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Baudrillard in Drag: Lady Gaga and the Accelerated Cycles of Pop

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How could a figure so calculated and artificial, so clinical and strangely antiseptic, so stripped of genuine eroticism have become the icon of her generation?

– Camille Paglia

Pop time, we would argue, is cyclical, rather than linear. Yet if there is a characteristic of our age of fast capitalisms and critical modernities, then it is that these pop cycles are increasing in speed. This paper investigates accelerated ageing and the speed at which new pop becomes old pop. Women are a canary in the mine of such a process. The brightest and loudest of these contemporary tweeters is Lady Gaga. She has compressed Madonna's two decades of fame into five years. She wears the pop history of Elton John, David Bowie, Donna Summer, and Debbie Harry on her sleeve. Her use of inversion creates a new bundling of radicalism and commercialism, old and new, ageing and youth. Our goal in this article is to track how and why Lady Gaga has compressed the cycles of pop and ageing. We argue that Gaga is Baudrillard in drag. Jean Baudrillard committed to shallow ideas, to banality, very deeply. So does Gaga. Using surprise and shock to create disturbing visual and sonic moments for the enabling of difference, Gaga deploys the full palette of pop. Pop history is her paint box.

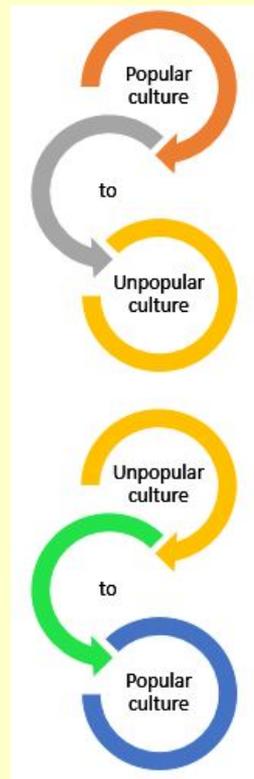
Our work opens this paint box to develop a model of pop time and how theories of accelerated culture are transforming the concepts of both popular culture and popular memory. In probing such questions, we also answer Camille Paglia's inquiry and show why her disdain for Gaga misreads (post) youth culture and (post) popular culture. Lady Gaga is more than a case study. She is a metaphor, metonymy, and model to think about how new theories of speed are activated on popular culture.

Pop Time

Pop history seemed, for some commentators at least, to have stopped sometime in the late 1980s. This was the so-called postmodern moment for many critics and fans, although it would be better to label it as a pivotal point in the development of contemporary mobile "accelerated culture." Indeed, "we have never been postmodern" (Redhead, *We Have Never* 1). History as a whole, not just pop history, was about to be reversed, or wiped out, so that nothing done previously was of any "authentic" value. Since the late 1940s and early 1950s, pop history had seemingly unfolded, scene on scene, genre on genre, layering itself into a rich cultural tapestry worked over and over by music journalists, academics and fans. From the 1950s to the late 1960s, the change was relatively leisurely given what was to come. Then various splinters followed in the early to mid-1970s: psychedelic rock, progressive rock, glam rock, punk rock. In a parallel pop discourse, soul in various guises (Motown, southern, Philly), ska, reggae, and disco unfolded from the 1960s onwards, fully fledged by the time of punk in 1976 and 1977. As this time stretched out, starting from the 1950s and ending in the mid to late 1970s, the pace of change in terms of genres sped up considerably by the period's end. There was much less space and time for a scene or a genre in the late 1960s or 1970s (compared with 1950s or early 1960s) to grow from underground to overground. Therefore, it was difficult to remain distinct from the pop mainstream. The same was true of its move back again into obscurity. Compare the gestation period of rock and roll, which took several years in the 1950s, with punk, which had approximately six months in 1976.

A subcultural history of popular music was also written along similar modes. In Britain, for example, the youth subcultures organized around the figures of rockers, mods, skinheads, rastas, bowie boys, and punks. All boasted homologies to music, drugs, and fashion styles and were observed by cultural studies scholars to have unfolded in linear fashion from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. After this date, subcultures were seen regularly to be "revived" (mod revivals, ska revivals, skinhead revivals, glam revivals, rave revivals, and so on) though at a quicker pace over the next thirty-five years. However, pop history after the punk years was starting to turn back on itself, creating a feeling of claustrophobia, as if nothing new could be created. By the late 1980s, a fully-fledged new pop culture looked as if it only had the reconfigurations of the past with which to work. But new media and new technologies were to intertwine with this new pop culture. Let us look further at how this so-called postmodern popular culture purported to work in accelerated culture.

A cultural object cascades from popular to unpopular culture, and from unpopular to popular culture.



Put another way, there is a movement from popular culture to post-popular culture. Unpopular or post-popular culture is the fodder of popular memory. It is woven into the fabric of fans' lives, only to return as a memory trigger and nostalgia. Marcel Danesi described this process as the "teenaging" of culture. He states, "Pop music, for instance, has become the norm because trends within it pass quickly from the teen world to the adult world and, thus, can be sold and recycled over and over to all age groups" (viii). Actually, the movements in popular culture through popular memory are not inevitable. Not all – not most – of old pop returns to new audiences. Popular culture is special and dynamic. Most importantly, it is always moving. Digitization – and such popular memory repositories such as iTunes, the Internet Archive, and YouTube – increase the scale, scope, and speed through which texts, songs, films, and ideas cascade up and down this model.

