

The Evolution of Lady Gaga

- And the different performance identities

By
Nanna Ørsløv Andersen

Supervisor
Mia Rendix

Abstract

The overall topic of the thesis is how Lady Gaga thematically expresses performativity and how she performs different identities in order to conclude if she has gone through a change concerning her performance identities from her first studio album and until her latest album. The thesis aims to analyze within a thematic framework on how Lady Gaga expresses performativity and performance identities focusing on gender and sexuality. Besides, it will highlight how she has developed as a performer concerning her identities throughout her work. Moreover, it will analyze whether Lady Gaga is aware of her performativity in her visual appearance. Therefore, this thesis aims to discuss whether Lady Gaga's lyrics and visual appearances have changed since the beginning.

The theoretical framework of the thesis is based on the American philosopher Judith Butler's gender theory about performativity by analyzing Lady Gaga's way of performing performativity in terms of gender, sexuality, and identity in her songs and music videos. Judith Butler's interests lie in the social gender, and she points out that an individual's gender is defined by its performativity. Hence, by working with this theory, it will examine how Lady Gaga's performance identities highlight the fact that Judith Butler claims that gender cannot be determined from the beginning since according to Judith Butler, changes throughout life concerning one's surroundings and behavior.

The methodology framework is based on a thematic analysis by analyzing the lyrics by using a textual analysis in order to examine Lady Gaga's lyrics and choices of words, the way she uses ambiguity, which will be used in order to see how Lady Gaga expresses herself and her gender and sexual identity in the lyrics. In addition, a thematic visual analysis will be the second approach in order to evaluate on Lady Gaga's performances in the music videos.

By using gender studies and the approaches, the results of the analysis will conclude on how Lady Gaga's persona, lyrics, and visual appearances have developed throughout her career. Moreover, the results will show how Lady Gaga challenges her gender and sexual identity by going against the norms set by society, by which Judith Butler argues that gender is constructed.

1. Introduction	4
<i>1.1 This thesis will ultimately answer the following thesis statement</i>	6
2. Becoming Lady Gaga	6
3. The Little Monsters	8
4. Methodology chapter	10
<i>4.1 Definition of the approach</i>	10
<i>4.2 Structure of the analysis</i>	10
5. Theory chapter	11
<i>5.1 The evolution of the feminist waves</i>	11
First and second-wave feminism	12
Third-wave feminism	12
Fourth-wave feminism	13
<i>5.2 Gender Studies</i>	14
Gender	15
Performativity	17
Gender Parody	18
Summary	20
<i>5.3 Popular Culture</i>	20
<i>5.4 Popular Music Culture</i>	22
Fan culture and subculture	22
6. Analysis chapter	24
<i>6.1 Introduction to the analysis</i>	24
<i>6.2 Lady Gaga's three albums and the chosen songs</i>	26
<i>6.3 Performativity in Lady Gaga's lyrics</i>	27
"Just Dance" and "Poker Face"	27
"Born This Way" and "Hair"	30
"Joanne" and "Million Reasons"	34

<i>6.4 Performativity in Lady Gaga's music videos</i>	35
"Poker Face"	35
"Born This Way"	37
"Million Reasons"	40
<i>6.5 Partial conclusion</i>	42
7. Discussion chapter	42
<i>7.1 Introduction to the chapter</i>	42
<i>7.2 Comparative analysis</i>	43
<i>7.3 A critical perspective on the persona of Lady Gaga</i>	46
8. Conclusion	48
9. References	50

1. Introduction

Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta, better known as Lady Gaga, is one of the world's most acclaimed pop stars in contemporary popular and music culture. She has taken the music scene by storm and is showing the world, by her performances, her different identities that are part of the persona of Lady Gaga. However, what is it Lady Gaga does compared to other musicians? Perhaps it is partly due to her Avant Garde costumes and over the top makeup and wigs and her behavior and appearances as well, which are very different compared to other pop stars. No one ever knows what Lady Gaga comes up with next. Lady Gaga is not just a pop star who does many concerts, she is also politically active and she, for example, supports the LGBTQ-community (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) and was a railing against DADT (Don't Ask Don't Tell) (Gray 2012: 181), which indicates that she cares about people who are different and is struggling in society because of having another sexuality. The theorist the thesis aims to work with is the gender theorist Judith Butler who authored the book, *Gender Trouble - Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), who claims that gender is not something that is determined from the beginning, but it is

something that people rather performs in terms of their surroundings and settings. Hence the thesis intends to examine how Lady Gaga performs performativity in terms of gender, sexuality, and identity.

The main focus of the thesis will be to characterize, analyze, and discuss the persona of Lady Gaga by examining her lyrics, visual performances, and her performance identities for the purpose of study how she has changed concerning the way she started to represent herself when she released her first studio album *The Fame* (2008) until her latest studio album *Joanne* (2016). The reason lies in the interest of why an American pop star can achieve remarkably fame by displaying different identities and explicit extreme performances. Lady Gaga stands out from the crowd by playing and challenging gender and sexuality, which is distant from other pop stars.

The thesis will present a chapter named "Becoming Lady Gaga" in order to present Lady Gaga's previous life before she became Lady Gaga. The chapter will involve on how Lady Gaga struggled to achieve fame in a committed industry. The reason for including this chapter is to understand Stefani Germanotta's identity before becoming Lady Gaga. Afterward, a chapter named "The Little Monsters" will be presented in the interest of displaying how Lady Gaga has achieved a fan base and why she has formed them into little monsters. This chapter will be introduced since the fan base has had a great impact of whom Lady Gaga has become and why she has created a persona as Mother Monster. In addition, the chapter "The Little Monsters" will be discussed in the discussion chapter as well. Next, the theory chapter will contain theories about gender studies by working with the American philosopher, Judith Butler, who states, "if gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way" (Butler 1990: 8) which suggests that if gender is a cultural phenomenon, hence anthropological, it has nothing to do how gender will be defined. A presentation of the evolution of the feminist waves will be presented with the purpose of understanding the development, concerning feminism, throughout the decades. Furthermore, popular and music culture will be presented with the intention of distinguishing between high and low culture, since Lady Gaga operates in contemporary popular and music culture. In addition to this, Roy Shuker's theory about fan culture and subculture will be introduced, in order to evaluate in terms of how Lady Gaga has achieved fans. Furthermore, the analysis chapter will examine three of Lady Gaga's albums, wherein two songs and one music video from each album will be studied. The analysis aims to study six songs and three music videos to have enough data but subsequently, for the sake of distinguishing between Lady Gaga's lyrics and visual appearances, concerning her performativity and performance identities, a comparative

analysis will be presented in the discussion chapter. With the intention of being a critic, the discussion chapter will contain a critical perspective on Lady Gaga's persona and her way of using performativity by discussing whether Lady Gaga has an agenda by doing it. Lastly, the thesis will present a conclusion to give a summary on the main points this analysis has found.

1.1 This thesis will ultimately answer the following thesis statement

How does Lady Gaga express performativity in her lyrics and music videos in terms of gender, sexuality, and identity? Moreover, the persona of Lady Gaga will be inspected in order to examine Lady Gaga's different performance identities and how she has developed throughout her career. Thematically, the thesis will inspect an analysis of Lady Gaga for the purpose of identity and gender aspects in her lyrics and visual appearance.

2. Becoming Lady Gaga

Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta was born in New York City on March 28th in 1986. She grew up in an Italian-American home with her father, mother, and sister. The British music journalist Paul Lester has authored the book *Looking for Fame. The Life of a Pop Princess: Lady Gaga* (2010) and writes, "the family was well-off, living on the Upper West Side of Manhattan; as a consequence the Germanottas could afford to send their eldest daughter to a good school: the Convent of the Sacred Heart, the oldest independent girls' school in Manhattan" (Lester 2010: 9).

When in kindergarten, Stefani started to express herself by performing and entertaining teachers, students, and parents. Because of her being into attention and entertaining, her mother Cynthia Germanotta, encouraged Stefani to take piano classes, when she was only four years old (Lester 2010: 10). According to her being into music, Stefani was not just influenced by her mother, but as well by her father Joseph, who introduced her to a number of great artists such as Frank Sinatra, Stevie Wonder, David Bowie, and Elton John. As a result, later on in Lady Gaga's career, she once stated to *Blender* Magazine, "my father used to play records all the time on the record player in the living room. So music was a big part of my family. Theatre became a huge part of my life because of that" (Lester 2010: 10). When the family went out for dinner at fancy Upper West Side restaurants, Stefani would start entertaining by dancing around the table using breadsticks as a baton (Lester 2010: 11).

At school, Stefani once stated that she was classified as the weird girl since she was into doing theatre and entertainment, “I was always a weird girl in school, who did theatre and came to school with lots of red lipstick on or my hair perfectly curled, or whatever I was doing to get attention” (Lester 2010: 12). In addition, Stefani has always been known for her standing-out outfits, and she claims that it all started when she was a teenager. At age thirteen, Stefani got into fashion and discovered the joy of music in a higher sense. To begin with, she mixed different clothing styles together, and it was normal for her to mix up her clothing in order to stand out and show her creativity and interest in fashion, “I wore acid wash jeans, tank tops, sneakers... kind of Fifties, kind of clubby. But I’d mix it up: some days I’d be in fishnets with bright red lips” (Lester 2010: 14). At age seventeen, Stefani got accepted to New York University’s Tisch School of Arts, which was an honor for her parents, because of the low acceptance rates. While attending the university, she was busy with singing- and acting classes, however, she spent most of her evenings doing gigs at bars and coffee shops around the city (Lester 2010: 19). Even though there were many opportunities for Stefani at the university, she felt it was not enough for her, and as a result, she dropped out after just one year. Her reason was, “I like what I like. I don’t like what I don’t like” (Lester 2010: 20). She decided to move from her parents and find a place for herself in order to concentrate on becoming an artist. In order to pay rent, she got different jobs around the city, and besides being a waitress, she was exploring a job as a stripper. At this time Stefani was eighteen years old, and she loved the job, and to this she once stated, “I have a strong sense of my own sexuality. I love the naked human body and I have a huge body confidence” (Lester 2010: 22). In contrast, her father was not happy about his daughter working as a stripper among go-go dancers and drag queens, however, Stefani was happy about it since the time of her life was crucial to her career, “I loved being a stripper. To me it was all about the act, it was all about art. I wanted to be the most outrageous performer on the stage. People would come to the clubs just to see what I was going to do that night. I found the whole thing amazing. I found the idea of taking my clothes off onstage incredibly liberating. I have absolutely no problem with my sexuality and any woman who wants to get more confident with her body should try stripping because it just makes you understand the power your body has” (Lester 2010: 23). A year after, Stefani was playing in a band named *The Stefani Germanotta Band* (known as SGBand). By November 2005, the band started working with producer Joe Vulpis, who helped the band working on a five-track demo known as the “Words EP” (Lester 2010: 32). The demo contained a ballad, which Stefani beforehand already had performed live in the street on NBC’s Channel 4, with the host stating, “she is only nineteen. And

what a voice” (Lester 2010: 32). Later on, the band fell apart, but Stefani wanted to move forward and wanted to become an icon, “it was around this time Stefani Germanotta began to slowly shed her old skin and toy with the idea of being reborn as someone completely different, someone far removed from the nice middle-class Italian-American girl” (Lester 2010: 34). Subsequently, she teamed up with the producer Rob Fusari who was used to pop divas in terms of earlier working with Destiny’s Child and Britney Spears. Fusari helped Stefani getting in touch with other producers; as a result, she got a deal but was later on canceled. Because of this, she started doing drugs, however, she decided to stop her addiction in order to continue her way of becoming a star without any failure, “I did it myself. I have such a fear of failure. I didn’t want anything to make me fail. So I stopped” (Lester 2010: 27). Another reason was because of her late aunt Joanne, who died when she was only nineteen. Even though Stefani has never met Joanne, she still has an influence on her according to her career, “I realized Joanne had instilled her spirit in me. She was a painter and a poet, and I had a spiritual vision that I had to finish her business. I have never met her, but she’s been one of the most important figures in my life” (Lester 2010: 28). Nonetheless Stefani was in a dark period she still maintained contact Fusari, and as a result, he linked Stefani to the producer RedOne, the Moroccan-Swedish producer/songwriter. Subsequently, they started to write songs together and it was together with RedOne she got the name Lady Gaga (Lester 2010: 41). In 2008, she released her first studio album *The Fame* (2008). Besides her first album, she has then released six other albums.

Today, Lady Gaga is one of the biggest pop stars, and besides writing music, she is an activist within politics and is an influential person in public in terms of her statements and supports about gender, sexuality, and rights. Stefani’s rebirth as Lady Gaga has been seen as a triumph of feminist determination (Lester 2010: 45). In summary, Lady Gaga has been through a rough journey in terms of becoming Lady Gaga. However, at an early age, there were signs of the colorful and exhibitionist adult which the world acknowledges today as Lady Gaga.

