

## "THE LIE BECOMES THE TRUTH" Constructions of authenticity in *Rolling Stone's* cover stories of Lady Gaga

It seems that one of the job requirements for a popular musician these days is convincing your audience that you're not the phony celebrity you appear to be (Barker & Taylor 2007: xi).

I fake it so real, I am beyond fake (Courtney Love, "Doll Parts").

Lady Gaga, one of the biggest pop stars of our time, has risen to fame not least because of the provoking play around her public persona. With her transforming and at times very artificial image, Gaga offers an intriguing case when it comes to the genuineness of a star personality – especially since previous research locates the source of the celebrity's power in authenticity. According to media researcher P. David Marshall (2014 [1997]: 186), celebrities are produced in different kinds of systems of cultural production, emphasizing different characteristics in the process; in the case of popular music celebrities, it is the concept of authenticity that is highlighted (2014 [1997]: 150, 193, 198). Similarly, according to film scholar Richard Dyer, the power of authenticating authenticity is behind the celebrities' star charisma: "Authenticity is both a quality necessary to the star phenomenon to make it work, and also the quality that guarantees the authenticity of the other

particular values a star embodies (such as girl-next-door-ness, etc.)" (1991: 137). Moreover, authenticity can be seen as integral to modern stardom, which "entails a belief in the ideology of authenticity" (Hinerman 2006: 457). Although Gaga is often discussed from the viewpoint of performativity or artificiality (e.g. Torrusic 2012), I propose that the traditional values of authenticity cannot be discarded in her case (see also Varriale 2012). Furthermore, Gaga's performativity raises interesting questions in relation to her perceived genuineness. In this article, I argue that Lady Gaga's interviews in *Rolling Stone* benefit from several contradictory authenticity discourses, which increase the appeal of her public persona.

My aim in this article is to investigate the media image of Lady Gaga through qualitative discourse analysis of three cover-story interviews with her in the magazine *Rolling Stone*, focusing on examining what sorts of authenticity discourses are constructed when discussing Lady Gaga in rock media interviews. Authenticity is and has been a value in our culture for centuries, even though we may not necessarily be conscious of it. I am interested in how these deep-rooted discourses of artistic genuineness are present in the selected cover stories of Gaga.

Firstly, I introduce the theoretical and methodological background of the study, including previous authenticity research, the method of the study, and the selected research material. Secondly, Lady Gaga is contextualized in regards to her musical genre. Then, I move on to analyze three themes: the discourse of a true self, representing traditional authenticity discourses; the artificiality of Gaga's persona, representing modern authenticity discourses; and, finally, the fluidity of Gaga's image.

## Theoretical and methodological framework

In the authenticity discourses that previous research has introduced, I see two strands. The first I call a traditional strand, where an authentic artist is expected to express the values and experiences of a community (Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010; Frith 1981). In this strand, artists are seen as creative geniuses; they should express their deepest emotions; ideas of truthfulness and integrity are attached to the image of an authentic artist; and lastly, the artist is expected to have close contact with the audience (Keightley 2001). As the other strand, I see discourses

such as authenticity of Modernism by Keightley (2001), or authentic inauthenticity identified by Weisethaunet & Lindberg (2010). In these discourses, artificiality is highlighted. The artistic identity is seen as a construction, and an element of self-production is crucial. Madonna and David Bowie are mentioned as examples of this type of authenticity. It could also be argued that the first, more traditional strand of authenticity discourses can be linked to the genre of rock, and the more modern strand to pop, as in rock, truthfulness was demanded in artistic identities. In this article, I propose that the analyzed interview texts benefit both of the above-mentioned strands: that they oscillate wildly between different discourses regarding authenticity. As a result, Gaga is portrayed both through the more traditional authenticity discourses and through the modern ones.

Entailed in the theoretical framework of this article, discourse analysis, is the necessity in my work for me to see authenticity in the light of social constructionism, as a cultural construction constructed in social interaction, through text, arguments, logics, and word choices, which is constantly used to legitimate and justify certain forms of music (Mäkelä 2002: 156–157). Methodologically, I have approached the material discursively, searching for repetitive patterns regarding different images of artistry, gathering them into bundles of statements that each constructs a discourse. From the many directions of DA, my research draws mostly from Foucauldian DA or discourse theory (Mills 1997: 16), focusing on hegemonic discourses and power relations, and seeing discourses as “systematically form[ing] the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1972: 49). In this research, language is a tool of power, constantly constructing the world and its phenomena, as opposed to telling us what the world per se is like. Following the discourse analysts Arja Jokinen and Kirsi Juhila, who in turn draw mostly on poststructuralist thinkers such as Laclau and Mouffe, and Foucault, I regard discourses as social reality in itself, not thought formations that well or badly represent reality (Jokinen & Juhila 1991: 27). The discourses analyzed construct and naturalize what is seen as authentic artistry. In other words, the texts have the power to give or deprive someone of such resources as authenticity and subsequent value.