Jean Baudrillard captured this movement and moment in 1988, the year of the second summer of love ("Hunting Nazis" 15). He predicted that we would move automatically from 1989 to 2000, missing out entirely on the concluding decade of the century and millennium. This was the birth of the pregnant phrase – or, more appropriately, the constipated era – for "popular cultural studies": "the end-of-the-century party" (Redhead, *The End 7*). For Baudrillard, who once appeared on stage in the US in a gold lame suit with mirrored lapels reading his self-penned song/poem "Motel Suicide" (Redhead, *The Jean Baudrillard Reader 7*), the reason for the dismissal of the 1990s was that we had already started the "end-of-the-century party"; thus we were deeply in "revival of the past mode." Since Baudrillard's late 1980s statement, contemporary music styles and forms rewound pop history with the same mixture of longing and revulsion that youth subcultures celebrate the various pasts of post-war youth culture. The new technologies, and their application in global popular culture, developed during the 1990s and 2000s, shrinking time and space, which was an application of deterritorialization and disintermediation.

Deterritorialization refers to a two stage process:

1. The disconnection from physical geography, place, and location.
2. The reimagining of new spaces, places, and allegiances.

So a consumer's body could be located in Detroit in the US or Dubbo in Australia, but through popular culture it enters the imagined spaces of Warhol's (or Gaga's) New York City.

Disintermediation is a distinct and particular formation and refers to the way in which links are removed from the supply chain between producers and consumers. New connections are enabled through digitization. So instead of a range of middle managers, agents, and service industries, a more direct relationship between producers and consumers is formed. Through the early years of the 2000s, the production of media content became easier. Word Press and Drupal meant that the users of websites could become the writers of websites. Blogging showed that anyone with a point of view, web literacy, and some writing or photographic skills could upload their views for others to read and offer feedback. Cheap and good quality sound recording equipment and software, and video recording equipment and software, have meant that reasonably high quality sound and vision can be created in the home. As mobile phones gained more functions in developing sonic and visual materials, more information of highly variable quality was available to be circulated on the web. Podcasting is part of user generated content as well. Just as blogging shook up publishing, podcasting rattled radio. Anyone with a view, hardware, software, and basic digital literacies could record and upload a sonic file. Therefore, user generated content refers to blogs, social networking sites, discussion boards, news sites, customer review sites, photo, video, and music sharing sites. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, and Wikipedia. While user generated content was an amateur process and practice, it is now being both harnessed and delivered by businesses and corporations. So Amazon and Apple's iTunes enable "feedback" that is integral to the purchasing decisions of consumers.

The consequence of user generated content, of digitized citizens uploading and downloading prose, images, and sounds, is that it flattens the relationship between producers and consumers. That is disintermediation. In conventional business models, multiple layers and roles are involved in designing, creating, branding, marketing, and retail selling of a product. In other words, the person who sells lipstick did not develop the chemistry to make it. The person who designed a chair did not build it or sell it. But in the online environment, many of these layers between producers and consumers are either collapsed or removed. In analogue, pre-web 2.0 environments, a musician used to write a song. It was recorded in a professional recording studio. The music would be stamped onto a vinyl platform. A marketer would create an advertising campaign. The product was shipped to a retail store. The CD or vinyl would then be sold to a consumer via a retail assistant. Through digitization, user generated content, and disintermediation, musicians write and record a song in their house and upload it to iTunes where it is purchased by consumers. Therefore, content originators and businesses can deal with customers directly without the mediation of wholesalers and retailers. Competitive and transparent pricing often results.

Lady Gaga has activated both disintermediation and deterritorialization. The first authentically post-downloading diva, Gaga holds an array of records for the most downloaded singles, enabled through her Twitter feed and Facebook feed. She establishes direct relationships with her fans, the "little monsters" as they call themselves. Through social media, she displaces music journalists and "talks" with fans, rebutting criticism. For example, before the release of her 2013 single "Applause," she wrote on Facebook: "Don't focus on ANY blogger criticism. I have been a producer/songwriter/musician for over ten years. Trust the artist, bloggers are not critics. The fans + music scholars are the best critics because they know the artist intimately. #STOPHarassingTheArtist we are here to entertain you. #FreeTheArtist #StopTheDramaStartTheMusic. Let's make 2013 a year where music/talent/artistry is more important than gossip/fanwars. I respect all fanbases for their passion #BeTheChange." This is disintermediation, but it is also intriguing that she validates "fans + music scholars." Such recognition of academics within popular music is rare, but it is a way (a tactic no less) to wedge space away from the reintermediation enacted by music journalists.

The key structural change enacted by disintermediation and deterritorialization is that time loops and hoops. This process is described by Paul Virilio, Baudrillard's long-time friend and colleague, as "cyclical" (cited in Redhead, *Theorist for an Accelerated Culture* 139-140), which means – for example – that more than sixty years of popular music is available for downloading on iTunes or YouTube. Pop can be plundered by the pop consumer of any age without any specific knowledge of the original position in linear history of the particular tune or performer. As we have seen already, pop time is cyclical, rather than linear. Instead of a chronological narrative of music drawn from the 1950s to the present, unfolding into the future, pop history repeats back on itself. Pop time includes both genres and iconic figures. Pop time speeds up. Acid House and Rave, for example, from the late 1980s and 1990s were

revived numerous times in the succeeding years until reprised for a short time with Nu-Rave in the late 2000s.

