surgery, a violent electrical storm first takes out the power and then a lightning strike seems to strengthen Ruth, now a kind of "creature," on the operating table. As the narrator comments, "Dr. Black, who had dropped the image of Venus on her conch ... was heard to refer to [Ruth] as Frankenstein's monster, something that needed lightning to animate it and get it moving."³⁵

Linking Ruth's surgical body to a Frankensteinian creature offers two important ideas for Weldon's novel. First, this renaming recasts Ruth's body as generic, not specific—a mere copy of the beautiful. As Mrs. Black quips to Dr. Black, "[S]he looks much like anyone else You and your friends aren't doctors. You are reductionists."³⁶ Weldon deliberately creates a humorous amalgam of Pygmalion, Galatea, Venus, and Frankenstein's monster in a kind of recursive, comedic duplication of allusional pieces and parts, thereby making even her own novel a surgical pastiche: a stitched-together text not so unlike a creature itself.

Yet the final image of Ruth offered in Weldon's *She-Devil* isn't that she's copy or a clone. She becomes a beauty zombie, the very sort of creature Frankenstein's monster also becomes in the film versions by Whale—a creature both inarticulate and violent, "feeding" off the collective fears of others and "infecting" them with its rage. For Ruth's body beautiful is ultimately a reanimate body: a zombie version of her husband's mistress, Mary Fisher. By the end of the book, this beauty zombie has managed to imprison and humiliate her philandering husband, kill off the actual Mary Fisher, move into Mary's house, and take Mary's place as an undead copy. Ruth, as the reanimated Mary, even gets a publisher interested in her manuscript of a new romance novel. The last two lines of *She-Devil* underscore how Weldon uses these ironic allusions

to flip the idea of living art into an undead abomination. The narrator says that Ruth is "a lady of six foot two, who had tucks taken in her legs. A comic turn, turned serious."³⁷

This potential seriousness of zombie beauty—meaning to take seriously a mindless, lethal beauty regime that wounds and infects as it consumes and spreads—is at least one of the somber consequences of actual plastic surgeries that control women's bodies under a tyranny of Western beauty. If one walks down any urban street in any major metropolis worldwide, the thin, tall, buxom, small-nosed, round-eyed woman one will see on billboards and storefronts is not only a clone but also a zombie—dead, mute, and multiplying. Importantly, too, this beauty zombie isn't merely fictional, which again points to Weldon's brilliant attempt to literalize metaphor by literalizing allusion. Across the globe, surgeons are torturing and killing—and then recycling and reanimating—living tissue in the name of loveliness. In Japan, a nerve is severed behind some women's knees to "repair" what the Japanese refer to as radish-shaped, or *daikon-ashi*, calves. The muscles atrophy and reduce the calves to super-slim proportions. In various countries across Africa, some women ask for "designer vaginas." Plastic surgeons are plumping up their labia majora with injections of fat, including tissue harvested from cadavers. And in China, some women wish to be taller, so surgeons are sawing their shin bones in half, having the bone removed, metal braces affixed, and then stretching their shins painfully into longer legs as they heal—which results in a kind of shuffling, zombielike gait for many months.³⁸

In other words, Ruth's zombie body isn't merely an allusion to Dr. Frankenstein's creature and the zombie spin-offs Shelley's novel instigated. Rather, its more important referent is the real-world, undead beauty body in any contemporary workshop of filthy creation. Fay Weldon's main character, then, is both fictive and factual, idea and artifact, alive and dead, metaphoric and literal. If seen as a humorous archetype stitched out of metaphoric allusions to metamorphosis, the image of Ruth is as seemingly harmless as a romance novel. Yet if Ruth is understood as a figure fashioned out of composite surgeries occurring in the lived experience of contemporary beauty bodies, she comes to represent the comic-turned-serious that simultaneously consumes as it infects its readers.