3. The Little Monsters

Not only has Lady Gaga established Haus of Gaga, which is a team who collaborates with her during any occasions. She also created a fan base, which she has named The Little Monsters. Since fans started to become aware of the global icon and her addictive hits, Lady Gaga started a fandom where the fans had the opportunity to follow her and her music in order for them to be a part of her

life. Mathieu Deflem who authors the book *Lady Gaga and the Sociology of Fame: The Rise of a Pop Star in an Age of Celebrity* (2016) writes, “Lady Gaga has a specific and distinct understanding of her fans, whom she refers to as Little Monsters, an expression the singer herself coined during her 2009 summer tour, using the term for the first time” (Deflem 2016: 127). Lady Gaga created the nickname, and it developed into her calling out the name during live shows and began making references to The Little Monsters in her songs as well. Deflem argues that it is impossible to be famous without an audience; however, it is possible to be famous without fans (Deflem 2016: 121). As just mentioned, Lady Gaga started to refer to her fans, during live shows, as The Little Monsters in the summer of 2009 and Deflem writes, “at the time, Lady Gaga was preparing the release of her album *The Fame Monster* (2009) and professed to a fascination with monsters. The Little Monster designation has since been adopted by many of her most devoted fans as well as by other members of the Lady Gaga audience referring to that particularly dedicated segment of her wider fandom” (Deflem 2016: 127). Since then, it also became popular among fans to refer Lady Gaga as Mother Monster (Deflem 2016: 128).

By creating the fan base The Little Monsters, Lady Gaga also created a subculture, in terms of her followers share the same interest, which is the icon Lady Gaga and her music. As Roy Shuker states in his work *Understanding Popular Music* (2013), “that youth subcultures appropriate and innovate musical forms and styles as a basis for their identity” (Shuker 2013: 206), which means that Lady Gaga’s fan base has created an identity in terms of what Lady Gaga sings about and the way she expresses herself throughout different personas in her performance. In addition, Deflem writes, “Further strengthening the collective identity of her most devoted fan base, Lady Gaga also gave her Little Monsters a unique gesture of greeting and identification, the so-called monster claw” (Deflem 2016: 128). Lady Gaga picked it up after spotting a fan that did the greeting to another fan among the audience, and since then Lady Gaga has used it as a greeting to her Little Monsters (Deflem 2016: 128). Moreover, in order to show her part in fandom, Lady Gaga made a manifesto, which she named *Manifesto of Little Monsters* and in the manifesto, she expresses the emotional nature of the bond with her fans, “when you’re lonely, I’ll be lonely” (Deflem 2016: 129).

The reason for her to create this so-called subculture of fans seems to be essential of whom she has become, but also how her fans have become. It can be argued that she wants to create a certain feeling for her fans, where they have the opportunity to feel that they are part of something special and have a shared identity. First of all, it forms an “us” and “them” narrative, where one is either a Lady Gaga fan or is not. Secondly, by having the group The Little Monsters, the fans can connect

with each other online in order to gather together and discuss and inspire each other. This indicates that by creating fandom, she created a family in terms of The Little Monsters is able to support each other around the world.

4. Methodology chapter

4.1 Definition of the approach

In order to answer the thesis statement, it has been crucial to study the six chosen lyrics and watch the three chosen music videos by Lady Gaga. With the intention of including theoretical aspects in the thesis, it has been essential to study and understand gender theory by Judith Butler and theories about popular and music culture in order to analyze how Lady Gaga expresses performativity and how Lady Gaga's music and her as an icon is a part of contemporary popular and music culture, wherein high and low culture will be determined. The approach this thesis has used in order to answer the thesis statement is a textual and thematically analysis. In order to show what the analysis claims it has been essential to use screenshots from the music videos, which can be found in the appendix, in order to give a clearer understanding of what the analysis claims. Gender theory has helped the thesis to maintain an understanding of Lady Gaga's performance identity in terms of the way Lady Gaga expresses performativity in her songs and uses her body language in the music videos wherein it will be analyzed how she expresses gender, sexuality, and identity. In short, the approach is a fundamental literal textual analysis, and a thematically analysis combined with gender theory wherein the fundamental aspects when working with gender theory will be Judith Butler's definition of performativity.

4.2 Structure of the analysis

The analysis contains six chosen songs and three music videos by Lady Gaga from three different albums. The first section in the analysis will present an introduction of the analysis, where it will introduce in a detailed manner, what the analysis will contain. The second section will present Lady Gaga's three albums and the chosen songs the analysis will work with. Moving on, the next section, which has the headline "Performativity in Lady Gaga's lyrics", will present a section of "Just Dance" and "Poker Face" from Lady Gaga's debut album *The Fame* (2008). Subsequently "Born This Way" and "Hair" from her second studio album *Born This Way* (2011) will be analyzed. Lastly, two songs from Lady Gaga's latest album *Joanne* (2016) will be analyzed, which are "Joanne" and "Million Reasons". The next headline named "Performativity in Lady Gaga's music

videos” will analyze three music videos from the three albums. The music videos are “Poker Face”, “Born This Way”, and “Million Reasons”.

Furthermore, the discussion chapter will contain a comparative analysis of the three albums in order to analyze any changes in her lyrics and music videos. Moreover, an introduction to Laura Mulvey’s essay concerning the male gaze will be introduced in order to discuss whether Lady Gaga is aware of herself as an object. Subsequently, a critical perspective on Judith Butler’s gender theory will be discussed in order to deliberate if it is just an act that Lady Gaga does in order to maintain her fan base.

In the analysis, the theory by Judith Butler about performativity will be used wherein the analysis will examine the six chosen songs by using a textual analysis by analyzing choices of words, meanings, and expressions in order to show how Lady Gaga expresses gender, sexuality, and identity. When analyzing the three chosen music videos, the analysis will study Lady Gaga’s explicit body language and personas.

5. Theory chapter

5.1 The evolution of the feminist waves

In order to introduce the American gender theorist Judith Butler, who operates within the third-wave in terms of her postmodern thinking, it seems crucial to present the different historical feminist waves, from the first-wave to the fourth-wave, in order to understand them correctly, and how they have changed throughout time. Since the third-wave feminism has been influenced by academic investigation of queer theory, and as mentioned by Judith Butler, the third-wave feminism section will be the longest.

The section below will give a brief historical description and explanation of the feminist waves in order to distinguish between each wave and the movement’s development. Besides presenting the first, second, and third-wave, and introduction of the fourth-wave will be presented since it is in contemporary development. The first and second-wave feminism will be introduced by the work of the American professor Martha Rampton from Pacific University in Oregon, USA. Next, the third-wave feminism will be presented on the basis of the political researcher R. Claire Snyder. Since the fourth-wave is in contemporary development, and introduction of the fourth-wave will be presented at the end. The doctoral researcher at Glasgow University, Ealasaid Munro, has been examining the feminist waves and has specialized in the fourth-wave in her work, *Feminism: A Fourth Wave* (2013).

First and second-wave feminism

Professor Martha Rampton from Pacific University in Oregon, USA, states in her article *Four Waves of Feminism* (2008), “the first-wave of feminism took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, emerging out of an environment of urban industrialism and liberal, socialist politics” (Rampton, 2008). Moreover, she writes that it was essential for women to have a voice and opportunities in society, and as a result, the movement focused on suffrage, in order for the women to achieve equality. With regard to achieving the goal, Rampton explains, “the wave formally began at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 when three hundred men and women rallied to the cause of equality for women” (Rampton, 2008).

The second-wave feminism transpired in the 1960s and continued into the ‘90s. In her article, she states, “this wave unfolded in the context of the anti-war and civil rights movements and the growing self-consciousness of a variety of minority groups around the world (Rampton, 2008). In contrast to the first-wave, the second-wave movement had women of color who attended the movement and fought for feminism and equality. To this, Rampton writes, “feminists spoke of women as a social class and coined phrases such as “the personal is political” and “identity politics” in an effort to demonstrate that race, class, and gender oppression are all related” (Rampton, 2008). Moreover, the second-wave feminism women developed “women-only spaces”, since women working together “create a special dynamic that is not possible in mixed groups” (Rampton, 2008). In the end of the article, Rampton explains, “the term eco-feminism was coined to capture the sense that because of their (women) biological connection to earth and lunar cycles, women were natural advocates of environmentalism” (Rampton, 2008).

Third-wave feminism

The third-wave feminism began in the ‘90s and was informed by postmodern thinking (Snyder, 2008: 183). The political researcher, R. Claire Snyder, states in her essay, *What is Third-Wave Feminism? A new Direction Essay* (2008) that the third-wave feminism is associated with young women who contradict the previous generation in order to have a wave of their own. Snyder explains, “third-wave feminists often argue against a straw woman – a frumpy, humorless, antisex caricature of second-wave feminists” (Snyder, 2008: 182). The distinctive aspects between the second and the third-wave feminism are that “the third-wave feminism makes three important tactical moves that respond to a series of theoretical problems within the second-wave” (Snyder, 2008: 175). Snyder states,

First, in response to the collapse of the category of “women,” the third-wave foregrounds personal narratives that illustrate an intersectional and multiperspectival version of feminism. Second, as a consequence of the rise of postmodernism, third-wavers embrace multivocality over synthesis and action over theoretical justification. Finally, in response to the divisiveness of the sex wars, third-wave feminism emphasizes an inclusive and nonjudgmental approach that refuses to police the boundaries of the feminist political (Snyder 2008: 175-176).

The third-wavers want their own type of feminism that speaks their challenges they face, and to this Snyder states, “young women today face a world colonized by the mass media and information technology, and they see themselves as more sophisticated and media savvy than feminists from their mother’s generation. A lot of third-wave literature emphasizes the importance of cultural production and critique, focusing particular attention on female pop icons, hip-hop music, and beauty culture, rather than on traditional politics per se” (Snyder, 2008: 178). In other words, the third-wavers are having a critical perspective about every message the mass media sends.

Fourth-wave feminism

The doctoral researcher Ealasaid Munro claims in her article *Feminism: A Fourth Wave* (2013), “that the internet itself has enabled a shift from “third-wave” to “fourth-wave” feminism. What is certain is that the internet has created a “call-out” culture, in which sexism or misogyny can be “called out” and challenged” (Munro 2013: 23). Subsequently, “it is increasingly clear that the internet has facilitated the creation of a global community of feminists who use the internet both for discussion and activism” (Munro 2013: 23). In other words, because of the media and the internet, the focus appears in film, music, television, and literature, and so on.

In other words, the fourth-wave feminism deals with a focus on female empowerment in terms of women want and can express and expose themselves by using social media platforms. Moreover, this wave wants to make it clear that it is acceptable for women to expose themselves and still be looked at as smart women. According to Munro, the internet and the media have a significant influence on the fourth-wave, since it can help to express their feelings and statements by discussion and activism (Munro 2013: 23).

5.2 Gender Studies

To begin with, it seems crucial to define the term queer, since it is a benchmark to gender studies. The term queer has different interpretations to each individual, and it can be interpreted to have a negative effect on people who do not follow the normativity of being hetero. Even though the term is associated with people, who do not live up to the cultural norms set by society, in terms of their sexuality, Julie L. Nagoshi, Craig T. Nagoshi, and Stephan/ie Brzuzy write in their work *Gender and Sexual Identity. Transcending Feminist and Queer Theory* (2014), “Queer is an identity, a theory about non-heteronormative sexuality, and a theoretical orientation for how identity is to be understood. The term queer can refer to “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically (Nagoshi et al. 2014: 22). When discussing queer theory, it is essential to mention that it is a critique of society, which implementation is to be a critic to society in terms of the way society form normative gender binary. Being queer and queering includes standing up for everyone in contemporary society, no matter gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, and so forth.

Queer and gender studies refer to a range of work and theorists; however, there is one theorist who cannot be avoided in this connection. Even though there are many academics that have put much work into their philosophical theories, Judith Butler can be considered as the mother of queer and gender studies, since she seeks to break down the normative gender binary. Butler’s celebrated work *Gender Trouble - Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) is the most acknowledge work from Judith Butler, where she, from a postmodern perspective, is questioning the concept of gender and challenging the belief regarding that the biological gender is permanent by using a poststructuralist approach to gender, sexuality, and identity. *Gender Trouble – Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) explains that gender is only understood as a result of the performances that each person enacts every day, and not their exterior markers as appearance, behavior, and general looks. In other words, gender is not something one is, but rather something one does, and to this, she adds that gender does not proceed from one’s sex as a biological determinant. However, because of heteronormativity, Judith Butler claims, “when the relevant “culture” that “constructs” gender is understood in terms of such a law or set of laws, then it seems that gender is as determined and fixed as it was under the biology-is-destiny formulation. In such a case, not biology, but culture, becomes destiny” (Butler 1990: 8). In other words, Judith Butler claims that the culture determines one gender from the beginning because of norms in society, which means that gender is constructed in the matter of boys should, for example, be dressed in blue and girls should be dressed

in pink. Furthermore, Judith Butler argues that people are not to be looked at or observed collectively, since every individual has their own unique identity and mindset, and to this, she states, “although the unproblematic unity of “women” is often invoked to construct a solidarity of identity, a split is introduced in the feminist subject by the distinction between sex and gender. Originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex” (Butler 1990: 6). When gender is constructed, it creates a determination of gender meanings.