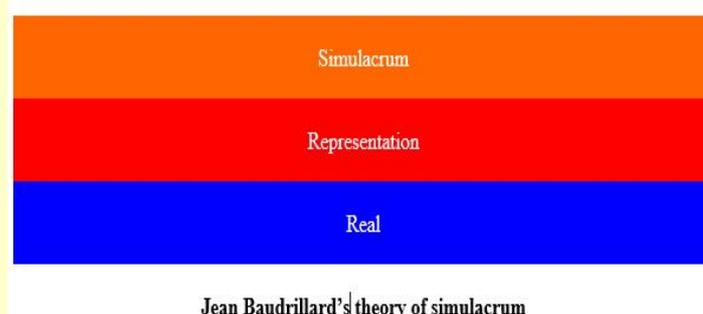
But there is a further argument: that these pop "cycles" are increasing in speed. Popular music writer Jon Savage described pop music from the period from 1977 to 1996 exactly in these terms:

The impulse to speed is at the heart of post-war pop. In the words of famed producer Guy Stevens, "All rock'n'roll speeds up." You can hear that within the tempo of punk staples like Lonnie Donegan's Rock Island Line, the Beatles' Twist and Shout, Patti Smith's We're Gonna Have a Real Good Time Together, the Clash's Brand New Cadillac and the Saints' This Perfect Day. You can also hear it in the way that pop genres have evolved even faster. Mod into the Ramones and Punk; Chicago House into Acid and Hardcore; Rare Groove and Breakbeat into the serious time damage that is Jungle. The cycles come and go, from motion to entropy, but the impulse to up the ante, to go faster than anyone else, is inherent in the twinning of technology and the adolescent psyche that occurs in Western consumerisms. (6)

This process has increased in speed in the last fifteen years since Savage's commentary. What needs to be tracked with some care is the momentum at which any era of new pop becomes old pop – partly because pop history embraces a version of Pop Art, a notion that Lady Gaga has (ad)dressed each day of her career.

Writer Simon Reynolds, in his book *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past*, has turned his pop history expertise to some of these questions. He details the process of rewinding and rewriting in the pop era. He explores the crucial question of "the simultaneity of pop time" (x), and in doing so Reynolds lays out what happened when we ran out of past in the early years of the millennium. He claims that "instead of being the threshold to the future, the first ten years of the twenty-first century turned out to be the "Re" Decade...if only it was just the old music and old musicians coming back, in archived form or as reanimated performers. But the 2000s was also the decade of rampant recycling: bygone genres revived and renovated, vintage sonic material reprocessed and recombined" (xi). Encouragingly, Reynolds is still a progressive: he believes that originality is possible and states, "I still believe the future is out there" (428). Yet one strand of this future is originality through the speed of change rather than new content. Pop content is degrading, through cascading cycles and loops. To reveal the mechanism for this recycling, we must step into Jean Baudrillard's simulacrum.

Baudrillard's important over-cited but under-read *Simulacra and Simulation*, published in 1981, is often cited as one of the key books in theorizing postmodernity. Whatever the outcome of the myriad debates about Baudrillard's relation to postmodernity, most importantly, this book analyzes contemporary notions of knowledge, truth and falsehood. It opens with a quote from Ecclesiastes that is a fake, which generations of naïve scholars have restated as a truth. The quote from Ecclesiastes/Baudrillard provides the basis of this new model for pop: "The simulacrum is never what hides the truth – it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true" (Baudrillard 1). He confirmed that "something has disappeared" (2), and "the era of simulation is inaugurated by a liquidation of all referentials" (2). He located a system of signs composed of "a material more malleable than meaning, in that it lends itself to all systems of equivalences" (2). Therefore, the simulacrum is not an illusion, mask or disguise; instead, it is the loss of the real. The task emerging from Jean Baudrillard's hypotheses and arguments is to conceptualize the abstraction, which seems an appropriate use of Ecclesiastes/Baudrillard. For Baudrillard, there is a three-layered way to think about life: the real, the representation, and the simulacra.



Baudrillard's theory means that an action, event or text is not only immediately represented through media but also is inevitably and rapidly re-represented. It

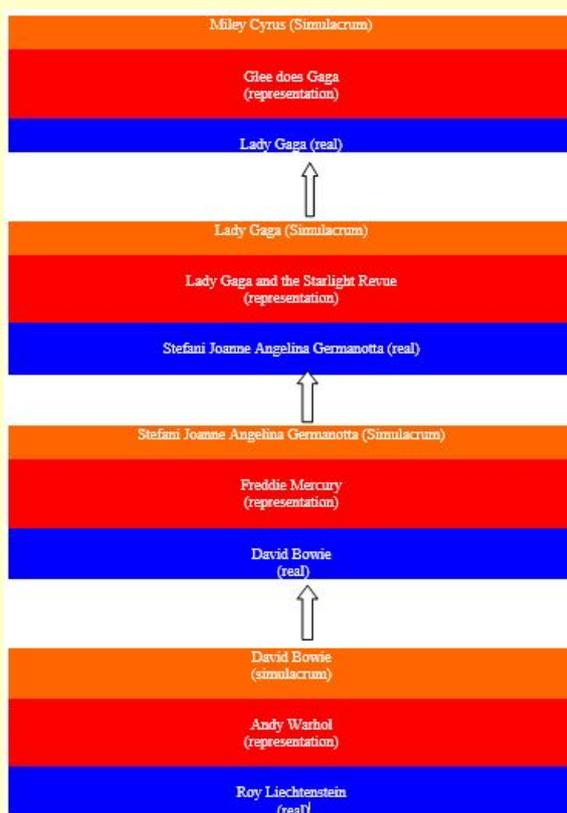
circulates as a dis-anchored signifier (form), which means that information – content – is disconnected from context and temporarily hooks into ephemeral media, only to unhook and continue moving.

The consequences of such decontextualization are that celebrities, magazines, and consumerism become a proxy for the real (see Inglis; Turner). The news is not real. It is a representation of the real. Yet most of us are spending more and more time in the simulacrum, the representation of the representation. Life is real. But tabloidized media means that most of us, most of the time are living through and with other people's representations. These signifiers, without anchorage to a context, circulate through the simulacrum and bounce around the digitized, convergent, Web 2.0 environment.

Baudrillard's model does not stop at this point. On the first page of *Simulation*, he argued that the simulacrum creates and implements its own referential system: the hyperreal (1), which is constituted within the simulacra and does not require anything external or contextual to provide meaning and authenticity (Genosko 41). In other words, the re-representations appeal to other re-representations for credibility and verification. If it is on Twitter, then it must be true. What the hyperreal configures is a system whereby representations talk amongst themselves (Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies* 9-10), disconnecting further from any notion of the real.