Flesh Fictions: Plastic surgery as performance

To extend this idea of a surgical body that is both dead and alive, fictive and factual, within the realm of popular culture, an obvious starting point

is reality TV shows, particularly those in the U.S. and U.K. Since the debut of *Survivor* in 1997, reality television has become enormously popular, and transatlantic shows that feature "actual" plastic surgeries are numerous, such as *The Swan*, *I Want a Famous Face*, *Plastic Surgery Live*, *The Only Way is Essex*, *Extreme Makeover* and *Plastic Wives*. In walking a supposed line between the real and the imaginary, these shows carnivalize plastic surgery, dissolving boundaries between the flesh-and-blood body and the body of fiction and fantasy.

As a side note, it's worth pointing out that the carnivalization of such surgeries isn't new. In a style worthy of P. T. Barnum, J. Howard Crum performed at least two facelifts in public, most famously in the Grand Ballroom of New York City's Pennsylvania Hotel on March 12, 1931.³⁹ Both the *New York Times* and the *New Republic* covered this event, in which a sixty-something actor, Martha Petelle, underwent a facelift operation that, in the words of the *New Republic's* journalist, seemed "as easy as peeling a banana."⁴⁰ In addition, there were also early contests in which plain-faced, everyday women could compete for free surgery and a chance at changing themselves into celebrity swans. One example is the *New York Daily Mirror's* "Homely Girl" contest from 1924.⁴¹

To theatricalize plastic surgery is to turn beauty's body into a kind of "fact fantasy"—or a "flesh fiction." For much of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, this flesh fiction has been focused on iterating conventional attractiveness—hence *I Want a Famous Face* articulates this desire to mimic celebrity beauty. And yet, akin to Ruth's body in Weldon's comically serious romance-horror novel, there is now the rise of another kind of flesh fiction, one that celebrates the surgical monster not as a Gothic embodiment of cultural anxiety but as a new articulation—and celebration—of horrific gorgeousness.

When H. G. Wells wrote about the possibilities of plasticity in 1895, he prophesized that "we may imagine as possible in the future, operators, armed with antiseptic surgery ... taking living creatures and moulding them into the most amazing forms; it may be, even reviving the monsters of mythology ... in flesh and blood."⁴² That future is now. Mythological figures—heroes, heroines, monsters—are being written on and into the surgical body.

Take, for instance, the French performance artist Orlan. Since 1990, she has undergone nine plastic surgeries, each directed as a performance within a surgical theater—replete with back-up dancers and surgeons wearing designer costumes—and each with a philosophical, religious, or aesthetic theme. Calling these events "Carnal Art," Orlan's surgical performances expose what actually happens in that interstitial space

between Before and After. Viewers gaze upon her dissected body, revealing the violence that is necessary to alter and restrict the female flesh into hegemonic beauty standards.

From 1990 to 1995, Orlan's performance-surgeries rewrote the feminine of Western art onto her own body. One procedure altered her forehead to shape it into the high brow of da Vinci's "Mona Lisa," while another changed her chin to be more in keeping with Botticelli's goddess in his "Birth of Venus." These modifications were not, according to Orlan, an attempt to achieve ideal Western beauty. "I tried to use surgery not to better myself or become a younger version of myself," she explains, "but to work on the concept of image and surgery the other way around."⁴³ In 1993, Orlan asked a surgeon to take implants that he would normally use to enhance a woman's cheeks and insert them under her forehead. Again, she claims that, in growing surgical horns, she wasn't trying to alter the cultural idea of beauty, per se. "I am not sure I can change such a thing," she said when interviewed by *The Guardian* in 2009, "but I can produce images that are different from those we find in comics, video games, magazines and TV shows. There are other ways to think about one's body and one's beauty. If you were to describe me without anyone being able to see me, [that person] would think I am a monster But if [a person] see[s] me, that could perhaps change."⁴⁴

Orlan is transforming her body into a living fiction, into words (and paintings) made flesh. The distinction here is important: Orlan is not copying a global standard of plastic femininity, which, of course, is another kind of fiction, an imitative and often punishing one. Rather, she is using her body as a text, making allusions to various recognized characters—Venus, the Mona Lisa—and literally inscribing them onto her body to create her own fleshy monster, an amalgam of prized body parts from these figures. Orlan is both the creature and the mad scientist. In fact, she insists upon staying awake for her performance-surgeries, directing them as they occur. She is also both the author and the living novel. Her surgical body is her story.