## Context of the research material

The research material used in this article consists of three cover stories about Lady Gaga in *Rolling Stone*, in Issue 1080 (11 June 2009) by Brian Hiatt, Issue 1108/1109 (8–22 July 2010) by Neil Strauss, and Issue 1132 (9 June 2011) by Brian Hiatt). I view the material as mediated cultural constructions – hence, I am cautious with regard to interpreting Gaga's quotes or the discourses constructed in the interviews as denoting the "real" intention of either the journalists or Gaga herself. Like Lise Dilling-Hansen (2015) in her research on Lady Gaga, I regard it as beyond the scope of my present knowledge to decide whether Gaga intentionally aims at being perceived as authentic. Rather, I see the interviews as mediated texts offering their readers a certain selected image of Gaga. This image and the associated discourses illustrate the value system of *Rolling Stone*, and also the valued star image in today's popular music culture, especially as the in-depth interview can be seen as a form of music criticism (Lindberg et al. 2005: 11).

One contextual element of the research material is the genre of the interview. In previous research, it has been acknowledged that Gaga has a tendency to mimic the interviewer, even in her clothing choices, and thus bring forward the performative nature of the interaction, even to the point of parody of the celebrity interview format (e.g. Torrusio 2012: 166–167; Davisson 2013: 116–118).

The context of *Rolling Stone* is that of a cornerstone of rock canon formation. According to Steve Jones and Kevin Featherly (2002: 20), *Rolling Stone* is the periodical striving most visibly to legitimate certain genres of music and artists – "Of all periodicals, *Rolling Stone* has had the power to 'consecrate' popular music in Bourdieu's terms". This legitimation process can be seen to work in the opposite direction as well: excluding certain types of music and artists from the popular music canon. What is discussed in a magazine with such canonical value in the rock culture also constructs what is worth discussing, and what is seen as authentic, as *Rolling Stone* is part of the canon formation process in rock. The popular music scholar and former rock critic Simon Frith argues that rock journalism aims at "creating a knowing community" superior to the average pop consumer (Frith 1996: 67), which entails the exclusion of particular types of music and audiences. Thus, in its contents selection *Rolling Stone* maintains its position as part of a select community; furthermore, the magazine must also pay attention to its

sales figures, so it must aim at pleasing its target group, serving their prejudices of taste (Weinstein 2004: 305).

## Lady Gaga and musical genres

Lady Gaga, born Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta in 1986, has published three studio albums so far: *The Fame* (2008), *Born This Way* (2011), and *Artpop* (2013), which have sold over 27 million copies worldwide (Waddell 2014). Lady Gaga can be considered to belong to the genre of dance-pop; at the beginning of Hiatt's first article, he terms Gaga "the biggest new pop star of 2009" (Hiatt 2009: 57).

When talking about authenticity, a central element in the history of popular music research is the division between pop and rock. The separation between rock and pop was a separation between art and commerce: the latter should not be mixed with artistic integrity. This pure form of rock with no connection to the commercialist world has to do with the mythology of rock that was built in the 1960s by American rock critics such as Landau, Marsh and Christgau, correlating rock with authenticity, creativity and the political movements of the time, *Rolling Stone* being an important contributor to this ideology. (Shuker 1994: 7–8.) However, Shuker continues to say that the division of pop and rock using authenticity as a divider is no longer, and has never been, valid. Rock is a marketing tool like any other – if one places oneself above the manufacturing process, it can work as a good PR trick. (Frith 1994: 7–8.) In my viewpoint, I follow Shuker – authenticity is more of a myth, an ideal, and the situation, in which rock bands should avoid commercial success in order not to lose their authenticity, is unsustainable.