The simulacrum becomes the real for the next cycle of significations. It is a cascading model. The simulacrum in one era becomes the real in the next, which means that transitory and ephemeral celebrity culture becomes the anchor – the real – for the next representation and simulacrum. Twitter is the great example of the simulacrum. An event happens. It is reported online. It is then commented on via twitter and blogs, without anchoring to earlier knowledge, references or history. Instead, the mashup uses other re-representations as textual fodder to create something new. This vertical tumbling of real, representation, and simulacrum is accomplished at great speed. This movement and change was described by Baudrillard as "replacing." He asked, "Nazism, the concentration camps or...did all those things really exist? The question is perhaps an intolerable one, but the interesting thing here is what makes it logically possible. And in fact what makes it possible is the media's way of replacing any event, any idea, any history with any other" (*The Transparency of Evil* 91). This passage remains a controversial and disturbing one from Baudrillard. In the wrong hands, he could appear a holocaust denier, but his argument is much more complex. He explains how and why holocaust deniers are possible or indeed Charles Darwin deniers or the flat earth movement. Baudrillard describes this process as being based on the media "replacing" – or as we would prefer to rewrite it "re-placing" – events, ideas, and history. Therefore, it is the reorganization of images that creates the culture of equivalence, that any set of facts is as important as any other.

Gaga tumbles through the real, representation, and simulacrum, but at great speed. When reading the diagram, start at the base with Roy Liechtenstein.



Through this cascading – and leaky – model, the simulacrum itself is layered and textured. It appears to replicate the fabric of life and experience. Actually, signifiers float and bounce. Simulacra re-intermediation takes place via social networking. This re-intermediation via social networking constructs layers in the simulacrum rather than reconnecting with "the real." This cascade increases in speed, which is the Gaga mode of pop time.

Gaga: Fast Pop

My name is Lady Gaga, I've been on the music scene
for years, and I'm telling you, this is what's next.

– Lady Gaga, cited in Sturges

Lady Gaga has understood the new pop time, deploying digitization with the precision of Greenwich Mean Time. She has released four "albums" since 2008: *The Fame* (2008), *The Fame Monster* (a re-issue of *The Fame* with additional tracks in 2009), *Born this Way* (2011), and *ArtPop* (2013). However, we do not live in an era of albums. She recognized that this is an age of downloadable singles and live performances rather than albums. Her Monster Ball Tour was one of the most profitable tours of all time (Waddell). She has also understood re-representation. Stefanie Germanotta became Lady Gaga. But she is not a performance. She grasps that the simulacrum is the new real. Gaga is – to paraphrase U2 – even better than the real thing. Her voice is strong and powerful, unlike Madonna. She has no difficulty in singing live, unlike Britney Spears. She writes her own material, unlike Mariah Carey. She is a musician and a fine pianist, more in keeping with Elton John than Christina Aguilera. Gaga moves between popular and unpopular culture, conscious of this movement, confirming her knowledge of Andy Warhol's Factory.

Born in 1986 in New York, she has compressed fifty years of popular cultural history into less than a decade. She moved beyond genres – capturing the post-genre reality of popular music. This tendency was exhibited with great success when she paired with Tony Bennett for the successful rendition of Lena Horne's famous vocal in "The Lady is a Tramp" and sung a pastiche of Marilyn Monroe "Happy birthday Mr. President" to Bill Clinton in the form of "Bad Romance" (renamed "Bill Romance" for the evening). She upstaged Mick Jagger and shocked even Keith Richards with her performance of "Gimme Shelter."

After such success and domination of popular culture through riding the simulacrum at speed, the question rang out: "What is next?" She became an icon of fashion, shoes, sunglasses, wigs, and teacups. She dominated social media like no other popular musical performer. She has toured for years with an energy, high quality vocal, dancing technique, and performance beyond even Madonna at her height. But what happens next? What is post-pop? The answer is unpopular culture, subverting categories and playing with "art."

Her four albums stretched the limits of popular music. "Applause" as a song and music video has demonstrated a bricolage beyond what was seen at the height of music videos in the 1980s. References expand from Fritz Lang and German Expressionism through to Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* and *The Black Swan*. There is a disheveled, worn out, simulacrum (but Warhol rendered) Marilyn Monroe, and pop references to Tom Petty as well as Madonna. The video is so rich, a whole industry of websites have been formed to "decode" its meaning. The responses have been shock, descriptions of "weirdness," and exclamations of "Who is Gaga ripping off now?" (Hawing). She is cannibalizing past images and iconographies at great speed, using post-pop and unpopular culture to refuel popular culture. After the scale of her fame, she has to be "unpopular" to rejuvenate popular culture. Art cinema, renaissance painting, and Warhol's Factory are all re-representations to hook into her cascading, looping simulacrum.