As a cultural metaphor, then, it's possible for plastic surgery to be something other than a narrative of magical transformation or one of oppression that, as Susan Bordo has said, feminists must resist.⁴⁵ On the other hand, however, plastic surgery also does not have to be what feminist theorist Kathy Davis has framed as surgical empowerment: women moving from objects to subjects, becoming more self-assured and feeling more "normal" after they tame their wayward bodies into everydayness on the operating table.⁴⁶ Instead, Orlan represents a beauty that is the opposite of "normal," what critic Karen Macfarlane has called a

"monstrous iconicity" in which beauty and monstrosity are overlaid within a single body as an object of new desire.⁴⁷

In 2013, Orlan decided to sue the American pop singer Lady Gaga for carnal copyright, specifically for images appearing in Gaga's music video "Born This Way" and for implants that Gaga wore to promote the album of the same name.⁴⁸ In this homage to—and a deconstruction of—the Before / After surgical sequence, Gaga's After image appears first, while Orlan's After comes after After—meaning her own post-surgical After body is re-presented as the now, perhaps as a kind of argument through sequencing that insists Orlan's After is, ironically, the original.⁴⁹ There are other paradoxes embedded within this image as well. Gaga's implants here must be fake—since she manages to make them appear and disappear at will—and yet when asked about them in 2011, Gaga denied that they were a kind of surgical or cosmetic modification. "[T]hey're not prosthetics," she insisted. "They're my bones They've always been inside of me, but I have been waiting for the right time to reveal to the universe who I truly am."⁵⁰

A significant aspect of Gaga's "Born This Way" video is the collapse of bodily binaries, including the organic, "born this way" body versus the modified one. Although Gaga says that she herself has never had any plastic surgery, the performance she engages creates a changeful and composite body that presents itself as surgically altered. Viewers gaze at Gaga's body through surgical eyes, which strangely map the surgical onto a body that may or may not have gone under the knife.

Said another way, Gaga has taken Orlan's somatic transformations of the flesh—yet another literalization, yet this time speaking to a playfulness of identity that plastic surgery has the possibility to engender, that of a "beautiful monster"—and has turned these transformations back into metaphor. Gaga's 2011 video "Born this Way" celebrates feminine monstrosity as a re-birth into an egalitarian world of horror-splendor hybrids. This rupture of traditional beauty standards at precisely the same time that Gaga (or, rather, Gaga's body) also adheres to them creates visual dissonance and uncertainty. The not-surgical body that is passing as plastic insists that monstrous beauty is—like traditional beauty—merely a performance of a cultural aesthetic and one that's just as valid. Thus, in what transgender theorist J. Jack Halberstam has called "gaga feminism," to "go gaga" is to embody both surgical beauty and monstrosity without necessarily undergoing corporeal change.⁵¹

To further confuse bodily limits and beauty systems, Gaga brings inside "Born This Way" one body that is widely known to be modified. For part of the video, Gaga, wearing skeleton makeup and a tuxedo, grinds

against "Zombie Boy" Rick Genest, a man who has a skeleton tattooed across his entire body and face. The viewer is thus presented with both a surgically modified body and a made-up body at once, with no seeming difference between them, except that Gaga stages femininity with her long, pink ponytail while Genest performs masculinity with his hairless head and square physique. Genest, of course, is living his rejection of beauty culture; his body is a literal and figurative anarchy against beauty codes. Gaga, however, is enacting such a rejection—as is clear when, in other dancing scenes, she rejects the rejection, gyrating in a tiny bikini-like costume, visually suggesting that what she, Stephanie Germanotta, was born with (what "God" or nature happened to give her) is almost exactly what plastic surgery hopes to achieve. Gaga resists beauty hegemony and reifies it all at once.

J. Jack Halberstam argues that Gaga's beautiful monstrosity is a new kind of identity politics. "Gaga feminism," he writes, "or the feminism ... of the phony, the unreal, and the speculative, is simultaneously a monstrous outgrowth of the unstable concept of 'woman' in feminist theory, a celebration of the joining of femininity to artifice, and a refusal of the mushy sentimentalism that has been siphoned into the category of womanhood."⁵² Halberstam urges his readers—particularly young feminists—to embrace this brave new world. The word made image made flesh made image made word.