However, what is also crucial in Shuker's text is the gravity and power that authenticity – although not "valid" – has had in rock culture and rock music, responding to an ideological purpose by identifying different forms of musical cultural capital (Frith 1994: 8). It might even be argued that precisely because the division is *not* valid, authenticity is even more crucial in drawing the line in the "sand" of popular music. It serves as a justification for this non-valid division, gaining authority from its deep roots in Western cultural history, stemming from Romanticism. Frith argues further that authenticity may also be used as an

evaluative tool in openly commercial genres, assessing perceived sincerity and commitment rather than the music's actual means of production (Frith 2004: 28). That Gaga, sonically speaking, is easier to categorize within the genre of (dance) pop, does not mean that traditional (rock) authenticity discourses cannot be utilized in her image. Hence, the discourses of authenticity are a loaded issue, intertwining with long-standing value debates in popular music.

In her research on Joni Mitchell, Anne Karppinen also discusses the separation between rock and pop, and its connections to gender: rock can be seen culturally as music for the mind, versus pop that is music for the body – dance pop arguably even more so. This mind/body dichotomy can also be seen culturally as a division between male and female, where women and the female are connected with the body, men with reason. (Karppinen 2012: 73.) According to Helen Davies, "[t]he association of masculinity with the cerebral and femininity with the physical perhaps explains women's exclusion from credibility on these grounds", the grounds being that a performer's music should be intelligent and serious, in order to be viewed as credible (Davies 2001: 306). Moreover, rock criticism's refusal of "feminine, 'prefabricated' pop music" (McLeod 2001: 47), and of dance music, which is associated with the feminine body, in contrast to masculine intellect (McClary 2002 [1991]: 153), adds to the contextualization of Gaga, a female pop star. Thus, for both Gaga and *Rolling Stone*, it may be crucial to succeed in articulating instead to rock's discourses of authenticity, in order to justify the value of Gaga.

Although Gaga can be categorized within the genre of pop, certain elements in her work imply an attempt to articulate specifically within the authenticity discourses of rock in order to successfully construct her work as art. Firstly, the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, an integrated work of art combining music and visual elements, can be used to depict Gaga's work, where it is hard to separate her clothing choices, performance props, and visual style from her music. Her image is strongly associated with the avant-garde fashion that she wears in her music videos and performances, as well as at normal public appearances (Corona 2011: 1). The concept of *Kunstwerk* also resonates with Gaga's idea of her work as Artpop, visible also in her latest solo album title. Repeated in quotes such as "Art is a lie", the analyzed texts imply that Gaga strives to be an artist, and to create art, not "just" pop. Involving oneself deeply with art requires some level

of authenticity, due to the previously discussed division between art and commerce, where in order to be art/rock, one needed to be authentic. Consequently, the analyzed interviews can be read as drawing from the authenticity and the aesthetics of rock, rather than of pop, for example by highlighting the personal stories behind the songs, thus substantiating the authenticity of her expressed emotions (see Frith 2001: 94, on Elton John as a pop star).

## Gaga is Gaga – Discourses of a true self

- What's the difference between Joanne Stefani Germanotta and Lady Gaga?
- The largest misconception is that Lady Gaga is a persona or a character. I'm not – even my mother calls me Gaga. I am 150,000 percent Lady Gaga every day. (Scaggs 2009.)<sup>1</sup>

The interviews construct a discourse in which Gaga has always been Gaga. She is not Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta, and has not answered to that name for years (Hiatt 2009), nor does anyone call her that anymore. For instance, Hiatt's first article (2009) systematically calls Gaga by the name of Gaga, even with respect to her childhood photos. Gaga is not a role or a disguise, but who she truly is. The idea of a true self is repeated in quotes such as "Gaga, a misfit in the Gossip Girl world of her high school, had found her true self. 'I've always been Gaga', she says. - - 'Once I was free, I was able to be myself'" (Hiatt 2009: 60). Rock-icon pictures in her backstage sanctuary remind her "'to be myself'", and not give in to the expectations or ideas the public has of her music, artistry or personality (Hiatt 2011:44). The performativity of her image can be rebutted by highlighting the assertion that Gaga's "art is not a mask. It is her life" (Strauss 2010: 68).