Besides, Judith Butler contradicts Simone de Beauvoir, who suggests in her work *The Second Sex* (1949) that one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one, and that gender can take on some other gender. “Beauvoir is clear that one “becomes” a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion to become one. And clearly, the compulsion does not come from “sex”. There is nothing in her account that guarantees that the “one” who becomes a woman is necessarily female” (Butler 1990: 8). The argument by Simone de Beauvoir will be covered and discussed by Judith Butler in more detail in the section below.

Ultimately, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble – Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) is rooted in French theory; however, Judith Butler makes it clear that the text is at a distance from the life of theory in France. On the account, the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, has inspired Judith Butler concerning his term about power. To this, she states, “for Foucault, the body is not “sexed” in any significant sense prior to its determination within a discourse through which it becomes invested with an “idea” of natural or essential sex. The body gains meaning within discourse only in the context of power relations” (Butler 1990: 92). In other words, one individual within a discourse excluded or integrates elements that do not fit the norms in society.

Gender

Before introducing what Judith Butler claims about gender, it seems necessary to give an explanation of the differences between sex and gender, in order to understand the distinction fully. Moreover, the explanation of the term construction/constructed will be covered, since it is a term, Judith Butler often uses when she argues that gender is not decided upon from one's physical sex. Constructed or discursively constructed, means that society has formed a cultural artifact, and something has become more asserted to be normal. Judith Butler writes, “on some accounts, the notion that gender is constructed suggests a certain determinism of gender meanings inscribed on anatomically differentiated bodies, where those bodies are understood as passive recipients of an

inexorable cultural law” (Butler 1990: 8). When Judith Butler mentions sex, she refers to one's biological sex. Butler distinguishes sex from gender, which are two different aspects because Judith Butler argues that gender is socially constructed and is referred to social roles in society, which is based on the sex of the person. In terms of what Judith Butler states when she argues that gender is constructed, is that people's social gender acts differently in society and construct their own gender role.

Butler proves that since gender is constructed, it can be deconstructed and performed in a different way. To this, Judith Butler argues that gender is socially constructed and that sex does not matter since it will not have any impact on how one acts or behaves even though one is a “man” or a “woman”. In other words, “if gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way” (Butler 1990: 6). Since gender is culturally constructed to be binary, Judith Butler argues, “the stability of binary sex, does not follow that the construction of “men” will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that “women” will interpret only female bodies” (Butler 1990: 6). In addition, even if the sexes appear to be binary in their constitution, there is simply no reason to assume that gender ought to remain as two (man/woman, boy/girl) (Butler 1990: 6). Subsequently, she claims, “when the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one (Butler 1990: 6). Moreover, Butler questions the biological sex versus gender and if there is a difference between these two. She questions if there is a history of how the duality of sex was established and if sex is discursively produced by various scientific discourses and if sex is contested. This construct called “sex” is as culturally constructed as gender, and was already a gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all. To this, Judith Butler claims, “as a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which “sexed nature” or “a natural sex” is produced and established as “prediscursive” prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts” (Butler 1990: 7).

As mentioned earlier, Judith Butler challenges Simone de Beauvoir, who states in *The Second Sex* (1949), one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one. According to Beauvoir, gender is constructed, however, contrary to Beauvoir's statement, Judith Butler argues,

for Beauvoir, gender is “constructed,” but implied in her formulation is an agent, a *cogito*, who somehow takes on or appropriates that gender and could, in principle, take on some other gender. Beauvoir is clear that one “becomes” a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion to become one. There is nothing in her account that guarantees that the “one” who becomes a woman is necessarily female. If “the body is a situation,” as she claims, there is no recourse to a body that has not always already been interpreted by cultural meanings; hence, sex could not qualify as a prediscursive anatomical facticity. Indeed, sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender all along (Butler 1990: 8).

Performativity

On the issue of identity, Judith Butler deconstructs the traditional way, where identity is put in one category and is categorized as permanent. In addition, she argues that identity can never stand alone and cannot be defined as a permanent size. However, the concept of identity is an essential aspect when discussing gender and performativity, since identity is who the subject is and behaves. Moreover, to express and perform a sexual identity means that one uses their sexuality in order to show one's sexual identity or one's attractiveness. It is important to keep in mind that “women” can express masculine sexuality and the other way around. To this, Judith Butler claims, “there is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results. Gender proves to be performative, that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be” (Butler 1990: 25).

Before stating what Judith Butler means when examining performativity, it seems essential to give an explanation of the differences between performativity and performance. Performance means that someone put on a role and acts in society as it was a role play. Hence it is not the same as performativity, which means that someone acts, behaves, walks, and talks in a certain way in society without being aware; it is natural to one's gender identity.

Judith Butler's interests lie in the social gender and she points out that an individual's gender is defined by its performativity. To this, Butler states that gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence (Butler 1990: 24). In other words, gender is always a doing; performativity is the action and expression in one. This is the way gender becomes a question about in which way the individual chooses to express an act. The question

about which body one is born into and which sex it belongs to does not matter. As previously mentioned, identity is therefore not permanent, but changes constantly; depending on the performance in different situations. To this, as stated earlier by Judith Butler, she claims, “man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one” (Butler 1990: 6). The boundaries between sex and gender can move around as it wants, and because of this, Judith Butler breaks the traditional perception of the linear relationship between sex and gender. Butler argues that one's sexual identity occurs as a consequence of the performativity. In this way, as earlier stated, gender cannot be categorized as permanent, hence, it happens fluently.

When examining performativity, it is fundamental to bring in the term drag and cross-dressing. What concerns Butler is that people might comprehend a male's “first” gender, if the male is wearing a dress. To this Butler claims,

if one thinks that one sees a man dressed as a woman or a woman dressed as a man, then one takes the first terms of each of those perceptions as the “reality” of gender: the gender that is introduced through the simile lacks “reality”, and is taken to constitute an illusory appearance. One thinks that he/she knows what the reality is, and takes the secondary appearance of gender to mere artifice, play, and falsehood. But what is the sense of “gender reality” that founds this perception in this way? Perhaps we think we know what the anatomy of the person is. Indeed, if one shifts the example from drag to transsexuality, then it is no longer possible to derive a judgment about stable anatomy from the clothes that cover and articulate the body (Butler 1999: xxii).

Trough repetition of performatives, norms are created and rules on how one should act and behave in one's surroundings, in order to fit into society.

Gender Parody

As mentioned above acts and behavior produce the effect of an internal core, but produce this on the surface of the body, “such acts, gestures, enactments, generally constructed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications

manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (Butler 1990: 136). In other words, since Judith Butler claims that the gendered body is performative, it has no ontological status apart from the various acts, which constitute its reality.

Judith Butler uses the term drag when discussing gender parody, and as a result, she claims, “the notion of an original or primary gender identity is often parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities” (Butler 1990: 137). Moreover, she argues, “the performance of drag play upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the initiative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency (Butler 1990: 137).

Judith Butler argues that gender ought not to be constructed, but that gender is an identity constituted in time, which contains repetition of acts. Hence gender is produced through the way the body acts. Judith Butler argues, “if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the *appearance of substance* is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performativity accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. Gender is also a norm that can never be fully internalized; “the internal” is a surface signification, and gender norms are finally phantasmatic, impossible to embody (Butler 1990: 141). In addition, Judith Butler argues that the distinction between expression and performativeness is crucial, and to this she writes, “if gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender’s performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality. Genders can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived. As credible bearers of those attributes, however, genders can also be rendered thoroughly and radically incredible (Butler 1990: 141). In other words, Judith Butler claims that one actively chooses the way one performs one gender in terms of the way one acts and behaves. Even though one is a man, one can act out another gender, which means that it is how one interprets one gender.

Summary

Judith Butler criticizes the traditional perception of gender and heteronormativity, by pointing out, neither women nor men should be put into boxes and be categorized from their biological sex by society. Because of heteronormativity, it creates a binary contrary between man and woman, which force each individual to stay within the given category. Moreover, Judith Butler believes that masculinity and femininity are constructed by society as well. This is regarding how men and women ought to act and behave in different situations and whom they ought to desire. Another way Judith Butler constructs identity is by problematizing the relationship between the categories of gender and sex. Traditionally, it is the gender (femininity/masculinity), which is understood as a consequence of the sex (woman/man), which is a condition for the desire of the opposite sex. Judith Butler breaks with the binary opposition man versus woman by claiming that gender is non-binary.

At last, Judith Butler claims that each individual is not assigned with a gender at birth but performs one based on the values and education that one has been taught and grows up with from the beginning. Likewise, gender is performative, and it does not come from nature, but each individual acts it out instead. Each individual acts as if that being a man or a woman is an eternal reality, hence, it is a phenomenon that is being produced and reproduced all the time. Prior to Judith Butler's theory about gender studies, it can be concluded that gender is performative, which means that no one is assigned with a gender from day one, and each individual can express performativity in a variety of ways.

5.3 Popular Culture

When examining a phenomenon or phenomena, such as film, or an icon as Lady Gaga, it is cultural studies that are the all-purpose term, since it covers social values, influence, and ideology. When doing so, it is likely to cover sociology, literary theory, and gender studies (Zeisler 2008: 5). According to the feminist author, Andi Zeisler, the term popular culture can be difficult to define, and Andi Zeisler claims, "definitions of popular culture depend on who's defining it and what his or her agenda is" (Zeisler 2008: 1). However, defined shortly by Andi Zeisler, "in a purely literal sense, popular culture is any cultural product that has a mass audience" (Zeisler 2008: 1). But what be defined as a product? When discussing popular culture and its product, it has to be understood as all the elements that create a mass audience. As an example, it can be defined as TV-series, music artists, brands, celebrities, and so forth. Feminism has also had its impact in popular culture, and the central issue is how feminism and popular culture are essential together and by examining the gender and cultural scholar, Adrienne Trier-Bienniek work *Feminism Theory and Popular Culture*

(2015) it will come up with an explanation. Adrienne Trier-Bienniek suggests that TV-series has given viewers exposure to smart, funny, and diverse characters. Moreover, she claims that the lyrics in women's songs and performance in music videos are becoming more feministic (Trier-Bienniek 2015: xiii). Moreover, Adrienne Trier-Bienniek adds, "the juxtaposition of feminist theory and popular culture has an inevitable impact on the consumption of culture mainly because popular culture has the power to put up a mirror to our lives and show connections between media, socialization and identity" (Trier-Bienniek 2015: xiv).

When discussing popular culture it is important to present high and low culture in order to distinguish between the two terms. High culture or the so-called elite could be considered as art, literature, and classical music made by for the world's educated elite (Zeisler 2008: 1). In contrast, mass culture and popular culture were considered as low culture, which was the baser stuff as gossip, with which the masses contended themselves. However, throughout time, the way people consider high and low culture has changed,

as it happens, the barrier that once existed between high culture and low culture has been whittled away to the thinnest of shards, and the voices that once conferred status on one form over another have become so many and so diverse that they often drown each other out. Shakespeare, Homer, and Dickens were the low culture of their respective eras, yet because of the vagaries of time are considered high culture in ours. Comic books, once derided as pabulum for kids and illiterate adults, have become the subject of retrospectives in major art museums. And television, movies, and music have become fodder for the realm of "cultural studies" at colleges and universities (Zeisler 2008: 5).

Andi Zeisler mentioned the German philosopher Walter Benjamin who wrote in his famous essay, "the masses seek distraction whereas art demands concentration from the spectator" (Zeisler 2008: 5). Said otherwise, high culture should entertain, nevertheless, it should be able to educate, inspire, and inform the elite. However, according to Andi Zeisler, the barrier between high culture and low culture does not exist in contemporary culture, since the time has changed on how people consider what is high and low culture. In order to discuss Walter Benjamin's statement, it can be argued that people are still searching for a distraction, however, popular culture in contemporary

time seems to demand the concentration he proposed to be the domain of high-art spectators. As just mentioned, comic books have become the subject of retrospectives in major museums and to this Andi Zeisler adds, “in any case, the rise of cultural studies – which might encompass anything from African American film theory to Jewish American humor in literature to Madonna studies – has further chipped away at the distinctions between high and low (after all, if you can study it in college, it can't be too trashy, right?) and made pop culture both past and present an increasingly rich source of fodder for examination and analysis” (Zeisler 2008: 5).

5.4 Popular Music Culture

In Roy Shuker's *Understanding Popular Music Culture* (2013) he argues, “in cultural terms, popular music is of enormous importance in daily life and for some is central to their social identities” (Shuker 2013: 2). Moreover, popular music culture refers to the way of making and consuming music. As previously mentioned in the section above, the term popular can be challenging to define, however, Roy Shuker comes up with an understandable definition, “the meaning and utility of terms such as “popular” and “mass”, especially in relation to “culture” and “media”, are the subject of considerable discussion and debate. Similarly, “popular music” and associated terms such as “rock”, “rock ‘n’ roll” and “pop” are used by musicians, fans, and academic analysts in a confusing variety of ways. It needs to be remembered that it is difficult to define phenomena that are social practices as well as economic products and which are not static but constantly evolving (Shuker 2013: 3). In other words, the term popular can be complex to define, and it has a different interpretation to people, as for some it means appealing to people, whereas for others it means something that is more grounded of the people. In addition, when a product is popular, it means that it is commonly liked or approved of by a large audience or a general fan base. As stated in the section above, popular products are applied to the media, which are TV-series, films, books, which are widely consumed (Shuker 2013: 3).