Conclusion

So—where does this idea of "flesh fictions" leave plastic surgery as a powerful and pervasive cultural metaphor? It's possible that traditional beautification surgery is now a master narrative that, for lack of a better phrase, "flesh fictions" or "gaga surgeries" disrupt. With flesh-and-blood plastics existing as monstrous characters within the real of day-to-day life—such as the body modifiers Stalking Cat or Lizardman or, of course, Lady Gaga herself—whether that plastic is somatic or cosmetic, it potentially turns the world into one whopping, complex novel inhabited by billions of fictional characters busily making and remaking themselves into beautiful Venuses and horrific Frankensteinian monsters.⁵³ And if the surgical turns material, lived experience into a kind of real-world novel, this means that, potentially, all subjects experience their bodies as nothing more than fictive, available for endless transformation, and thus identity itself becomes endlessly plastic in this postmodern moment. For to be plastic is to collapse distinctions between the real and the fictive, the past and the present, the natural and the artificial, the female and the male, and

to demand whether there can be, anymore, a body that isn't surgical—and whether or not that's a loss.

Notes

¹ "ISAPS International Survey on Aesthetic/Cosmetic Procedures Performed in 2011," *International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery* (ISAPS, 2011), <http://www.isaps.org/Media/Default/global-statistics/ISAPS-Results-Procedures-2011.pdf>. Accessed 10-10-2013.

² "Top 5 Cosmetic Surgeries by Gender," *Cosmetic Surgery National Data Bank Statistics 2012* (American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2012), <http://www.statista.com/study/18061/us-cosmetic-surgery-data-2012/>. Accessed 10-12-2013.

³ Virginia L. Blum, *Flesh Wounds: The Culture of Cosmetic Surgery* (Berkeley, 2003), 44.

⁴ Elizabeth Haiken, *Venus Envy: A History of Cosmetic Surgery* (Baltimore, 1997), 10, 177.

⁵ Susan Bordo gives a telling example in her article "The Empire of Images": "Until television was introduced [to Fiji] in 1995, the islands had no reported cases of eating disorders. In 1998, three years after programs from the United States and Britain began broadcasting there, 62 percent of the girls surveyed reported dieting. The anthropologist Anne Becker was surprised by the change; she had thought that Fijian aesthetics, which favor voluptuous bodies, would 'withstand' the influence of media images. Becker hadn't yet understood that we live in an empire of images and that there are no protective borders." Susan Bordo, "The Empire of Images in Our World of Bodies," *The Chronicle Review* (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 19 December 2003), <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v50/i17/17b00601.htm>. Accessed 10-2-2013.

⁶ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (New York, 1995; first published 1818), 34.

⁷ See Virginia Blum's article in which she discusses how Hollywood star culture creates and maintains an endless surgical desire for a famous face. "Cosmetic surgery leads to more surgery; it's as simple as that" (124). Blum considers how this hyper-surgicalized face represents a knife blade (so to speak) between mass media's images of beauty and monstrosity. Virginia Blum, "Becoming the Other Woman: The Psychic Drama of Cosmetic Surgery," *Frontiers* 26:2 (2005): 104-31.

⁸ One such book is Katharine A. Phillips' *The Broken Mirror: Understanding and Treating Body Dysmorphic Disorder* (Oxford and New York, 1996).

⁹ For instance, see Sheila Jeffreys, *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West* (London and New York, 2005); Alex Kuczynski, *Beauty Junkies: Inside our \$15 Billion Obsession with Cosmetic Surgery* (New York, 2006); Victoria Pitts-Taylor, *Surgery Junkies: Wellness and Pathology in Cosmetic Culture* (Piscataway, NJ, 2007); and Bethanne Snodgrass, *The Makeover Myth: The Real Story Behind Cosmetic Surgery, Injectables, Lasers, Gimmicks, and Hype, and What You Need to Know to Stay Safe* (New York, 2006).