The texts articulate the fact that Gaga dropped out of university to pursue her dreams, and "worked for it" (Hiatt 2009). All this can be seen to resonate with discourses of authenticity as negation and authenticity as self-expression (Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010) – she did not pursue music to gain financial profit, but because she wanted to, it was her personal choice and her "*passion*". The

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<sup>1</sup> Scagg's article is not a cover story, but a shorter interview. Because of its briefer format, it was not included in the final research material.

theme of working continues, as the texts emphasize the hard work Gaga puts into her art: how she writes music every day (Strauss 2010: 70), how she works out harmonies in her head "even as she speaks" (Hiatt 2011: 42), and how she is "proud of being harder to work with than a typical pop singer" (Hiatt 2011: 44). The set-up of Hiatt's article is in the recording studio, stressing Gaga's work, her ability to hear when the EQ is changed, and her being in charge. According to Keightley, rock culture is suspicious of mediation, while valuing "independence from external interference and control, [which signifies] a greater authenticity" (Keightley 2001: 134). Extensively describing Gaga's effort in the studio articulates that she is in control and that she is working genuinely and autonomously, free of mediation, which coincides with the values of rock (Keightley 2001: 134). "I am a real artist, and I'm so involved", says Gaga. "Usually the artist comes in, cuts a vocal and leaves, and these guys do their business and send it back" (Hiatt 2011: 44). Gaga's work ethic is described as "relentless", demonstrated in her "seemingly endless" world tour and her writing songs on the road. "We're supposed to be tired. - - I don't know who told everyone otherwise, but you make a record and you tour. That's how you build a career", Gaga states. (Strauss 2010: 68.) Strauss' interview also mentions workaholism. All of the interviews begin in work-related surroundings: in a tour van (Hiatt 2009), in her dressing room backstage (Strauss 2010), or in the studio (Hiatt 2011). When asked if she does any "human things" such as sleeping and eating, Gaga replies "sounding proud. 'Only music and coffee'" (Hiatt 2011: 45). The texts construct an image of an artist sacrificing herself on the altar of art.

The previous image of a pop star may be the reason for this extensive argumentation about Gaga's working habits: the texts situate her in the category of a hard-working artist, not as a "typical pop artist", a pretty face singing songs composed by other people. This categorization is closer to the aesthetics of rock that are essential to a magazine like Rolling Stone. Moreover, according to Varriale, working hard is a "long-standing narrative - - in star mythology" (Varriale 2012: 257). The discourse's emphasis on the amount of work done can be compared with rock culture's tendency to guard popularity against inauthentic and thus undeserved success (Keightley 2001: 132), begging the question of whether success is undeserved and less authentic if one has not "worked for it", if it has come easily or through the marketing forces of record companies.

Gaga is quoted as dedicating herself to her art: "When you work as hard as I do, or you resign your life to something like music or art or writing, you have to commit yourself to this struggle and commit yourself to the pain" (Strauss 2010: 70). The discourse creates an image of a dedicated artist, not of a celebrity writing and performing music as a stepping-stone to fame. Articulation within the discourses of art helps to avoid the common accusation against pop music – its commercialism – exemplified by Gaga wanting to make "'museum-worthy' art out of pop" and stating that "'The whole world sees the number-one records and the rise in sales and recognition, but my true legacy will be the test of time, and whether I can sustain a space in pop culture and really make stuff that will have a genuine impact'" (Hiatt 2009: 61). Gaga's true legacy has to do with artistic vision rather than commercial success, which is constructed as inessential.

Switaj argues that there are two aspects that separate Gaga from most pop artists: "the absence of any aspect of Gaga's star image labeled private or authentic and the way the excesses of her performance make apparent that she's always performing - -" (Switaj 2012: 34). From this material, I would argue that there are elements that are constructed as *appearing* private and authentic, which makes Gaga's performativity a complex matter. For instance, in Hiatt's article from 2009, in the middle of a soundstage performance, Gaga withdraws to the dressing room; later, we are informed, "she nearly broke down and cried in the dressing room" (Hiatt 2009: 60). These statements construct certain moments as private and authentic, accumulating in the discourse of a "true" self. Similar tones of being permitted to witness an "authentic" Gaga behind the performance are visible in the quote by Hiatt (2011: 46): "Her eyes are open wide, the lids smeared with makeup, and the pupils don't have that charismatic, crazy glow – they just look sad and tired and very human", a reaction to Hiatt having previously described her as self-confident. The text describes her as clearly human, that through this interview we gain access to Gaga's real person and that there is a human being, it is not all performance, which could be interpreted as being crucial for *Rolling Stone* – to maintain the idea of the personal authenticity of stars.