Fan culture and subculture

Fan culture covers youth culture, which mostly leads to subcultures, which express a certain lifestyle. A subculture can exist in many cultural ways, but in this context, however, it is the group of fans who are into popular music culture. When discussing the term, it is important to cover the term fandom, and Roy Shuker presents in *Understanding Popular Music* (2001) a distinction between fans and serious fans, where he defines the division between the two terms. Serious fans focus more on the music rather than on the persona of the performer(s). “Fans tend to be lauded as representatives of the “serious” side of popular music” (Shuker 2001: 213). However, these fans

will mostly describe themselves as into particular performers or genres (Shuker 2013: 213). Serious fans are characterized as fans that are seeking for rare releases, concert goings, and interest in record labels and producers and performers. Roy Shuker claims, “such people frequently become record collectors on a large scale, underpinning an infrastructure of specialist record shops and, of key importance, second-hand record shops (Shuker 2001: 213). Moreover, serious fans often involve in subcultures. However, fans will mostly collect the records put out by their idol.

Roy Shuker mentions that in the early 1950s fans were youths between 13-24 years of age who was the major consumers of rock ‘n’ roll and pop. In the 1950s, the music was usually aimed at the youth market, and young people have continued to be major consumers of the genres (Shuker 2001: 194). But what covers the term youth? Roy Shuker suggests, “the blanket term “youth” conceals more than simple age divisions, as a social category it embraces a wide variety of taste groups, subcultures, and fandom; all audience segments themselves differentiated by class, ethnicity, age, and gender (Shuker 2001: 195). The concept of youth culture developed in the 1950s and the culture, which can be associated with the subculture, were people who had similar interests. Subsequently, the groups were mostly created in order to revolt against their elders. Historically, in the 1950s, the youth culture was linked to the growing autonomy of youth because of their increased income. By having more to spend, the youth culture could express themselves clearer in terms of values and separate ideals. Hence, with the youth having more money to spend, large markets were developed for teenage interests, which were music and clothes (Shuker 2001: 196). In the 1960s, it was the counterculture, which was growing in the youth culture. During the decade, the youth were protesting in the universities and on the streets, as well against the way in Vietnam. Because of this, “youth were now viewed as a definite social block, belonging to a generational culture which transcended class, status, and occupation. Popular music, particular emergent genres such as psychedelic or acid rock, was regarded as an age-specific means of cultural expression, uniting young people and confirming their radical potential (Shuker 2001: 196).

Music can be one reason that creates a subculture, who listen to a certain kind of music and genre or is into a specific artist. Roy Shuker states, “that youth subcultures appropriate and innovate musical forms and styles as a basis for their identity, and, in so doing, assert a countercultural politics” (Shuker 2001: 206). This perspective was linked to the theorists and writers of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS), whose study interest lies in youth subcultures. Writers who were associated with the Birmingham School, subcultures were regarded as, “meaning systems, modes of expression or life styles developed by groups in

subordinate structural positions in response to dominant meaning systems, and which reflect their attempt to solve structural contradictions rising from the wider societal context” (Shuker 2001: 206). In other words, subcultures rely on style as a means of creating their values visible in a society saturated by the codes and symbols of the dominant culture. It is not all who become part of a subculture throughout life, however, members of youth subcultures, utilize symbolic elements in order to construct an identity, which is usually outside of conservative mainstream society (Shuker 2001: 207).

6. Analysis chapter

6.1 Introduction to the analysis

Lady Gaga can be considered as one of the best musical pop artists in contemporary America and is an artist who is obviously an important part of popular and music culture, because of the fame she has achieved throughout her career. Moreover, it can be argued that Lady Gaga and her music operates in high culture, even though her music takes part in popular culture, in terms of topics she sings about, but also the fact of her persona and she as an icon has become of academic interest. Andi Zeisler mentions in her work *Feminism and Pop Culture* (2008), “if high culture comprised the art, literature, and classical music made by and for the world’s educated elite, low culture was the baser stuff with which the masses contended themselves (Zeisler 2008: 1). It can be argued that classical music belongs to high culture and the so-called elite, however, today it seems that pop music has become as valuable as classical music and belongs within the high culture in contemporary society. The reason for claiming this is because of the way popular music has become more valuable and affects people and is of academic interest, hence it can be considered as valuable as high culture and classical music. In order to support this claim, Andi Zeisler argues, “Comic books, once derided as pabulum for kids and illiterate adults, have become the subject of retrospectives in major art museums. And television, movies, and music have become fodder for the realm of “cultural studies” at colleges and universities” (Zeisler 2008: 5).

Throughout this chapter, the analysis will be presented in order to come up with an answer and a discussion on the thesis statement. The analysis contains an analysis and a discussion of Lady Gaga’s lyrics and music videos. Lady Gaga’s lyrics and music videos will be examined, however, it will be six chosen songs and three chosen music videos from three different albums expanding from Lady Gaga’s first studio album to her latest studio album. The choice of the songs is partly based on Lady Gaga’s most famous hits and music videos. However, there are songs in the analysis, which

might not be that familiar, since they have not peaked in the Danish radios and Danish music television. The reason for working with songs, which are not that famous and familiar as others lies in the interest of the themes in the songs. But also because of the academic interest which can be worked with when examining the songs.

The purpose of the analysis is to evaluate on how Lady Gaga expresses performativity and plays with gender in the chosen lyrics and music videos. In order to examine this, Judith Butler's gender theory will be the fundamental theory throughout the analysis. Judith Butler aims to break down normative gender binary since she argues that gender is constructed by society (Butler 1990: 6). In addition, she claims that gender is not something that each individual is but rather something one does. According to Judith Butler, gender proves to be performative (Butler 1990: 6) and each individual performs their gender, sexuality, and identity in terms of their surroundings. Because of Judith Butler's statement about gender-as-performance, hence, the analysis will examine how Lady Gaga uses and express performativity in her songs and music videos.

According to the structure of the analysis, the analysis will contain three sections. The first section will present an introduction to the three albums, the six chosen songs, and the three chosen music videos. Moreover, the first section will shortly introduce the themes, which Lady Gaga, for the most part, operates within her songs, in order to give a fundamental understanding of what Lady Gaga regularly sings about. The second section will examine performativity in Lady Gaga's six chosen lyrics. In addition, the second section will also inspect Lady Gaga's ambiguousness in her lyrics and will try to come up with a solution on how she uses it in her lyrics. The last section will explore performativity in Lady Gaga's music videos in order to examine how she uses her body language and expresses gender, sexuality, and identity. In order to show Lady Gaga's body language in the music videos and to support the claims, timestamps and screenshots have been used and can be found in the appendix. The songs and the music videos will be analyzed in chronological order, starting with the songs from Lady Gaga's first studio album. The reason for doing so is in order to distinguish between the songs in the comparative analysis.

Hence, in order to examine the thematic change in Lady Gaga's lyrics and music videos, a comparative analysis will be presented in the discussion chapter. The differences or similarities the comparative analysis will examine is in terms of how Lady Gaga's performativity has changed and developed and if there are any differences in the way she expresses herself in a thematic manner from her first studio album and throughout her career. Therefore, working with a comparative analysis is in order to compare Lady Gaga's lyrics and music videos and end up with a conclusion

on how Lady Gaga's performativity and persona has changed since the beginning of her career from 2008 until 2016. In addition, the discussion chapter will contain a critical view of Lady Gaga's performativity and persona by operating with Judith Butler's gender theory. The reason for being a critic is in order to perceive another perspective on how Lady Gaga expresses herself at a certain degree. In addition to this, the critical section in the discussion chapter will contain an introduction of the feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey's critical essay concerning the male gaze named, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) in order to inspect how Lady Gaga is sexually objectified and if she is aware of it or not.

6.2 Lady Gaga's three albums and the chosen songs

Lady Gaga's debut album *The Fame* (2008) contains fourteen songs in total, where some of the songs have become more famous worldwide than others, such as "Just Dance", "Poker Face", "Eh, Eh (Nothing else I can say)", and "Paparazzi". Since *The Fame* (2008) was Lady Gaga's first studio album, and Lady Gaga was new in the music industry, it was still able to reach number one in Canada, Ireland, Austria, Germany, and the UK. Subsequently, in the United States, *The Fame* (2008) peaked at number two on the Billboard 200 chart, which is an American record chart ranking the 200 most popular songs in the contemporary United States. Richard Gray who is the editor of *The Performance Identities of Lady Gaga: Critical Essays* (2012) states, "Lady Gaga's first two singles from *The Fame* (2008) album, "Just Dance" and "Poker Face", became international number-one hits, topping the Billboard 100 in the United States" (Gray 2012: 3). Besides, the album earned six Grammy nominations (Gray 2012: 3). *The Fame* (2012) album seems to focus on the rise to fame and contains mainstream party pop songs with fast beats and lyrics that for the most part focus on themes such as party, sex, and getting rich and famous.

Lady Gaga's second studio album *Born This Way* (2011) contains fourteen songs as well, however, the album is also available with bonus track versions and contains twenty-two songs in total. As in her first studio album *The Fame* (2008), there are songs, which are more recognized than others worldwide. Claimed by Richard Gray, Lady Gaga continued to reach the charts with the title track, "Born This Way", as well as "Judas", "Edge of Glory", "You and I", and live performance of "Hair" (Gray 2012: 4). "Born This Way" became a major and famous hit, relating to it became the fastest selling single in the history of iTunes. Moreover, the single accomplished to sell approximately one million copies in a period of only five days (Gray 2012: 4). In addition, Richard Gray states, "Lady Gaga won two awards for "Born This Way", including best female video and best video with a message. She became the first musical artist to win over one billion

viral views on YouTube” (Gray 2012: 4). The reason for the song became such a success suggests the interest of Lady Gaga’s message in the song and the way she salutes otherness. Moreover, she stands out as an advocate to the LGBTQ-community (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) in terms of standing up for equality and the way she tries to undermine the construction of gender and heteronormativity. In an interview, Lady Gaga stated, “no matter if you’re rich or poor, black or white, gay or straight, you have the right to stand up to be counted” (Gray 2012: 6). The themes that are conspicuous on the *Born This Way* (2011) album are themes such as personality, identity, confidence, and sex. Besides, religion is also a heavy subject on the *Born This Way* (2011) album.

Lady Gaga’s latest an fifth studio album *Joanne* (2016) contains, on the deluxe album, fourteen songs as well as the two other mentioned albums. The most well-known songs from the *Joanne* (2016) album are “Perfect Illusion”, “Joanne”, and “Million Reasons”. Some of the most memorable folk-pop songs from the album have a slow-pace beat, however, there are still songs on the album that has the Lady Gaga spirit, with a fast beat and electrical sound effects. What the Lady Gaga spirit means in terms of her songs, is that her previous albums have contained themes as party, sex, fame, and political issues. The *Joanne* (2016) album seems to be more personal, where she is revealing her true self in terms of the way she expresses and exposes herself in her lyrics and as well as in her music videos.

On the basis of Lady Gaga’s three albums *The Fame* (2008), *Born This Way* (2011), and *Joanne* (2016) the analysis will work with the lyrics of “Just Dance” and “Poker Face”, which are from her first studio album *The Fame* (2008), next, “Born This Way” and “Hair” from the *Born This Way* (2011) album, and lastly, “Joanne” and “Million Reasons” from her latest album *Joanne* (2016) in order to study how Lady Gaga expresses performativity and how ambiguousness is a major part of her lyrics. Subsequently, a visual analysis of “Poker Face”, “Born This Way”, and “Million Reasons” will be analyzed in order to evaluate on her body language, costumes, moves, and how she expresses performativity. The reason for working with three albums, six songs, and three music videos is for the purpose of having enough data to examining Lady Gaga’s performativity and as well her persona.