¹⁰ John Staige Davis, "The Story of Plastic Surgery," *Annals of Surgery* 113:5 (May 1941): 641-56.

¹¹ For a brilliant, short history of Ellis and his experiments on homosexuality, see Jennifer Terry's essay, "Anxious Slippages between 'Us' and 'Them': A Brief History of the Scientific Search for Homosexual Bodies" in her own collection *Deviant Bodies*, co-edited by Jacqueline Urla (Bloomington, IN, 1995), 129-69. For more on Galton and his use of photographic "composite portraits" to determine deviance in criminals, prostitutes, and the insane, see Ronald Thomas' article, "Making Darkness Visible: Capturing the Criminal and Observing the Law in Victorian Photography and Detective Fiction," *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, ed. Carol Christ and John Jordan (Berkeley and London, 1995), 134-68.

¹² Sander L. Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery* (Princeton, 1999), 100, 112, 125.

¹³ H. G. Wells, "The Limits of Individual Plasticity," *H. G. Wells: Early Writings in Science and Science Fiction*, ed. Robert M. Philmus and David Y. Hughes (Berkeley, 1975), 36.

¹⁴ Although reconstructive surgery was first performed in India around 600 BCE when a procedure was developed to rebuild a nose from a patient's cheek, it is with Gasparo Tagliacozzi in Renaissance Italy that modern plastic surgery came into being. In 1586, Tagliacozzi detailed how he remade a nose from a skin flap, one that was gradually transferred from his patient's upper arm to the face. It is this procedure that surgeons such as Gillies and Davis perfected and extended. See Haiken, *Venus Envy*, 5, 18.

¹⁵ "Plastic," *The Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://www.oed.com>. Accessed 10-19-2013.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Indeed, the Greek word "kosmetikos" originally meant "to arrange or adorn." "Cosmetic," *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Accessed 10-11-2013.

¹⁸ That said, in recent years cosmetic surgeons in Europe and America have attempted to establish their own professional organizations and other gatekeeping measures, contending that "traditional plastic surgeons are simply trying to protect their lucrative trade" by excluding doctors who aren't certified in specific ways. See "Ear Doctors Performing Face-Lifts? It Happens," *The New York Times*, 30 January 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/31/health/non-specialists-expand-into-lucrative-cosmetic-surgery-procedures.html?_r=0. Accessed 10-8-2013.

¹⁹ Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful*.

²⁰ John Howard Crum, *The Making of a Beautiful Face: Or, Face Lifting Unveiled* (New York, 1928), 5.

²¹ In this last iteration of the term, I find it ironic that many middle- and working-class consumers now use their credit cards as "beauty banks" to finance their elective surgeries: buying the plastic body parts of beauty's imaginary with the fantasy of plastic money. All of these definitions and examples come from "Plastic," *Oxford English Dictionary*.

²² *Mean Girls*, dir. Mark Waters (Paramount, 2004).

²³ For instance, see: "China's 'Artificial Beauty' Show," *BBC News* (12 December 2004), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4090741.stm>. Accessed 8-22-2014. Also, see Pablo Gorondi, "Proud to be Plastic: The 'Improved' Beauty Contest," *The Independent*, 11 October 2009, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/proud-to-be-plastic-the-improved-beauty-contest-1800929.html>. Accessed 8-22-2014.

²⁴ Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley, 1993), 245-46.

²⁵ "Metaphor," *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Accessed 10-23-2013.

²⁶ M. Black, "Visiting the Bottom of the Monstrous World: Allusion as Metaphor in Lawrence," *Cambridge Quarterly* 24:2 (1995): 133.

²⁷ Fay Weldon, *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* (New York, 1983), 257-58.

²⁸ Blum, *Flesh Wounds*, 92-94.

²⁹ Amanda Scherker, "Plastic Surgeon David Matlock Sculpts, Marries his Perfect Woman," *The Huffington Post*, 29 August 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/29/plastic-surgeon-perfect-woman_n_3831854.html. Accessed 5-23-2015.

³⁰ On its website, the company "VenusTreatments.com" offers the "Venus Freeze Treatments" themselves as well as a "Venus Blog" for reading patient testimonials.