The interviews contain many references to accompanying her places, meeting her family, and generally witnessing her *offstage*. For example, the third article from 2011 follows Gaga from studio to backstage to stage, discussing work ethics, fans, and personal history along the way. The article purports to offer a

view of Gaga's private life: of her studio work, personal life, and family. (Hiatt 2011.) According to media scholar Erin Meyers, "the blurring of the private/public distinction that occurs in celebrity media is essential for the maintenance of their star power". The fans may recognize the constructed and performed nature of the celebrities in their professional performances. (Meyers 2009: 892–893.) However, in the media, stars are in turn brought close to the reader and shown as normal persons through reports concerning their private lives, which in addition remind the audience of their own experiences (Meyers 2009: 892–893) – as if through the media, the fan gains access to the "real" person of the star behind the image. Meyers describes this closeness by using Schickel's term "illusion of intimacy" (Schickel 1985: 4), which she argues can be applied more widely to celebrity media than to television alone, which is Schickel's main focus. The tension between the "real" person and the "larger-than-life" quality of the star, further fortified by the "tension between the possibility and impossibility of knowing the truth about her life", fascinates people. (Meyers 2009: 893–894.) We as fans want to solve that mystery; we want to discover the "truth" behind the constructed image of the star, leading to a "never-ending quest for the 'real' celebrity" (Meyers 2009: 896) – simultaneously to a never-ending quest for authenticity? This "pursuit of the authentic celebrity persona" is what lies behind the stars' social power (Meyers 2009: 904).

The interviews construct the illusion that we are now being permitted to see behind the image: "up close, she's always softer, prettier and younger-looking than her ultrastylized photos might suggest" (Hiatt 2009: 58). As the interviews allegedly allow us access to see the "everyday" life of Gaga, offstage, with her family, they construct an illusion of gaining access to the "real" person, the authentic self of Gaga. In addition, Varriale maintains that in her analysis of Gaga's interview, romantic and folk concepts of authenticity are used to construct "a 'real' Gaga, - - behind the stylish and media-exposed star" (Varriale 2012: 257). However, this feeling of intimacy is a mere illusion, as the interview format is nonetheless a knowingly constructed and mediated image of a performer. What is crucial is that the celebrity succeeds in creating an illusion of intimacy and authenticity, regardless of whether they are actually revealing anything true about their private lives (Myrskog 2014: 30). Correspondingly, the magazines perform intimacy through the construction of their interviews.

For instance, the photo collages in each of the articles construct intimacy by featuring "private" photos. In the article from 2009, there is a photo collage titled "The Evolution of Lady Gaga", which entails childhood photos, Gaga performing at the Lollapalooza rock festival before her debut album, and finally, her appearance on Ellen DeGeneres' talk show, wearing a weird planetary hat (Hiatt 2009: 59). Meanwhile, the cover of the magazine from 2010 already creates a sense of intimacy: "Lady Gaga tells all", the biggest headline of the issue, implies that now everything will be revealed, the mystery finally solved, which also serves as a gimmick designed to increase sales. As in the 2009 article, there is a photo collage of Gaga's past, ranging from childhood and high-school photos to pictures with her father, ex-boyfriend Rob Fusari, and friends, all from pre-Gaga days (Strauss 2010: 69). According to Turner, when it comes to celebrities, their private lives are often seen as more interesting than their professional lives (Turner 2004: 3); thus, the illusion of gaining access to the private life of Lady Gaga increases the sales appeal of the article.

In Strauss' article, the text makes clear that Gaga does not fall into the same category as performance-focused spectacles: "It is not just a stage spectacle like a Madonna or Kiss show. It is a highly personal piece of performance art dressed up as a pop spectacle" (Strauss 2010: 68). Madonna is one of the performers who are often mentioned in discussions of authentic inauthenticity and constant self-invention (e.g. Barker & Taylor 2007; Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010), the same elements that Gaga is connected to. However, the text clearly separates Gaga from Madonna, particularly by means of the "personal", which suggests ideas of traditional authenticity, tied to the person of the performer. Gaga's career is portrayed as a result of heartbreak; her "success is the ultimate misfit's revenge" (Strauss 2010: 68). Her albums are stated to be inspired by Luc Carl, Gaga's ex-boyfriend, the "love of her life" (Hiatt 2009: 59) and her "muse" (Hiatt 2011: 47); her work is thus constructed as originating from her authentic personal feelings of heartbreak and of rejection (Strauss 2010).