A 2011 analysis of Gaga stated that she "belongs in a museum" (Smith 44). Actually, a popular cultural museum is her fodder. Every sign and text is of equal value. This culture of equivalence means that she can create new ideas from old iconography, simply by increasing the speed of consumption. The superficiality – the surface – matters because the surface is all there is. The question is – the paradox is – how to align these floating signifiers with structures of objection. It is incredibly difficult to connect depth models of oppression, on the basis of race, class, gender, and sexuality, to a reflective, mobile surface of popular culture. Just as the body is a site of subjection, so is it the vehicle for liberation. Gaga deploys unpopular culture – particularly ugliness – to probe the limits of beauty. Natasha Walter's critique is an important one in which she argues the following:

There is, of course, nothing intrinsically degrading or
miserable about a woman pole-dancing, stripping,
having sex with large numbers of partners or
consuming pornography. All these behaviours are

potentially enjoyable and sexy and fun. But in the current context, in which women's value is so relentlessly bound up with how successfully they are seen as sexually alluring, we can see that certain choices are celebrated, while others are marginalised, and this clearly has a major effect on the behaviour of many women and men. (120)

The result is a combination of Gaga's humour and her incorporation of the different, the deviant, and the disturbing into her dancing, songs, and videos. She also sings of disease and distortion. As many of her songs, tours, and fans describe, she is the "Mother Monster," and she is the monstrous feminine. Her nudity is not sexual, but unsettling and similar to Marc Bolan's masculinity at the height of glam rock. This simulacrum is not fake or an illusion. It is the new real. Gaga confirmed her authentic, simulacrum realness: "This is truly who I am. Gaga is not a character. There's the fashion, the music, the films, and the videos. Everything that you see is an extension of me. It is not a character that I play on television" (cited in Goodman 12). She is not a recycled Madonna. For example, her performance in the 2009 Video Music Awards commenced as a bricolage of Madonna's "Like a Virgin" in her song "Paparazzi," but then she became injured – damaged – and blood spurted over her forehead. This exploit was not a copy, but a brutal re-representation of the brutalized feminine. Therefore, the use of pop is arching into the use of art.

Gaga: Pop Art

I wanted to do something that was original and fresh. There's nothing more provocative than doing pop music in the underground, instead of doing underground music that would pass as pop. I'm talking about real pop music that would pass in the underground – the reverse. So I did that... It's all back to Warhol. I admire his ability to make commercial art that was taken seriously as fine art. That's my duty, I feel.

– Lady Gaga, cited in Morgan, 45-46

Pop and art have remained in an unerring and uncomfortable embrace through much of the post-1945 era. John Lennon's marriage to Yoko Ono captured and performed this turmoil. Stefani Germanotta, an Italian American from Yonkers, has continued this unstable yet productive history. Changing her name to Lady Gaga, derived via a Queen song, she is the archetype and model for the argument about pop time and accelerated modernity explored in this article. She is a conscious, self-made bricolage, demonstrating Elton John's high theatrics yet profound talent at a keyboard, Donna Summer's dangerous and provocative sexuality, Madonna's capacity to shock, Debbie Harry's ability to seduce and innovate, and Bowie's ability to change and surprise. Yet the speed at which she loops, folds, changes, and transforms is the movement from these earlier performers. The content is recycled, creating new ideas through the combination. Yet her contribution to popular cultural studies is to capture the transformations to pop time via accelerated modernity. She has also best managed digitization through downloading cultures and Twitter.

How and why has Lady Gaga compressed the cycles of pop ageing? Partly it is because she embraces a version of pop art. As the cultural commentator and novelist Michael Bracewell has pointed out, for pop artist Andy Warhol, as an aesthetic and a style, "Pop was the totality of popular culture, of which popular music was simply a strand" (24). The relationship, as Neil Tennant of the Pet Shop Boys insisted to Bracewell in an interview, "goes back to the start of pop art in the 1950s when artists in Britain and America began to respond to pop music... Because they're a part of it, they reflect that in their music... it's the same sort of attitude found in pop art. Also pop musicians relish the easiness of it – the fact that it's just about an idea, because that's what pop music is" (Tennant, cited in Bracewell 30). Bringing this argument up to date, Jon Savage, writing in the mainstream press about Lady Gaga's gay anthem "Born This Way," claims the following:

Lady Gaga is the quintessential 2011 pop star; her records are a winning mixture of electro-pop with contemporary R and B touches and her subject matter feeds into the media's self-obsession on the nature of fame and the devouring, if not sadomasochistic, nature of twenty-first century celebrity. Part of this involves the courting of controversy, and Gaga pushed her public persona to ever more hallucinatory extremes... She has long included gay imagery in her videos as part of her armoury. Telephone included as make-out scene with Beyonce, while Steven Klein's nine minute epic for Alejandro fused homoerotic, horror and religious

imagery. The subsequent public spats merely boosted net views and sales. (Savage, "Just the Way You Are" 20-22)

In "Born This Way," Lady Gaga in 2011 had echoes of the Carl Bean hit from 1978 "I Was Born This Way" released at the peak of disco. This is intentional and conscious bricolage, homage, derivation, and cultural recycling. In case such references were missed, the accelerated looping of pop time was made even more obvious in "Edge of Glory." A song about the mythical and youthful great night – involving music, dancing, sex, and danger – was a (post) feminist, postmodern re-writing of Bruce Springsteen's "Born to Run." These lyrics did not contain the masculinity of Springsteen, of "Wendy," everlasting kisses and girls riding pillion with a man in a beat-up car escaping New Jersey. Lady Gaga writes the feminist response, testing masculinity to see if it can keep up with the brinkmanship of extreme dancing through a remarkable night. Lady Gaga does not sing about a passive woman escaping New Jersey; she sings about a woman travelling to "the edge of glory." Mary does not become pregnant, as the lyric relayed in "The River." Pleasure, power, and happiness are not in the past, as in "Glory Days." Instead, for an intense present and excessive night, anything is possible. The hyper-masculinity of Springsteen's rock has met his match in Gaga's pop. In case these resonances and rewritings of melody, lyric, and ideology from Springsteen are missed, Gaga featured a saxophone solo played by Clarence Clemons, the long-time member of the E Street band. His performance in the video for "Edge of Glory," the only other presence in the video except Gaga herself, was an evocative collision in the history of popular music: young and old, white and black, female and male. Clemons recognized the opportunity and relevance of this connection. He described the moment of their meeting:

Three weeks ago E Street Band saxophonist Clarence Clemons was putting together an exercise machine in his Florida house when his wife told him that Lady Gaga's people were on the phone. "They said to me, 'Lady Gaga wants you to play on her album,'" Clemons says. This is on a Friday afternoon at 4:00 pm. I said, "When do you want me to do it? I'm free Monday or Tuesday." They go, "No, she needs you RIGHT NOW in New York City." Clemons dropped what he was doing and started driving to the airport. "I almost got a ticket I drove so fast," says Clemons. "It was wild. I was so excited. I'm a Gaga-ite." (cited in Greene)

Upon arrival, he played on two tracks: "Hair" and "Edge of Glory." When describing her rationale for calling Clemons, Gaga was clear: "It's uptempo, but it's sort of got this Bruce Springsteen vibe to it...I actually had Clarence Clemons come in. He played saxophone. It's really interesting, because it's putting saxophone on this really huge electronic record" (cited in Perpetua). This "vibe" – or ideology – of Springsteen was conscious and intentional. Indeed, the saxophone – let alone the man who played it – had a role in summoning nostalgia, youth, hope, and a repackaging of the past in the present. Yet the textual dance between these two icons of music was fundamentally appropriate. Through Clemons, Gaga matched her sonic footnotes with a visual appendix. The evocative nature of the song and video was only enhanced upon Clarence Clemons' death soon after the release of them. In an embodiment of mobile accelerated culture, the online response to the death from Gaga's monsters on Twitter was of a greater volume than that from Springsteen fans. Indeed, articles referred to Clemons' as "Lady Gaga's saxophonist" (Metro). The archetype of accelerated culture and looped pop time: the two songs Gaga recorded with Clemons gained a greater profile than the three decades of performances Clemons did with Bruce Springsteen.

The problem that emerged for Gaga in her fourth album was to find new popular culture to imbibe, reconfigure, and recycle. Do the wigs become even bigger? The glasses stranger? The shoulder pads larger? In *ArtPop*, her most recent album, she did enact all those strategies but – following Warhol, Bowie, and drag queen culture – she realized that the most radical act she could perform was remove the mask. The cascading simulacrum continues. Lady Gaga removed her wig, makeup, and outlier fashion. For the iTunes Festival on September 2, 2013, an astounding opera of oddity emerges as she played her new songs for a new audience. In the next cycle of simulacra, Gaga constructed an "authenticity," with real hair, little makeup, and a white t-shirt. This next cascade was a significant move, symbolized in the titled *ArtPop*. In a revealing haiku sound bite, Lady Gaga described popular culture as "the new underground" (Thorpe). *ArtPop* involves her use of and homage to Andy Warhol. Particular ideas, performers, and genres move between high and pop culture. The artists pick and mix, poach and steal, rip and restitch. Lady Gaga shows that femininity may yet be the great social experiment of the twenty-first century. She also shows that popular culture can play with art and industry as well as provide the soundtrack for a different way of living.

Post-Youth Culture: Ageing and Popular Memory

I smell youth. Vintage youth.

-- Pet Shop Boys, *It Couldn't Happen Here*

With authenticity as the new image, it comes as no surprise that the most strident critique of Lady Gaga has emerged from – yes, you have guessed it – Camille Paglia. Described by *The Sunday Times* as "America's foremost cultural critic," Paglia's supposed status does not incorporate expertise with theorizations of post-youth, popular music, speed, or accelerated culture. Without any expertise in and with bricolage, Paglia refers to Gaga's "manufactured personality," describing her as "artificial" and "strangely antiseptic." Quite remarkably, Paglia has completely missed the point, demonstrating no expertise in the work of Paul Virilio or Jean Baudrillard. She privileges her Madonna over Gaga:

Going off to the gym in broad daylight, as Gaga recently did, dressed in a black bustier, fishnet stockings and stilettos heels isn't sexy – it's sexually dysfunctional. And it's criminally counterproductive, erasing the cultural associations from that transgressive garb and neutering it. The gym-going Madonna, to her credit, has always been brutally honest about publicly showing herself in ratty gear with no makeup. (Paglia)

Configuring Madonna as authentic femininity and Gaga as the superficial interloper was never going to end well, intellectually or personally. If there was a point to so-called postmodernism in pop culture – which may be a paradox in itself – then it was to separate and defamiliarize the relationship between signifiers and signifieds. That was the point of Warhol screen printing the soup cans: to defamiliarize the engagement with everyday objects. Gaga's meat dress was another example.

Gaga works with the repulsive, the shocking, the grotesque, the dying. She does not wink. She does not blink. The challenge for Gaga is how to age. She has two options: crash and reinvent or crash and disappear. But she will have to enter post-youth culture, either dragging her history with her, or cutting away the weight to continue to reinvent herself. But women confront particular challenges when enacting this process, which can be seen in Ros Jennings and Abigail Gardner's *"Rock On": Women, Ageing and Popular Music* as well as Andy Bennett and Paul Hodkinson's *Ageing and Youth Cultures: Music, Style and Identity*. Neither volumes capture the theories of pop time, the simulacra, disintermediation and deterritorialization offered in this article. Neither book mentions Gaga, perhaps because she is deemed as too young. However, the nature of accelerated culture is that pop time has ensured that Gaga has packed Madonna's thirty year career in a blistering, disturbing but exhilarating five. Pop and ageing is transforming. Yet a challenge remains. Older women are invisible in our culture, with few roles to play in politics or the workplace (Thone). How will Gaga age?