³¹ Mary F. Rogers, *Barbie Culture* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA, 1999), 5. It is Rogers who calls Barbie's femininity "emphatic."

³² Moreover, Barbie's plastic flesh, forever young and mostly immobile, also literalizes the postmodern idea that a beautiful, surgically modified woman is a "plastic."

³³ As Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar famously said in their 1979 study, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, "[W]omen must kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been 'killed' into art." *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, 1979), 17.

³⁴ Weldon, *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*, 257.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 271.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 259.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 278.

³⁸ See Jennifer Cognard-Black, "Exporting American Beauty: Plastic Surgery and the New Culture of Worldwide Acceptance," *Beauty and the Breast*, 30 October 2007, <http://www.blogger.com/exporting-american-beauty-plastic-surgery-and-new-culture-worldwide-acceptance>. Accessed 10-29-2013.

³⁹ Haiken, *Venus Envy*, 76-81.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁴¹ This reference to the "Homely Girl" contest comes from Christine Rosen's article "The Democratization of Beauty," *The New Atlantis: A Journal of Technology and Society* (Spring 2004), <http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/the-democratization-of-beauty>. Accessed 10-19-2013.

⁴² Wells, "The Limits of Individual Plasticity," 38-39.

⁴³ Stuart Jeffries, "Orlan's Art of Sex and Surgery," *The Guardian*, 1 July 2009,

<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/jul/01/orlan-performance-artist-carnal-art>. Accessed 1-24-2013.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ See Bordo, "The Empire of Images in Our World of Bodies," and Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*.

⁴⁶ Davis has argued that "[C]osmetic surgery is an intervention in identity. It does not definitely resolve the problems of feminine embodiment, enabling a woman to transcend the constraints of her body; nor is it an unproblematic act of liberation. However, by providing a woman with a different starting position, cosmetic surgery can open up the possibility to renegotiate her relationship to her body and construct a different sense of self. In this way, it intervenes in the disempowering tension of Western feminine embodiment—the entrapment of objectification. Cosmetic surgery can provide the impetus for an individual woman to move from a passive acceptance of herself as nothing but a body to the position of a subject who acts upon the world in and through her body. It is in this sense that cosmetic surgery can, paradoxically, provide an avenue towards becoming an embodied subject rather than an objectified body." Kathy Davis, *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery* (New York, 1994), 113-14.

⁴⁷ Karen Macfarlane, "The Monstrous House of Gaga," *The Gothic in Contemporary Literature and Popular Culture* (2012): 114-34; see 115.

⁴⁸ Lady Gaga admits that sampling and stealing are a central part of her performances. She self-consciously creates a referential aesthetics, so much so that there is a pop culture journalist for MTV, James Montgomery, who writes "cheat sheets" for the many visual allusions within her music videos. See James Montgomery, "Lady Gaga's 'Born This Way' Video: A Pop-Culture Cheat Sheet," *MTV News*, 28 February 2011, <http://www.mtv.com/news/1658903/lady-gaga-born-this-way/>. Accessed 5-23-2015.

⁴⁹ While there are international laws firmly in place that arbitrate textual copyright, the question of visual plagiarism is much murkier. For the image that claims the visual rhetoric of Before / After images, see *Huffpost* in its "Arts & Culture" section: "French Artist Orlan Sues Lady Gaga for Plagiarism," *Huffpost*, 18 June 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/artinfo/french-artist-orlan-sues-_b_3455153.html?. Accessed 5-23-2015.

⁵⁰ Melissa Whitworth, "Explaining Lady Gaga's Prosthetic Horns," *Telegraph*, 4 April 2011, <http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/article/TMG8449130/Explaining-Lady-Gagas-prosthetic-horns.html>. Accessed 5-23-2015.

⁵¹ J. Jack Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (Boston, 2012).

⁵² *Ibid.*, xii-xiii.

⁵³ Images of Lizardman, aka Erik Sprague, can be found at his own website: www.thelizardman.com. He has a self-published book (available for pay-what-you-want download) called *Once More Through the Modified Looking Glass*. Stalking Cat, aka Dennis Avner, died in 2012. Images of him are ubiquitous online.