The interviews also produce intimacy by highlighting that she writes her own material: "When we know singers are performing their own songs, we are invited to feel that they may be speaking directly to us, and telling us about their own lives" (Barker & Taylor 2007: 170). The discourse of authentic self-expression is constructed in the following quote: "'The song is about my sadness in the most real and honest kind of way'", highlighting the integrity of Gaga expressing her

deepest emotions, as in the next quotes: "Sometimes I break down and cry on-stage" (Strauss 2010: 71) and "[the song *Yoü & I*] is so emotional that she wept uncontrollably while she recorded the vocal" (Hiatt 2011: 47). Authoring her own songs enhances Gaga's perceived authenticity, since following the example of John Lennon, who strove towards a more extreme version of personal authenticity, it was considered "increasingly important that artists bare their souls" (Barker & Taylor 2007: 191). Romantic authenticity in turn values "sincere, unmediated expression of inner experience" (Keightley 2001: 136). Authenticity can further be associated with perceived truth. This can mean that artists are expected to "look deep inside themselves for their art". (Jones 2008: 15, 35.) However, the category of autobiographical songs is a fairly new and artificial invention in the history of popular music, even though the audience today considers it self-evident (Barker & Taylor 2007: 131). Singer-songwriters, offering access to their private feelings, are apparently a contrast to stars such as David Bowie who "flaunt the artificiality of their personas"; however, as David R. Shumway argues, this openness is produced and performed like other stars' stage roles (Shumway 2014: 151). Nonetheless, the interviews emphasize the personal anguish Gaga has put into her songs, highlighting her construction of openness.

The idea that music is born out of the performer's own feelings is tied to the idea of a tormented artist expressing his/her troubles. The idea of a suffering artist emerged in Lennon's work, developing the idea of authentic artistry further and leading even to people pursuing problematic lifestyles for authenticity's sake. "Songs that delved into the tortured recesses of the artist's mental processes and problems became an indicator of the ultimate kind of authenticity". (Barker & Taylor 2007: 191–192.) The theme of a suffering artist, which incorporates romantic connotations, drawing on modern art movements (Marshall 2014 [1997]: 162–163), is echoed in all of the interviews, highlighting Gaga's troubled past, such as painful school memories of bullying, and her consequent abusive relationships and issues with drugs and alcohol (Hiatt 2011: 45). Strauss' interview addresses different kinds of trauma Gaga has faced: "There are some things that are so traumatic in my past, I don't even fully remember them" (Strauss 2010: 72). This quote is also highlighted by its position as a pull quote. Borrowing the ideal from rock aesthetics, the text grants Gaga personal authenticity by way of her described traumatic history. Gaga is quoted as being somewhat conscious of

this idea: "All of the things I went through were on my own quest for an artistic journey to fuck myself up like Warhol and Bowie and Mick, and just go for it". Simultaneously, the quote parallels her with artists with established authenticity, and furthermore, of being on close terms with them, as Jagger is intimately called by his first name, constructing an analogous identity for Gaga, who is positioned as equal to these musicians.

Similarly, the second article begins with a spread photo of Lady Gaga sitting in a trashcan on a street corner in New York, wearing a leather jacket and sunglasses. The caption is: "I think about laying in my New York apartment with bug bites from bedbugs, and roaches on the floor", says Gaga. 'I've come a long way'. (Strauss 2010: 67.) This is a classic "from rags to riches" tale, echoing Hiatt's article (2009), where Gaga is described as having lived a cocaine-filled life in a "shitty little apartment" before she became famous. Roughly put, Hiatt's article overall is a story of a transformation and also a rags-to-riches story: how a Catholic schoolgirl found her true self and her passion, helped by established scene figures who support and praise her. The story constructs a traditional authenticity discourse, where the artist has come a long way and paid her dues, hence deserving the subsequent success.