6.3 Performativity in Lady Gaga’s lyrics

“Just Dance” and “Poker Face”

At first glance, it seems that Lady Gaga’s songs deal with the things and themes that she is singing about, for instance, as seen in “Just Dance” and “Poker Face”, the songs appear to be all about partying, getting drunk, having sex. However, Lady Gaga is ambiguous in her lyrics, and the

songs seem to deal with fundamental issues such as personal experiences. The reason for her being ambiguous in her songs could indicate that she wants to show different expressions and performances in her lyrics and as well as in her music videos and live performances. Besides looking on how Lady Gaga performs gender, sexuality, and identity in the two songs, it seems essential to consider gender roles in the two songs. Judith Butler claims, “the notion that gender is constructed suggests certain determinism of gender meanings inscribed on anatomically differentiated bodies, where those bodies are understood as passive recipients of an inexorable cultural law” (Butler 1990: 8). Since gender is constructed by society, there are laws, which each gender should follow in order to be accepted into western society. These laws work in the matter of how men and women should behave, which is based on the sex of the person. Historically, women have to fit a certain role in society; hence, they become a stereotype. However, Lady Gaga acts in disregard to the constructed laws and gender roles in terms of what she is singing about in “Just Dance” and “Poker Face”. In “Just Dance”, Lady Gaga is singing about going out partying and getting drunk and moreover, she expresses in an ambiguous way that she has exposed her body in terms of her singing, “how’d I turn my shirt inside out” (Germanotta et al. 2008). Because of this, this indicates that Lady Gaga is challenging the norms and the gender roles of the ideal woman, in terms of the fact that she is going out by herself, exposing her body, and getting drunk. If she followed the norms of the ideal woman, one could argue that she would never go out alone and have fun and be surrounded by men. Moreover, the fact that she has turned her shirt inside out seems at first glance that she does not follow gender normativity and norms set by society. However, it can be argued that she has been raped since she is partying with men, and she cannot remember how her shirt has been turned inside out. According to Judith Butler, no one has a gender from day one, but rather performs one in terms of their surroundings, and this is what Lady Gaga does by being a strong woman who goes out by herself. Moreover, in the lyrics the ideal man is represented, in regards to Lady Gaga singing, “use your muscles, carve it out, work it, hustle” (Germanotta et al. 2008), which indicates that men are attractive because of the men having muscles and that they are strong biologically, nevertheless, the men in the song can be considered as being ideal men in terms of them having muscles. Moreover, Lady Gaga constructs them into sex symbols. In “Poker Face” Lady Gaga challenges the gender roles as well, in terms of her being in control of the men and playing with them mentally. In addition, the song indicates that she can form the men the way she wants, and to support this claim, Lady Gaga sings, “I wanna hold’em like they do in Texas please. Fold’em let’em, hit’em, raise it baby stay with me” (Germanotta et al. 2008). This phrase indicates

that Lady Gaga has feminist tendencies in terms of her having the power over men and that she can seduce them the way she wants. Even though she is a woman, she is the one who is in control, and it can be argued that it makes her a feminist, since she shows that even though she is a woman she can still be the one who is in control. In order to support this, Lady Gaga sings, "I won't tell you that I love you" (Germanotta et al. 2008) which indicates that she does not love him and there are no emotions involved and that she is using a poker face in order to control the men. Moreover, Lady Gaga is also challenging her gender by singing, "kiss or hug you 'cause I'm bluffin' with my muffin' I'm not lying I'm just stunnin' with my love-glue gunnin'" (Germanotta et al. 2008), which suggests that besides having a "muffin'", which is slang for women's genitals, has a "love-glue gunnin'", which can be argued to be a reference to a male's genitals, and in this context it could indicate that she is the male who has the power and that she is subverting the gender stereotypes. As Judith Butler states in her work that gender is independent of sex, and is free-floating, since "man" and "masculine" might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and because of this claim, gender proves to be performative (Butler 1990: 25), and this is what Lady Gaga aims to show in "Poker Face" in terms of her showing that gender is independent of sex. Again, Lady Gaga is ambiguous in her lyrics of "Poker Face", since she demonstrates that the song is about poker and gambling, however, it can be argued that the song is about her coming out of the closet sexually and a way to show or tell that her sexuality is fluid.

Moving on to the way Lady Gaga expresses sexuality in the lyrics of "Just Dance" and "Poker Face", it can be perceived that Lady Gaga uses her sexuality as a strong woman, but also as a woman who is expressing her sexuality as fluid throughout the lyrics. As previously mentioned, Lady Gaga sings in "Just Dance", "how'd I turn my shirt inside out" (Germanotta et al. 2008), which indicates that she has exposed herself in order to show her female sexual body, since the top of her body has been revealed and her breasts have been disclosed. At the same time, it can be argued that she has been raped since she does not recall how she has turned her shirt inside out. Again, Lady Gaga's ambiguousness is showing here, in terms of the song indicates that it is dealing with more serious issues, than just dancing and getting drunk. In "Poker Face" Lady Gaga reveals her sexuality as being fluid than being heterosexual, in terms of the song is about her seducing men but is in love with women. In order to support this statement, Lady Gaga sings, "no he can't read my poker face, she's got me like nobody" (Germanotta et al. 2008), which indicates that she tricks the man to think that she is in love with him, but eventually she is more interested in the woman, since the woman has "got" her like anyone else, and she cannot stop thinking about her while she is

with the man. However, the reason for stating that her sexuality is fluid is in terms of her sexual identity, which shows that she is into men and women. Lady Gaga breaks the norm of heteronormativity since she performs her gender and sexuality identity as fluid. Judith Butler states, "because of heteronormativity, gender seems to be determined and fixed as it was under the biology-is-destiny formulation" (Butler 1990: 12). Lady Gaga proves that gender and sexuality do not proceed from one's sex as a biological determinant. In addition, Judith Butler criticizes the traditional perception of gender and heteronormativity, by pointing out, neither women nor men should be put into boxes and be categorized from their biological sex by society since each individual has their own sexual identity and mindset. It can be argued that Lady Gaga is challenging gender, sexuality, and identity in order for her to state to the listeners and her fans, that she is queer. Moreover, Judith Butler rejects the idea that anyone is born with a particular sexual identity, and this emphasizes the suggestion that gender and identity can be changed to fit one's personality, which indicates that it is not determined from the beginning. Lady Gaga aims to show this in "Poker Face" that it is normal to be into both of the sexes and that no one can control their sexual desire.

Even though these two pop songs might be depicted as party songs, because of their fast beat, Lady Gaga uses ambiguousness in her lyrics in order to make each person interpret her lyrics in a different way, but it could also be in order for her to play with different viewpoints. In addition, she uses her sexiness and sexual identity, but at the same time, she is also a constructed persona who holds back since she does not make the fundamental issues clear in her lyrics. Because of this, Lady Gaga becomes a persona, who is problematic to define. Besides, Lady Gaga is extreme as a persona when using ambiguousness, and because of this, she is not just one character but changes like a chameleon, which makes her interesting.

"Born This Way" and "Hair"

This section will work with Lady Gaga's two songs, from the *Born This Way* (2011) album, which are "Born This Way" and "Hair". "Born This Way" is a popular song, and as mentioned earlier, it became the fastest selling single (Gray 2014: 4). Yet, the song "Hair" seems not to be as popular as "Born This Way", however, it can be interpreted in different perspectives and focuses on identity which makes it interesting to examine. It seems that Lady Gaga's *Born This Way* (2011) album is dedicated to her fans, The Little Monsters, in terms of the political fundamental issues that take effect in society as having another sexuality, being different or being of another skin color than white. Because of her being a famous pop star, it suggests that she has the ability to be an advocate to young people and speak up for them since the listeners and the fans look up to her and might

consider her as a role model. Lady Gaga addresses her Little Monsters in the intro of the song by phrasing, “just put your paws up ‘cause you were born this way baby” (Germanotta et al. 2011) this can be seen because of her using the word paws, which is a reference to an animal. Because of this, she compares her fans to animals or other monstrous creatures, in order to state that the song is made for the fan base, The Little Monsters. In addition, the paw or the claw is a ritual for The Little Monsters, which Lady Gaga started in order to strengthen the collective identity of her fan base (Deflem 2016: 128). Moreover, the way Lady Gaga performs her identity in general and the way she uses extremeness in terms of her different costumes and outstanding performances, young people might think that it is okay to be different and it should be embraced.

Lady Gaga's “Born This Way” seems to be a song where there is not that much to interpret in terms of it having a straightforward message of diversity, and in addition, what Lady Gaga does is that she is standing up for otherness, and is fighting for equality and throughout the song she is showing the outside world that she is queer and fighting against heteronormativity as well as racism. In the lyrics she sings, “you're black, white, beige, Chola descent, you're Lebanese, you're Orient” (Germanotta et al. 2011) and “no matter gay, straight, or bi, lesbian, transgendered life, I'm on the right track baby I was born to survive”. As Nagoshi et al. states in her queer studies, “being queer includes standing up for everyone in contemporary society, no matter gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity” (Nagoshi et al. 2014: 107). Moreover, Lady Gaga stands up as an advocate for gender equality, and throughout the song, she is fighting for political fundamental issues. The listeners are encouraged to be who they are; even they do not follow the norms set by society. She sings, “oh there ain't no other way, baby I was born this way” (Germanotta et al. 2011), and this indicates that there is no choice if one is having another gender identity or sexuality. Judith Butler claims that one is born with a gender identity, but performs one later on in life, which means that gender is not determined from day one. Since it seems that Lady Gaga means that one is born as different from the day they came out of the womb, the song can be interpreted that Lady Gaga means that someone cannot control whom they become later on in life. It seems straightforward that “Born This Way” has the purpose of rejecting and breaking down the patriarchal and heteronormative ideologies and values by ignoring gender roles and the traditional boundaries set by the gender binary system. Moreover, Lady Gaga addresses a variety of sexualities, gender identity, and ethnicities in order to achieve her goal of inclusively and remove her own privilege from the spotlight as a white Anglo Saxon American Protestant.

Lady Gaga narrates her viewpoint and statements on otherness, equality, and human rights as an activist in the lyrics of the song. She sings, “there’s nothing wrong with loving who you are, she said, cause he made you perfect, babe, so hold your head up girl and you’ll go far, listen to me when I say” (Germanotta et al. 2011). This phrase can be interpreted as she is speaking to her fans directly, and is expressing how they should love themselves no matter how different they are. The reason for her to use the word girl in the phrase could be in order for her to claim that it does not matter what gender someone is. As Judith Butler states in her theory is that no one is born a gender at birth, but gender is something someone performs according to one’s surroundings, “we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence” (Butler 1990: 24). Likewise, as claimed before, the song seems to be to her fans, The Little Monsters, which are young people where the most part support the LGBTQ-community or is having another sexuality than hetero. Lady Gaga addresses herself as an activist for the LGBTQ-community, which is expressed in her lyrics in the way she supports the community by stating that it is okay to be different, and it does not matter if someone does not follow the norms set by society, “no matter gay, straight, or bi, lesbian, transgendered life” (Germanotta et al. 2011). In the first phrase of the song Lady Gaga sings, “my mama told me when I was young, we’re all born superstars” (Germanotta et al. 2011) and “a different lover is not a sin” (Germanotta et al. 2011), this phrase could indicate to Lady Gaga’s raise and the way her family has been supportive throughout her life, and has been a family where it does not matter what gender or sexual identity one has, and the way one look like, because no matter what, they have raised her in order to believe that she is perfect the way she is. This is in accordance with Judith Butler’s theory that no matter who someone is, and what gender and sexuality someone has, they are as good as normal as the ones who follow the binary heteronormative, and that they should not be judged because of their gender and sexuality.

“Born This Way” seems to be a religious song for her Little Monsters because of the way she addresses God as him, and what is assumed to be a Christian God due to her own Catholic heritage. In the intro of the song, she sings, “it doesn’t matter if you love him, or capital H-I-M” (Germanotta et al. 2011). The reason for her to do so could be because of the way that, in a biblical sense, God loves everyone. In order to support this claim, Lady Gaga also sings, “cause he made you perfect, babe” (Germanotta et al. 2011), which tells that if God created each individual, he did with a purpose. The chorus of the song, as well as the bridge, outline the importance of self-love. Lady Gaga makes a general statement about loving yourself and living life without regret. In the bridge,

Lady Gaga specifies whom she is addressing, “don’t be a drag, just be a queen, whether you’re broke, or evergreen, you’re black, white, beige, Chola descent, you’re Lebanese, you’re Orient, whether life’s disabilities, left you outcast, bullied, or teased, rejoice and love yourself today, ‘cause baby you were born this way” (Germanotta et al. 2011), since she is addressing every identity factor, including gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. By calling out to a variety of identities, she does not only serve the purpose of telling the fans or the listeners to love themselves, but also to refrain from judgment from others. Because of the song is strong politically and specifies in serious themes as being accepted in society, it can be argued that the song is specifically made for her fan base, The Little Monsters, in order to purposefully creating a subculture, the monster subculture. Through this creation of a subculture, Lady Gaga natures a fan base that she does not only have emotional ties to but also relies on financially.

The song “Hair” is not as straightforward as “Born This Way” since Lady Gaga uses ambiguousness in the song. It indicates that the title of the song is a metaphor for identity and freedom, which can be argued in the title of the song, since one’s hair changes throughout one’s life, in terms of style, form, and shape, and so does one’s identity. According to Judith Butler, one’s identity changes in terms of one’s surroundings. As previously mentioned in the chapter “Becoming Lady Gaga”, she once stated, “I was always the weird girl in school, who did theatre and came to school with lots of red lipstick on or my hair perfectly curled, or whatever I was doing to get attention” (Lester 2010: 12), and this could indicate that this is what she aims to show in the song that everyone should embrace their identity and the way they choose to look without being judged. Throughout the song, Lady Gaga expresses gender, sexuality, and identity as a woman in terms of having long hair and wearing makeup, “sometimes I want some raccoon or red highlights” (Germanotta et al. 2011) and “I got my bangs to hide” (Germanotta et al. 2011). The song seems to be about that everyone should be strong no matter how one looks like and that nobody should take away one’s identity, but should accept everyone. However, the song can also be interpreted as being about a transgender, where the character in the song cannot be who he/she really wants to be and is short of his/her identity because the character cannot dress the way he/she wants without getting judged by friends, family, and in order to support this claim Lady Gaga sings, “I scream mom and dad, why can’t I be who I wanna be” (Germanotta et al. 2011) and “I just wanna be myself and I want you to love me for who I am” (Germanotta et al. 2011). It seems that the character is implied to have long hair because it can be cut, “mom would cut my hair at night” (Germanotta et al. 2011), and by having long hair, can be associated with femininity. However, it can also be interpreted that

because the mom is cutting the character's hair at night, is that the mom has a hard time accepting the way the person looks like. It is clear that the person in question wants to achieve acceptance of the identity from the parents. There are boys/men who have long hair and can be confused for a girl, or it can be interpreted that the person is transgender because of the long hair.