Such a question must nod to the sagging recent visage of Mick Jagger and Keith Richards at Glastonbury. At a certain point – even for men – the heroic label of vintage or classic or "good for their age" is replaced by a karaoke circus of wrinkles, lumps, bumps, and lines. It took the Stones until well into their seventies to become their own retirement village tribute act. Sexism is not as kind to women. Gaga's cycle will burn much faster. Something odd happened to femininity and ageing through the 2000s before the rise of Gaga. Corsets of muscle, botox, fillers, liposuction, and gastric bands have been normalized. Women's faces have been ironed of emotion. Bodies have been pummeled, pushed, pumped, and pinched into a diversity of shapes and sizes. But there have been scars. Madonna's hands – which have now created a sickly, descriptive, generalizable compound noun of "Madonna hands" – show the cost of attempting to Dorian Gray a body without the convenience of a portrait in the attic. Stevie Nicks and Debbie Harry – the most effervescently beautiful of women – have a category of photographs in Google Images labelled with the biting title of "fat photos." Much less attention is placed on Paul McCartney's hair, and its changing color: from brown to grey and (yes) magically back to a deep brown once more, just in time for his new marriage.

There is a problem with the emerging theoretical configuration of post-youth culture, ageing and pop. Jennings and Gardner describe the "representational difficulty" of ageing (6). There are two ways to express concern about such a statement. Firstly, post-Baudrillard, it is an awkward and uncomfortable notion that representation can be discussed in a seamless or untroubled way, supposedly unhooking floating signifiers from the simulacrum and reconnecting them with depth narratives of meaning, identity, and justice. But secondly – and parking the problematics of postmodernism for a moment – the way in which semiotics, or more precisely textual analysis, has been simplified and reified has meant that "reading" has replaced "thinking." The decades-long critiques via poststructuralism and social

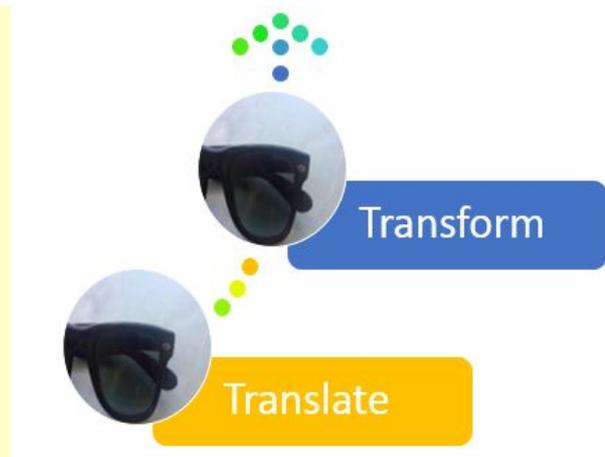
semiotics have been ignored. Representation has become an empirical "real" to be revealed by eagle-eyed scholars when summoning Barthes or Saussure.

Ageing has many challenges, but the most significant one is not representation. The challenges for performers of the digital age is that the web recycles and repositions "old" and "new" and "young" and "old. The past lives in the present. Digitization is a denial of death. In the discourse of downloads, Abba songs mix with Christine Perfect. Sandy Denny is next to Janice Joplin on the playlist. Grace Jones and Gaga are equal before the download. While digitization cuts bodies away from bits, bodies matter in any discussion of men, women, ageing, and popular culture. It is the ageing body that will shatter Gaga's simulacrum. The assumption – since Little Richard pounded the keys to "Tutti Frutti," is that young people are the "natural" audience for pop. Such an assumption was incorrect in the 1950s. It is incorrect now. Popular music performers have always been troubled by ageing. This is not new. From Bruce Springsteen "sitting around getting older" while "Dancing in the Dark," to The Who's (failed) hope for death before "getting old" in "Won't Get Fooled Again," the binary of "old" and "youth" has always been muddled and troubled textually, contextually, and politically in popular culture.

This fact is why popular memory should have been a far more visible and significant part of Cultural Studies. When Richard Johnson, Gregor McLennan, Bill Schwarz, and David Sutton published *Making Histories* in 1982, they focused attention on how the fibres of the past are woven into the present. A dialogue between radical scholarship, political change, and critical history was forged. The Popular Memory Group, which met between October 1979 and June 1980, drew attention to the limits of academic history. Their experiments with popular autobiography and community-based scholarship were a starting point of not only a site or object of study but also of an organic, realizable politics. While the group sketched how public representations operated through private memory, they left popular culture an untouched and untethered part of their analysis. Oral history was of greater interest. Their focus on power, domination and social change was stark. They discussed "the power and pervasiveness of historical representations, their connections with dominant institutions and the part they play in winning consent and building alliances in the process of formal politics" (207). They stressed that there is always resistance to dominant memory, and contestation is always possible. Their work displayed how empowered representations are cut up by oppositional ideologies, while also placing attention on how public discourses intervene in private lives. Most significantly, they reminded historians that through Popular Memory Studies, the past is neither pristine nor static, but a living skeleton on which the flesh of the present clings.

The Popular Memory Group's neglect of popular culture was indeed odd. The post-war period has been punctuated by pop retro-glances. We cannot separate the knowledge of popular representations such as music and film from the experiences of life. Significant songs are the grammar and fodder for our troubles, pleasures, joy, and pain. Particularly, it is important to watch the popular culture that, while connected to dominant institutions, also creates a space for difference and critique. Gaga is a clear example of this mode of cultural formation. Therefore, it is important to focus on – overtly and clearly – the relationship between popular culture, unpopular culture, and Popular Memory Studies.

Popular culture is a conduit for popular memory, moving words, ideas, ideologies, and narratives through time. It is distinct from both collective memory and history. Popular memory, by its nature, is a fount of consensus and a building block of "the mainstream." Collective memory, such as that formed by and with working class communities, women, or citizens of color can hold a radical or resistive agenda. Collective memory is often forged by unpopular culture and is the "minority report" of an era. The greatest difficulty for disempowered groups is the survival of their stories, truths, and differences. The dustbin of history is hungry for those voices and views that disagree with the justifications of the influential. Gaga matters because she grasps that popular culture is a memory conduit. It has two functions: to translate and transform. Firstly, it is able to translate texts into a new context.