It gives the impression that "Hair", as well as "Born This Way" is dedicated to her fans, The Little Monsters, in terms of her singing about self-acceptance and self-esteem. Lady Gaga has come to terms with herself, and she wants the same for her Little Monsters, which indicates that she has made the songs in order to help and be an advocate for her fans. It can be argued that the listeners do not notice and realize the true meaning of the songs because of her ambiguousness and the pounding dance beats, however, Lady Gaga mocks all of the horrible things that are glorified in society. It is all about understanding that not everyone will like each other, but if someone feels oppressed because of their gender or sexuality, the purpose from her is to state to her fans that they should be strong and it is okay to be different.

"Joanne" and "Million Reasons"

This section will examine the songs "Joanne" and "Million Reasons" from Lady Gaga's latest album *Joanne* (2016). There are songs on the album where Lady Gaga represent herself as a more vulnerable artist in terms of the way she invites her fans under her skin where she exposes herself in a more personal manner than ever seen before. "Joanne" and "Million Reasons" does not have a fast beat as the other songs the analysis has worked with; however, it gives the impression that the instruments, a guitar, and piano, are in focus in the songs. Furthermore, Lady Gaga's voice seems not to be edited as in other songs where it is obvious that her voice has been edited with special effects and autotune. Because of this, the songs seem to be more personal since her vulnerable voice and instruments are in focus.

"Joanne" is dedicated to her family, though it can be argued that it is mostly dedicated to Lady Gaga's father, Joseph Germanotta since "Joanne" is about his late dead sister, who died when she was only nineteen years of age from lupus. In addition, Lady Gaga herself never had the chance to meet her, however, Joanne has been a huge part of Lady Gaga's life, and additionally, Joanne is Lady Gaga's middle name. Lady Gaga once stated in an interview, "I realized Joanne had instilled her spirit in me. She was a painter and a poet, and I had a spiritual vision that I had to finish her business. I have never met her, but she's been one of the most important figures in my life" (Lester 2010:28). In the first verse she sings, "take my hand, stay Joanne. Heaven's not ready for you. Every part of my aching heart, needs you more than the angels do" (Germanotta et al. 2016). It

seems to very straightforward that Lady Gaga is singing to her late dead aunt, Joanne. Moreover, in the bridge, Lady Gaga sings, “honestly, I know where you’re goin’. And baby, you’re just movin’ on. And I’ll still love you even if I can’t see you anymore. Can’t wait to see you soar” (Germanotta et al. 2016). This phrase indicates that Lady Gaga wants to see her soar, which indicates that she wants her aunt’s artistic spirit to rise.

When taking a look at the song “Million Reasons” Lady Gaga’s ambiguous identity is again showing in terms of the way one can interpret the song. First of all, one can assume that she is singing about a person that she has lost and is fighting to get back, but the relationship seems to be tough, and she is considering quitting. She sings, “you’re giving me a million reasons to let you go, you’re giving me a million reasons to quit the show” (Germanotta et al. 2016). Although, it could also mean that she is revealing the part of her identity where she sings about her music career, and how it has been hard work to create the Lady Gaga persona and to always care about her fans in the challenging music industry. Moreover, in the 2017 Netflix documentary *Gaga: Five Foot Two* (2017), directed by Chris Moukarbel, which follows Lady Gaga closely while working on the *Joanne* (2016) album and the Super Bowl preparation, the audience will meet Lady Gaga who reveals that she is suffering from fibromyalgia, which is a musculoskeletal pain, and has been in pain for over five years, which have left her incapable of getting out of bed some days. In the documentary, she tells while crying, “it’s the whole right side of my body. It’s in a... I don’t know, a spasm. It feels like there is a rope pulling from my like first toe all up my leg and into my... and then... around my first rib... into my shoulder. And then, my neck. And head, jaw. My fucking face hurts” (Moukarbel 41:54-42:21, 2017). Because of this, this could also be the reason for Lady Gaga to have a reason to quit the show because of health issues.

In total, however, since Lady Gaga is known to perform her extremeness and identity in the music industry, one could argue how much she is revealing her façade and how honest she is. If Lady Gaga’s life is performance art, *Joanne*’s (2016) personal expose could be interpreted and presented as an invention.

6.4 Performativity in Lady Gaga’s music videos

“Poker Face”

Lady Gaga’s music video “Poker Face” premiered in 2009 and was Lady Gaga’s third music video after “Just Dance” and “Beautiful, Dirty, Rich”. The Norwegian director and photographer Reinert Olsen, better known as Ray Kay, directed the music video (Vernallis et al. 2013: 131). The music video lasts for 3 minutes and 35 seconds, and the music video can be considered as a

mainstream pop music video with Lady Gaga dancing and singing in front of the camera, accompanied by background dancers. The music video aims to show that it is quite sexual, in terms of the way Lady Gaga is represented and the way the camera focuses on her skin and body. When she appears from the pool in the beginning of the music video, a close-up shot of her face, with her mouth half open, and her body dripping with water (YouTube 0:08-0:11, 2009) (appendix 1). When she is sitting and dancing on the lounge near the pool area, the background has light colors, however, she is in focus, since she is wearing a black leather suit in the light surroundings. This indicates that she is the “bad” or the “other”, who is challenging and fighting the constructed gender norms since her gender can be considered as fluid, since she is singing, “can’t read mine, can’t read mine, no he can’t read my poker face (she’s got me like nobody)” (Germanotta et al. 2008).

Throughout the music video, Lady Gaga performs her sexual identity as a woman in terms of the way she is dressed in feminine sexual outfits and has heavy eyelashes and the way she moves her body in a sexual way. The audience sees Lady Gaga playing strip poker with men and women, which indicates that she is into both of the sexes, moreover, it can be a way of telling that she is challenging heteronormativity in terms of her exploring her sexuality. Judith Butler’s definition of sexuality concerns whom one is attracted to, and in the music video, Lady Gaga is dancing and touching both men and women. Subsequently, a shot in the music video shows a pack of men and women, including Lady Gaga, who touch each other (YouTube 1:22-1:24, 2009), which shows a fluid gender identity, in order for Lady Gaga to present that she might perceive herself as having a non-binary gender identity. In addition, the audience sees her taking off her clothes when she is playing strip poker with the others (YouTube 1:48-1:49, 2009). Moreover, Lady Gaga is using her body in a sexual way in terms of her spreading her legs and using her body language in a seductive way (appendix 2). Likewise, the music video seems to be very seductive, provocative, and sexual, and this is depicted through the camera angles, and how it focuses on her body. When Lady Gaga sings, “I’ll get him hot, show him what I got” (Germanotta et al. 2008), the camera zooms quickly and unsteady in and out of her body, in order to for the audience to focus on her body. Furthermore, the movements she performs while singing the phrase appears to be sexual as she is making movements that indicate that she is ready to have sex (YouTube 0:48-0:49, 2009) (appendix 3).

Lady Gaga uses her sexual identity to support her performance as a sexy feminine woman, and she calls attention to the performativity of gender through her hyper-exaggeration of femininity. Lady Gaga presents a female identity in her challenging womanized and sexy outfits and high heels. Throughout the music video, her sexual outfits are very feminine and challenging as well in terms

of her exposing a lot of skin. She wears five different outfits in the music video, and all of them can be considered as being very sexualized, which creates a feminine sexual identity. As an example, she is wearing a blue bodysuit, which has a deep cut, and her skin and her breasts can easily be spotted, and because of this, her bodysuit can somehow be considered as challenging (appendix 4). Because of the song suggests being about Lady Gaga's sexuality, it can be argued that the blue bodysuit also fit the song since she reveals herself and her sexual identity. Furthermore, she also performs gender by being feminine in terms of her long decorated nails, long blonde hair, with the trademark hair bow, which is a part of her identity, because since Lady Gaga started her career, she was often seen with the hair bow. In addition, she makes it clear to the audience that she is a woman by touching her genitals when she is singing, "with my muffin' I'm not lying" (YouTube 2:29-2:30, 2009), since "muffin'", as earlier stated, is slang for a woman's genitals. It is noticeable that Lady Gaga performs an obviously sexual femininity, as well as an explicit and controlling sexuality in order to show empowerment. In other words, she uses her sexuality to empower and free herself from the limitations placed on her by the male characters. The way the camera focuses on her body can set the viewer in the position of the male gaze of Lady Gaga's body, and in addition, it gives the opportunity to view Lady Gaga from a more objective position. As mentioned in the chapter "Becoming Lady Gaga", she was working as a stripper when she was only eighteen years old (Lester 2010: 22), and to this, she once said, "I have a strong sense of my own sexuality. I love the naked human body and I have a huge body confidence" (Lester 2010: 22). This suggests that it has led her to form a confident and sexualized persona.

"Born This Way"

"Born This Way" music video premiered in 2011 and was the first music video from her second album of the same name. Exclude the prologue the music video lasts for 4 minutes and 41 seconds. In the music video, it is not only Lady Gaga, with sharp prosthetic cheekbones, who makes an appearance, but also the zombie boy model, Rick Genest. Moreover, Lady Gaga is depicted as giving birth to a new human race, which is free of prejudices, during the music videos prologue. The scenes change between several dance sequences.

Judith Butler argues in her theory about gender performativity and discusses what it means to perform gender and examines topics such as drag, transsexuality, and cross-dressing and argues that the gendered body is performative and has no status apart from one's physical sex, which means that it is performing repetitive actions that have been socially and historically constructed. Subsequently, gender is not something that begins from the start and remains static, since it is,

according to Judith Butler, ever-changing and varying in a result of other social stimulations. Performative gender produces a series of effects that confirms what it is to be a man or a woman, that is the construct part of gender. It can be argued that all people in society act and believe that being a man or a woman is an internal reality, and it suggests that it is a singularity that is constantly being reproduced. In addition, it can be argued that society has developed normative institutions such as psychiatrists to act when someone is not operating as their hegemonic, heteronormative being in order to withstand the culture. Gender, along with heterosexuality is culturally constructed to be binary set by society, because of the notion of reproduction, but also because of the stereotypical aspects that have been taught in terms of how men and women should behave and look like, not the principle of desire. Judith Butler proves that since gender is constructed, it can be deconstructed and reconceptualized to be performed differently than it has been for a long time. Lady Gaga proves Judith Butler's theory about performativity in "Born This Way" since it has concrete examples of the theory since Lady Gaga goes from highlighting gender as performance to highlighting the constructed nature of heterosexuality and desire. In the music video, she is creating characters as the cross-dressing zombie girl, the young feminine dancer who exposes her skin by only wearing lingerie, Lady Gaga as Mother Monster, and the character who is genderless. By this, Lady Gaga messes and plays with gender and has a way of using gender identity and androgyny to show it as performativity. The audience might not contemplate Lady Gaga's gender as performative, because of the construction where society believes that gender is an inherent characteristic to each person, which means that males and females differ from biological reasons. However, with the theory provided by Judith Butler, and proof shown by Lady Gaga, it can be determined that gender may, in fact, be something that one performs than rather something one is. Through her body language, explicit a transgressive performance of gender, it can be argued that Lady Gaga has created a new form of identity activism supporting awareness of how limiting and exclusive social structures on gender is. Lady Gaga is the perfect example of what it means to perform gender, and through this, she is not only proving that gender is performed, but she is breaking the stereotypes with each new persona she plays and chooses to ignore the people who do not applaud for her actions about being queer. First of all, she is performing her gender as feminine because of the way she is dressed at the beginning of the music video by dancing around in lingerie and exposing her skin with monstrous cheekbones and pointy shoulders (appendix 5). The reason for her to only wear lingerie could be in order to the connection of the title of the song, where everyone is naked when he or she is born. However, it indicates that Lady Gaga does it in order to

show her feminine sexual body. Moreover, in the prologue, she gives birth, which signifies that she is a woman, which is the only gender that biologically can give birth to a child. Later on in the music video, Lady Gaga dances and sings next to the Canadian model Rick Genest, better known as the zombie boy, who has a skeleton tattoo all over his body, in order for him to look like a zombie. He is wearing a black suit, and so is Lady Gaga, and in addition, her makeup is made in order for her to look like a zombie as well (appendix 6). Again, Lady Gaga tries to deconstruct the fact that everyone is born with a determined gender from the beginning since she is challenging the construction by wearing a suit, which is mostly the norm for men. This indicates that she uses an androgyny identity and is cross-dressed in terms of her wearing a suit, however, she has long pink hair, which tells that she is still maintaining femininity (appendix 7). Moreover, a shot in the music video where the camera focuses on her lower body part, which is blurred, suggests that she wants to show that it does not matter what gender you are, since one's gender, according to Judith Butler, changes throughout one's life and that it is performative in terms of one's surroundings. In addition, when Lady Gaga is challenging her gender by wearing a suit, she is grabbing her genitals, as if she was showing that she has a penis (appendix 8), in order to fulfill the mission of her messing and playing with gender and performativity by challenging the thoughts about her being a female or a male. To this, Judith Butler writes, "assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of "men" will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that "women" will interpret only female bodies. Further, even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution (which will become a question), there is no reason to assume that gender ought to remain as two" (Butler 1990: 6). In the beginning of the music video, Lady Gaga is in the spotlight because of her pale skin and behind her, dancers who are of another skin color than white are in the background. They are all moving in the same way and wears lingerie as well, which indicates that Lady Gaga aims to show equality. When Lady Gaga starts to dance, she touches her body and especially her breasts, in order to show her sexual identity. Another shot shows that she is sitting down with her legs spread, where she background dancers are in between of her legs, which makes it look like that they are all connected or that she is giving birth to them (appendix 9), which makes her represent herself as the mother. When the shot is showing, Lady Gaga sings, "you're Lebanese, you're Orient" (Germanotta et al. 2011), then another shot shows her dancing around again, however, the shot with Lady Gaga and her being connected to the others is shown again and she sings, "no matter gay, straight, or bi, lesbian, transgendered life, I'm on the right track baby I was born to survive" (Germanotta et al. 2011). This

indicates that Lady Gaga wants to state that it does not matter what race or skin color one has and that they have the same rights and are as equals as white people. Moreover, it indicates that gender is fluid. At the end of the music video, the audience sees a pink triangle, which is an indicator for vagina, and Lady Gaga appears inside the triangle wearing a suit and looking like a zombie. This shot represents the concept that it does not matter what gender one has, and even though one is born with a vagina, the person might not act like a girl/woman.

In total, Lady Gaga messes and plays with gender and sexuality in terms of the way she is dressed and the way she uses her body language throughout the music video. The reason for her to do so indicates that she stands up as a role model for other people and show that it is okay to be different and challenge the norms created by society. The music video and the lyrics seem to be her most explicit musical statement, yet it has formed an essential part of her self-construction. It appears to be important to mention that in 2010 Lady Gaga showed up at the MTV Video Music Awards wearing a dress made out of raw beef which is namely known as the meat dress, which made her stand out as very different and explicit compared to other pop music artists, and the media started to focus on the way she expressed herself and her performance. As with the meat dress and the "Born This Way" music video it indicates that Lady Gaga use of extremeness started to be a part of her brand and the performance identities and moreover her costumes often show a hyper-sexualized nature of her persona, which makes it obvious that Lady Gaga is performing multiple genders. As mentioned earlier, Lady Gaga is performing queer, and queerness is an important aspect in Lady Gaga's performances since she is always performing herself and the remaining ambiguity of her own gender and sexual identities creates the road to queerness. The theory about gender supports that gender can be acted out, and Lady Gaga is very explicit when constructing her gender. First, she plays with gender by acting as a man by being cross-dressed, but at the same time, she is very sensual towards Rick Genest, who is a man. Second, when she is dressed as a man, it can be argued that it is not a parody but an act on gender.

"Million Reasons"

The music video "Million Reasons" premiered in 2016 and was Lady Gaga's second music video from the *Joanne* (2016) album, after the music video "Perfect Illusion". In addition, this music video is a continuation from "Perfect Illusion", and it starts with Lady Gaga being picked up from the desert, where the audience saw her at the end of the music video "Perfect Illusion". Afterward, Lady Gaga is in a studio in order to film a music video for the song. When Lady Gaga is

looking at herself in the mirror, the audience sees Lady Gaga looking as a natural woman, in terms of her not wearing that much makeup and having a messy bun (appendix 10), as the audience has used to see her in previous music videos and performances. This could indicate that Lady Gaga plays with performance identities since it can be argued that the person who sees herself in the mirror is Stefani Germanotta and not the persona of Lady Gaga, because of the way the extremeness has vanished. However, later on, the persona of Lady Gaga appears, and Lady Gaga is wearing a pink suit with a pink cowboy hat, and in addition, she has extremely long blonde hair, which is arguably a wig. By this, it seems that Lady Gaga follows the constructed norms and laws set by society by wearing a pink cowboy hat and is having long blonde hair, and as Judith Butler claims, “when the relevant “culture” that “constructs” gender is understood in terms of such a law or set of laws, then it seems that gender is as determined and fixed as it was under the biological-is-destiny formulation” (Butler 1990: 8). The reason for Lady Gaga is not challenging the norms suggests that before in her previous albums she needed to be acknowledged by other people which could indicate a form of lack of confidence, which she has now since she has toned her extreme behavior down. However, Lady Gaga wears this and the wig in order to perform her identity and persona, and even though the song is having a slow pace beat, Lady Gaga is still presenting a little bit of craziness in terms of the way she moves and looks like when she is wearing the pink suit and cowboy hat.

Concerning Lady Gaga's performativity in the music video, it seems that the audience sees another side of Lady Gaga, which she has never shown before. She plays a little with gender by wearing a suit and a cowboy hat, which is associated with men's wear; however, she maintains the feminine touch because of the suit is pink. It can be argued that she does not really expose or express sexuality in an extreme way, but in the beginning of the music video she embraces her femininity in terms of the way she is gazing herself looking as an ideal woman. However, when Lady Gaga is picked up from the desert in the beginning of the music video, she is wearing cowboy jeans and a t-shirt including sunglasses and a cap. By this look, one could argue that she demonstrates a little masculinity, and it suggests that she is challenging gender and the ideal norm of what to wear, and in addition, she uses a little of androgyny. However, it can be argued that Lady Gaga has found another way of using and expressing her sexuality or another way of being sexy.

Though it can be argued that Lady Gaga is not showing an explicitly sexualized persona since the style of the song is soft folk-pop. Because of this, Judith Butler's theory about performativity seems not to apply to the song in terms of Lady Gaga's persona is toned down. However, it can be claimed that Lady Gaga's *Joanne* (2016) album can be considered as high culture. Though, one has

to keep in mind that Lady Gaga, after her release of this album, has returned to her monstrous performance again.

6.5 Partial conclusion

In order to give an explanation of Lady Gaga's change in her performativity and performance identities, one can consider the three titles of the albums. The first album *The Fame* (2008) is a dedication of achieving fame and is fascinating. However, it seems important to mention that the songs from *The Fame* (2008) album also appears on *The Fame Monster* (2009), which makes her more desirable and explicit. The songs on *The Fame* (2008) represent desirability, while the songs that have been added on *The Fame Monster* (2009) are more troubled and monstrous. Lady Gaga once stated, "on my release *The Fame Monster* (2009), I wrote about everything I didn't write on *The Fame* (2008). While traveling the world for two years, I've encountered several monsters, each represented by a different song on the new record: my "Fear of Sex Monster", my "Fear of Alcohol Monster" my "Fear of Love Monster", my "Fear of Death Monster", my "Fear of Loneliness Monster"" (Gray 2012: 43). The *Born This Way* (2011) album attempts to start a discussion about sexuality, identity, and is far more explicit. *Joanne* (2016) can be argued to be stylistic and has a change of content in terms of exposing her true self, which goes against the persona she is. It can be claimed that with this album, Lady Gaga has been through a maturation process.

When examining Lady Gaga's visual appearance, it can be argued that Lady Gaga is on the one side very hyper-sexualized and on the other side she is an ambiguous queer, and these two sides can be seen in her performativity and sexuality. She does not put herself into the masses but is more extreme no matter what she does, which can be considered as almost being pornographically and is having transgressive sexuality.

7. Discussion chapter

7.1 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter aims to examine and discuss a comparative analysis of the chosen songs and music videos, which the analysis has worked with above. This will be done in order to discuss if Lady Gaga's songs, music videos, and persona have changed thematically since her career took off in 2008 with *The Fame* (2008) album until her latest studio album *Joanne* (2016). The main reason for producing a comparative analysis suggests the change in Lady Gaga's appearances, performance identities, and the way she expresses herself as a persona. When examining the comparative analysis, it seems essential to deliberate on Lady Gaga's fan base The Little Monsters in terms of

discussing and reflecting if the fan base has had any impact on the music icon and persona Lady Gaga has constructed since the beginning of her career.

In addition, this chapter will contain a discussion of Lady Gaga's persona and the way she uses performativity in the lyrics and in the music videos. By doing so, the feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey's essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) concerning the male gaze will be a reference in order to discuss whether Lady Gaga is aware of herself in a provocative and challenging manner. Subsequently, this chapter will contain a critical perspective on Lady Gaga's use of performativity by considering Judith Butler's theory on gender studies and performativity.

7.2 Comparative analysis

In many of Lady Gaga's lyrics and ones the analysis contain, it is clear that Lady Gaga is an artist who uses ambiguity in her lyrics. Songs as "Just Dance" and "Poker Face" seems at first hand to be banal, but when examining the lyrics and keeping the persona of Lady Gaga in mind it can be perceived that the lyrics are dealing with serious fundamental issues, but also provocative elements, such as her challenging the gender norms. The two songs from *The Fame* (2008) album make it obvious that the songs are party songs in terms of the fast beat and the electronic tones. The way Lady Gaga uses her body in the "Poker Face" music video can be perceived that she is using her female sexual body and by having background dancers and her singing into the camera, creates the music video to be a mainstream pop music video. Moreover, Lady Gaga's look and appearance in "Poker Face" is very feminine in terms of her long blonde hair, lots of makeup and tight revealing clothing. In addition, since *The Fame* (2008) was Lady Gaga's studio album and it was in the beginning of her career, it can be argued that Lady Gaga did not really have any other opportunity to do other things since she was not an artist who was that popular because she was new in the music industry. Since there are many pop artists in contemporary popular and music culture that expresses them in a sexual way in order to achieve attention, Lady Gaga expressed herself in a feminine sexual way in order to achieve attention to the audience, Lady Gaga expressed herself in a feminine sexual way in order to become acknowledge as a pop star. In addition, since Lady Gaga was not a familiar pop star, which she became later, it can be argued that she did it in order to be accepted by the audience. After the "acceptance", she has had the ability to create a persona with well-known characteristics where she had the possibility to express more extremeness. Lady Gaga became one of the greatest pop stars in the contemporary music scene, and besides this, she created a fan base, which she named The Little Monsters, where her fans around the world could express their feelings online and state how they felt by writing about serious issues they were facing, such

as getting accepted in society in terms of their sexual identity. This gives the impression that Lady Gaga took advantages of this and she constructed another identity; The Mother Monster persona where her statements on her second studio album *Born This Way* (2011) was more serious because of her singing about political themes such as being accepted in society when being homosexual, bisexual, and transgender. Because of this, Lady Gaga uses her icon as an advocate for people who are fighting against the norm in society. Four years later, when Lady Gaga released her fourth and latest studio album *Joanne* (2016) it seems that Lady Gaga has changed in terms of the way she looks and what she sings about. In other words, her Lady Gaga persona appearance seems to be faded away into a more serious and personal character. Moreover, Lady Gaga does not put on different characters on the *Joanne* (2016) album, as she does on *The Fame* (2008) and *Born This Way* (2011).

In total, it is obvious that Lady Gaga's persona and performance identities have changed since the beginning. It has changed in terms of what Lady Gaga's lyrics deal with, the pace in the music, Lady Gaga's looks, and appearances. But why has it changed? Lady Gaga's career started back in 2008 and is still going strong to this day, but until 2016, it might have changed because of the change and the political issues in society, which Lady Gaga confronts and provokes in her songs, but also that Lady Gaga has achieved much more attention and more financial and social capital since her first studio album, which has given her the ability to become more extreme in her music and identities. In other words, when Lady Gaga started she had to put herself out there in a mainstream way in order to get viewers and when she got it, she had the ability to stand out as a more extreme persona in order to become a memorable icon. Thereafter, it seems that Lady Gaga has taken off her mask and started to expose herself as a vulnerable girl, which she might did since she had achieved so much attention, that it was time to care about herself and show what was behind the façade of Lady Gaga. As previously mentioned, the way Lady Gaga has triumphed an enormous fan base, The Little Monsters, might have created the persona Lady Gaga has become throughout her career in terms of that every pop star needs fans in order to functions as an artist. However, the way Lady Gaga has accomplished her fan base suggests that she has put a lot of work in getting the fan base. First of all, Lady Gaga has created a subculture which she has giving the name The Little Monsters, which makes the fan base feel as a certain group in society who stand up for the same things as Lady Gaga. The fact that Lady Gaga is an advocate and has the possibility to tell her statements in her lyrics and music videos, her fans follow her since they might not have the possibilities to express their feelings and opinions to the world.