So *24 Hour Party People* is able to take the Hacienda nightclub from 1987 and move it into the 2000s, activating new audiences and literacies. Gaga can move Warhol's Factory to the 2010s. Yet popular culture also holds another function: transforming a sign system into a site of political opportunity, pushing it forward into a new, creative, and productive space. There are no political guarantees with popular culture – it can be both conservative and progressive. Gaga can be framed – as Paglia has confirmed – as a patsy for patriarchy. Conversely, she can be framed as shattering notions of beauty and normative femininity.

Gaga's popular culture is still fresh. It is still pop. Her movement to *Artpop* signifies a difficult, disturbing but productive detour. It may be her equivalent to David Bowie's *Low*. It will be some time before Popular Memory Studies can assess her influence in creating new ways of thinking about popular culture, beyond the high/low binary, beyond intrinsically resistive readings and beyond textual poaching. The tracing of popular memory through the conduit of popular culture is a promiscuous intellectual business, refusing to obey disciplinary boundaries. The re-presentations of place, time, and identity envelop theories of power, transgressing the limits of history, heritage studies, Cultural Studies, and geography. As Liliane Weissberg has recognized, "Memory's stock has not only had a low and a high. Memory's own history, our understanding of what it is and how it functions, has radically changed in recent years. The computer is not the sole challenge to our notion of a personalized, individually owned memory" (13). The careful recycling of popular culture – particularly music – has frayed the textual fibers of remembering and forgetting. Popular memory does not signal the end of history, but a collectivizing and preservation of "private" experiences that rarely survive beyond the death of the subject.

Gaga does matter to popular culture. She is not only the first truly digital performer but also she has used the surfaces of culture to become a mobile, dancing Andy Warhol screen print. She may be abused for her derivations, her bad taste, her remixing of past and present, but trashy popular culture is the undiscovered country of history and has been deeply neglected in cultural studies. If scholars do not use this type of trivial "pop," then they will limit their relevance and future. Dominic Strinati has recognized the consequences of forgetting or undermining the popular: "The symbolic power of intellectuals over the standards of taste which are applied to the consumption of cultural goods becomes more difficult to protect and sustain when people have made available to them a mass culture which does not depend on intellectuals for its appreciation and its definitions of pleasures" (45). Judgments of taste are often hidden through scholarly discussions of methodology. With so much at stake in the study of popular culture, it is not clear how it should be researched. There is something extraordinary about the popular: it is part of daily life, but also passionate, excessive, and textually complex. Being both accessible and polysemic means that texts hail and connect with different viewers/listeners/readers through time. Popular culture, at its flashy best, has the capacity to transform a way of knowing, being, feeling, and sensing. Popular Memory Studies frames a method of meaning making, which connects a self and community.

Music traverses many eras and ears. While a song may be on the charts for weeks, it is located in a back catalogue for years, and popular memory for decades. Particular songs are summoned to hook onto specific cultural events or moments. While Jon Savage argues that "the basis of pop music is that it provides a refuge from chronology" (*Time Travel* 8), actually it does the reverse. It ties the notes, syncopation, and screeching vocals to many clocks, and many times. While it is easy for Savage to read this time-music-memory nexus as "a generational war, expressed in time and perception" (6), popular music no longer (did it ever?) offers a grenade for a youthful revolt. Instead, different revolutions, revelations, and memories are summoned through each selection on the juke box. Sourcing the past through music creates many possibilities, but few definitive answers. Forgetting and remembering builds the database from which histories are constituted.

Lady Gaga, like the best of popular culture, teaches us to commit to our moment. Perhaps one of the most moving questions about time and cultural value was asked by Robert Palmer's *Deep Blues*: "How much history can be transmitted by pressure on a guitar string?" (DeCurtis). Powerful, evocative, and elegant, Palmer thinks about sounds, sensations, tones, and textures. Without being pulled to justifications of art or industry, generations of scholars can be motivated by such a question. Pop agitates the patterns of our daily life, unsettling the relationships between production and consumption, information and knowledge, expectations and opportunities, creativity and industry. While pressing a guitar string or dancing to Gaga, pop time configures an honesty through the gauze.

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Jean Baudrillard (UK: /ˈbɔːdrɪˈlɑːr/ BOHD-rih-yar, US: /ˈbɔːdrɪˈr/ BOHD-ree-AR, French: [ˈɛ̃ː]f bodɛ̃ːja]; 27 July 1929 – 6 March 2007) was a French sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist. He is best known for his analyses of media, contemporary culture, and technological communication, as well as his formulation of concepts such as simulation and hyperreality. He wrote about diverse subjects, including consumerism, gender relations, economics, social history, art, Western foreign policy, and Baudrillard in drag: Lady Gaga and the accelerated cycles of pop. Add to My Bookmarks Export citation. Type. What are reading intentions? Setting up reading intentions help you organise your course reading. It makes it easy to scan through your lists and keep track of progress. Here's an example of what they look like: Your reading intentions are also stored in your profile for future reference. How do I set a reading intention. To set a reading intention, click through to any list item, and look for the panel on the left hand side This paper investigates accelerated ageing and the speed at which new pop becomes old pop. Women are a canary in the mine of such a process. The brightest and loudest of these contemporary tweeters is Lady Gaga. She has compressed Madonna's two decades of fame into five years. She wears the pop history of Elton John, David Bowie, Donna Summer, and Debbie Harry on her sleeve. Our goal in this article is to track how and why Lady Gaga has compressed the cycles of pop and ageing. We argue that Gaga is Baudrillard in drag. Jean Baudrillard committed to shallow ideas, to banality, very deeply. So does Gaga. Using surprise and shock to create disturbing visual and sonic moments for the enabling of difference, Gaga deploys the full palette of pop.