Concerning the way Lady Gaga performed on *The Fame* (2008) album seems to be very mainstream and pop, and it indicates that it was the only opportunity for her to do, because no one did not really know her, which meant that she had to behave as an ideal mainstream pop star, in order to be accepted. Later on, Lady Gaga started to use the monster brand, which deals with the fact that being a person, who is different or does not follow heteronormative elements in society, had the possibility to follow Lady Gaga as her Little Monsters where she was the supporter as Mother Monster. This suggests that she did this in order not to disappear from the crowd in popular music culture, but had to come up with an extreme and different aspect to be remembered. On account of this, Lady Gaga achieved a fan base and from then on the *Born This Way* (2011) album can be considered as being made for her fans, because of the issues she sings about. Moreover, from 2011 Lady Gaga became more extreme in her behavior and performance, in terms of the way she started to dress up in over-exaggerated costumes and having monstrous prosthetics on her body, which indicates that she gained a lot of success and an enormous fan base since she had the ability to stand out. Five years after, the *Joanne* (2016) studio album was released and it seems that Lady Gaga wanted to take care of herself in terms of the songs are more personal and she exposes herself in a sense which is more vulnerable that has not been seen before by Lady Gaga. She does not express her gender and sexuality as she did before.

Furthermore, it seems crucial to mention that in 2010 Lady Gaga showed up at the MTV Music Awards wearing a meat dress and subsequently in 2011 Lady Gaga was carried in a gigantic egg on the red carpet at the Grammys. When analyzing the music video "Born This Way" it seems clear that Lady Gaga aims to put on a mask and makes everything over the top. This tells that Lady Gaga is a persona who stands out of the crowd and makes her memorable. All of this took place after her career expanded right after *The Fame* (2008) album. However, the most thrilling accessory Lady Gaga has in the era of the *Joanne* (2016) album is a pink cowboy hat.

To conclude this further, it can be suggested that Lady Gaga needed to be accepted and acknowledged in order to function as a pop star, which could indicate that she had a lack of confidence since she had to put herself out there as a persona who had to perform extremely. As seen on her latest album, it suggests that she has found her place in the music industry as a persona who does not have to act over the top in order to be accepted. By this, Lady Gaga started her career by challenging the norms to a persona who has the confidence to behave as the biological gender she is.

7.3 A critical perspective on the persona of Lady Gaga

In Laura Mulvey's essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), which concerns the male gaze and the image of women in film writes, "the determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (Mulvey 1975: 837). In addition, she mentions the two levels the male gaze contains which suggests the woman as erotic object for the male protagonist, but also as erotic object for the spectator, who most likely is predominately male and heterosexual and because of this, "a woman performs within the narrative, the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude" (Mulvey 1975: 838). Besides, close-up shots of legs, face, or other (passive) female body parts make it erotic in the gaze of the (active) male, which gives satisfaction. Laura Mulvey uses the feministic psychoanalytical approach, and even though the essay is from 1975 it can still be used and is relevant as a critical aspect when discussing women in television. However, in the contemporary aspect, it can be argued that the theory will concern more on the female sexuality as a form of empowerment in contrast to objectivity. In other words, the theory by Laura Mulvey has some good point and can reveal some structures and mechanisms. In Lady Gaga's music videos "Poker Face" and "Born This Way" she uses her female body in a sexual manner and it can be argued that she can be objectified as a sexual object in terms of the way she is dressed in revealing clothes and subsequently how close-up shots of her face, body, and skin creates a sexual identity. But is Lady Gaga aware or does she do it in order to send a message to the audience and her fans? One suggestion might be that Lady Gaga is using her female body in order to show empowerment and, in addition, showing her feministic values. Nevertheless, it can be argued that in order to stand up for feminism one does not have to expose their body in such way as Lady Gaga does in her music videos. The doctoral researcher Ealasaid Munro states in her article *Feminism: A Fourth Wave* (2013) how the Internet, as well as other social media platforms, has spread the question of gender equality. Moreover, the wave deals with a focus on female empowerment and how women, for example, can express and expose their sexy bodies in challenging clothing. This could be what Lady Gaga aims to show in her performance and hence validating women's right to be sexual. In contemporary popular culture and music, this is often seen by female pop stars such as Beyoncé, Miley Cyrus, and Ariana Grande, who uses their sexual femininity in order to show empowerment, though, Lady Gaga is far more extreme by the way she shows it in terms of her moves, costumes, and androgyny performance, which seems not to be seen today from other pop stars. As mentioned,

in the “Poker Face” music video, close-up shots of Lady Gaga’s body might create a sexual identification from a male’s perspective. However, it seems that Lady Gaga exudes confidence in her sexuality, which gives power in the portrayal, because of her assertive moves in front of the camera, which makes her objectively empowering.

Moving on, it can be argued that Lady Gaga is in control of the male gaze in terms of her confidence in front of the camera and that she embraces her gender as a strong woman and her female sexual identity. Judith Butler posits, “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results” (Butler 1990: 25). This is the performativity of gender or gender-as-performance. Though, it can be argued if it is all natural-doing by Lady Gaga and that Judith Butler’s gender theory seems right in terms of Lady Gaga’s behavior and the way she expresses performativity or if Lady Gaga does it because of an agenda in order to get a wider fan base or if it is just a brand and niche Lady Gaga is doing in order to become a pop star who stands up for breaking heteronormativity. One can suggest that Lady Gaga is a performer where each one can interpret the way she portrays gender, sexuality, and identity. Her music videos such as “Poker Face” and “Born This Way” contain topics such as queerness and sexuality, and at the same time, she exposes the untraditional feminine behavior in an explicit sexualization. However, because of the way Lady Gaga uses androgyny and stereotypically feminine characteristics from her costumes it seems that she is over-exaggerating and seems less serious. Moreover, Lady Gaga has constructed a certain persona and identity in terms of gender and sexuality, however, at the beginning of her career, she started speculations about her sex in the media in terms of whether she was a hermaphrodite or not, “despite her explicitly gendered stage name and the obvious fact of her biological nature as a female, Lady Gaga has, especially in the early stages of her rise to fame, been confronted with the puzzling rumor that she is a hermaphrodite (Gray 2012: 25).

In total, the question about Lady Gaga being an artist who can be connected as an artist who does gender as performance can be argued. It is clear that Lady Gaga is a performer and an artist, and in her music videos and performance appearances, one might say that she creates gender in the way she is doing and the way she dresses. However, it can be argued that it is only part of Lady Gaga’s performance identity and behind closed doors, she might not worship the persona of Lady Gaga. On account of, it can be argued that, as mentioned before, that the way Lady Gaga uses performativity indicates that it could be her brand and niche in order to achieve attention and success, a broader fan base that can or wants to relate to the persona of Lady Gaga, but also the fact

that Lady Gaga's songs deal with topics such as gender and sexuality which have become a discussed aspect in today's society.

The fact that the comparative analysis shows that Lady Gaga's performance identities have changed since the beginning of her career until her latest music video "Million Reasons", Lady Gaga still is committed to the persona, in terms of her physical characteristics, however, Lady Gaga's latest live performances at the Grammys do not have that many props on stage as she had in her previous performances, but she still keeps her crazy and over-exaggerated extreme Lady Gaga persona appearance while performing. Even though Lady Gaga has changed some elements in her performance she is still Gaga.

8. Conclusion

It can be concluded that Lady Gaga expresses performativity in different ways in her lyrics and visual performances in terms of the way she acts her gender and sexuality. Lady Gaga's feminine performativity is exceedingly performed in the "Poker Face" music video for the reason that she wears ultra-feminine clothing and exposes her body in a sexy feminine way. Her sexuality throughout the music video is expressed by her body language, which can be argued to be challenging since she uses her body in order to seduce men and women. According to Judith Butler, one's actions and performance creates one gender, and Lady Gaga's gender is being expressed by her different looks and appearances. However, it can be determined that Lady Gaga starts playing and challenging her gender identity in "Born This Way" and "Hair" and changes in performance identities by showing androgynous behavior and appearance. To this, Judith Butler argues that even though gender is constructed it can be deconstructed and performed in a different way, and this is what Lady Gaga does in this context prior to the way she challenges gender and sexuality. Judith Butler claims, "if gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way" (Butler 1990: 6). When analyzing the songs from her latest album *Joanne* (2016) it can be argued that Lady Gaga's way of showing performativity in terms of gender and sexuality has been toned down in terms of her visual presentation in her music video. Hence it can be argued that Lady Gaga's development throughout her career has been changed since she started being a mainstream pop star, by making party music with fast beats and having a feminine sexual look, in order to be accepted in the music industry. On her second album *Born This Way* (2011) it can be said that Lady Gaga achieved a fan base, which she named The Little Monsters, and was able to stand out of the mainstream pop star crowd since she had attained a

fan base and fame, and because of this, she started being more extreme in her behavior and appearance and her performance identity suggests that something has changed. Throughout this album, Lady Gaga's feminine identity changed into a monstrous identity by having cheekbones prosthetics and pointy shoulders, and it can be argued that the otherness in Lady Gaga appeared. However, five years after, Lady Gaga's way of expressing performativity seems to be changed, since her music on her latest album does not contain party tracks, but is a genre of folk-soft pop, which put Lady Gaga in a position where her extremeness is at low-key but becomes more personal. In other words, the three titles of the albums can be argued to determine the change in Lady Gaga's way of showing performance identities, since the first album concerns about achieving fame and the fascination of becoming rich and famous, whereby the second album expresses serious statements such as politics, religion, and identities, and lastly, the latest album illustrate a Lady Gaga behind the façade of the performance identities. The reason for Lady Gaga expressing gender, sexuality and identity in the beginning of the career can be argued that it is in order to become a brand and a persona, which can be argued that she has control of herself and is aware of her action, which according to Judith Butler, is something that happens in one's surroundings and different situations without being aware of it, in other words, it is all natural.

Interpreted another way, Lady Gaga's persona is very extreme and at some point, her visual appearances can be considered as pornographically. Her identity changes along with her performances, such as being the mainstream pop star, a person with a fluid sexuality, Mother Monster, and the natural looking woman.

9. References

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, NY 10001: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, Inc.

Deflem, M (2016). *Lady Gaga and the Sociology of Fame: The Rise of a Pop Star in an Age of Celebrity*. Palgrave Macmillan US

Germanotta, S. and Khayat, N. (2011). *Hair*. [Song] Abbey Road Studios (London): Streamline.

Germanotta, S., Khayat, N. and Thiam, A. (2008). *Just Dance*. [Song] Record Plant Studios: Streamline.

Germanotta, S. and Khayat, N. (2009). *Poker Face*. [Song] Record Planet Studios: Streamline.

Germanotta, S. and Laursen, J. (2011). *Born This Way*. [Song] Abbey Road Studios (London): Streamline.

Germanotta, S. and Ronson, M. (2016). *Joanne*. [CD] Shangri-La, Gypsy Place Studios Malibu, CA: Interscope.

Germanotta, S. and Ronson, M. (2016). *Joanne*. [Song] Shangri-La, Gypsy Place Studios Malibu, CA: Interscope.

Germanotta, S., Fair, R., Garibar, F., Herzberg, T., Jerkins, R., Riley, T., Khayat, N. and Dresti, N. (2009). *The Fame Monster*. [CD] Darkchild Studios, Los Angeles, CA: Streamline.

Germanotta, S., Fusari, R., Kierszenbaum, M., Khayat, N. and Dresti, N. (2008). *The Fame*. [CD] Chalice Recording Studios, Los Angeles, CA: Streamline.

Germanotta, S., Garibay, F., Lange, R., Laursen, J., Sparks, C., Khayat, N., Blair, P. and Grigahcine, W. (2011). *Born This Way*. [CD] Abbey Road Studios (London): Streamline.

- Germanotta, S., Lindsey, H. and Ronson, M. (2016). *Million Reasons*. [Song] Shangri-La, Gypsy Place Studios Malibu, CA: Interscope.
- Gray, Richard J. (2012). *The Performance Identities of Lady Gaga*. McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Hogben, R. (2016) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=en2D_5TzXCA YouTube Web. March-May
- Knight, N. (2011) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wV1FrqwZyKw> YouTube Web. March-May
- Lester, P. (2010) *Looking for Fame. The Life of a Pop Princess. Lady Gaga* Omnibus Press
- Moukarbel, C (2017) *Gaga; Five Foot Two*. Netflix
- Mulvey, L. (1975) *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. *Screen* 16.3
- Munro, E (2013) *Feminism: A Fourth Wave*. Sage Journals
- Nagoshi, J., Nagoshi, C., Brzuzy, S. (2013) *Gender and Sexual Identity. Transcending Feminist and Queer Theory*. New York. Springer
- Olsen, R. (2008) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bESGLojNYSo> YouTube Web. March-May
- Rampton, M (2008) *Four Waves of Feminism*. Pacific Magazine, Fall
- Shuker, R. (2001). *Understanding Popular Music*. 2nd ed. Taylor & Francis.
- Shuker, R. (2016). *Understanding Popular Music Culture*. 4th ed. Milton: Taylor & Francis.
- Snyder, R. Claire (2008) *What is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Direction Essay*. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society.

Vernallis, C., Herzog, A., Richardson, J. (2013) *The Oxford Handbook of Sound and Image in Digital Media*. Oxford University Press

Zeisler, A. (2008). *Feminism and Pop Culture*. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press