One point of view on authenticity construction in the selected pieces is that mentioning other, already established artists, or alleging an association with them, is a way to construct authenticity for Lady Gaga as well (cf. Peterson 2005: 1087). In Hiatt's first article (2009) in particular, many famous artists are mentioned in connection with Lady Gaga. She makes a photo shoot with Cyndi Lauper and hangs out backstage with Marilyn Manson, who tries to hit on her with "horrific pickup lines". Madonna and Justin Timberlake are also mentioned, the former having seen a Gaga show in Los Angeles. Manson also "makes the case for Gaga as an artist":

I was most impressed by her paparazzi photos. I thought that it looked the way that rock stars should look, as exciting as something that Warhol or Dalí would do. And I don't consider her to be similar to her contemporaries – the other girls that do pop music – simply because she knows exactly what she's doing. She's very smart, she's not selling out, she's a great musician, she's a great singer, and she's laughing when she's doing it, the same way that I am. (Hiatt 2009: 59–60.)

In my view, Manson – or Hiatt – uses Manson's already acquired authenticity to vouch for Gaga, while Manson connects her work with rock's authenticity discourses by drawing a distinction between her and "the other girls", by means of comparisons with other artists such as Warhol and Dalí, by distancing Gaga from commercialism and accusations of selling out, and by highlighting her actual musicianship. However, it could also be argued that Manson's credibility is questioned just before the previous statement by quotes from Manson's pickup lines, such as "'I'll give you a cervical exam'". Mentioning this, before Manson's comments on Gaga's artistry, may construct an image that Manson has a hidden agenda, that Manson's motives for praising Gaga are biased because of his sexual interest in her.

Another viewpoint on the central role of Manson in the article is that, according to Davies, women can gain credibility by association with a man. This can also cause problems: women may be suspected of being manipulated or using their sexuality to further their career (Davies 2001: 308). The latter in particular resonates with the Manson quote, thus partly dismantling the constructed authenticity.

Name-dropping is also visible when Gaga's backstage photos of classic rock icons are listed along with her vinyl collection, "all classic rock and metal". Furthermore, *Born This Way* has "cameos from members of Queen and the E Street Band", resulting in the statement that the album is "the closest thing Lady Gaga has made to a rock album" (Hiatt 2011: 45). Clarence Clemons from the E Street Band plays on two tracks, *The Edge of Glory* and *Hair*; Brian May has a guitar solo on *Yoü & I*, a track produced by Mutt Lange, who has in turn produced established rock acts such as AC/DC. Correspondingly, as Lennon tapped into the cultural authenticity of blues and folk by using elements of them in some songs, "he reinforced the idea that these past musical styles could function as badges of integrity" (Barker & Taylor 2007: 186). When this is combined with Gaga's list of her favorite "pop" songs, which "define[s] the term loosely", including AC/DC's *T.N.T.*, and Led Zeppelin's *Whole Lotta Love*, it can be argued that the texts tap into the authenticity of the rock genre and of established rock stars, constructing a discourse where Gaga is added to this list of established rock musicians, especially when Gaga states that the rock-icon photos remind her "'of what I think is going to be, ultimately, part of my greater legacy'" (Hiatt 2011: 44) – that one

day Gaga will be part of this rock-icon continuum. Regarding visual elements, when compared to the earlier cover stories, the style of the cover from 2011 is also more traditional – there are no artificial attachments to her, compared to previous covers, where Gaga is pictured in see-through plastic bubbles (2009), and in her underwear with machine guns attached to her bra (2010).

When it comes to fans, in Romantic authenticity, direct and sincere communication between the artist and the audience is at the core (Keightley 2001: 136). Gaga is stated to have

a symbiotic, almost unnervingly intense connection with her fans. "We have this umbilical cord that I don't want to cut, ever". - - "There's something about my relationship with my fans that's so pure and genuine. During the show, I say, 'I don't lip-sync, and I never will, because it is in my authenticity that you can know the sincerity of my love for you'". (Hiatt 2011: 44.)

The quotes construct a discourse where the "pure" and "sincere" connection between Gaga and her fans, who are also known as Little Monsters, is a sign of her genuineness. In folk authenticity, music that was seen as "pure, genuine, and organically connected to the community that produced [it]" was valued; roots, tradition, and the rural in turn underlined (Keightley 2001: 121). Even though Gaga's music is far from roots music or rural surroundings, it can be argued that in its own way, Gaga's music is portrayed as stemming from the subcultural urban community, thus utilizing the values of folk authenticity. Additionally, the subculture of performance artists can be seen to have produced not only the music but possibly also Gaga herself.

Lady Gaga is also stated to be "a pop star for misfits and outcasts", and to have been a misfit herself at her school. Gaga can be interpreted as expressing the experience of a community of misfits, thus echoing the above-mentioned folk authenticity, and Weisethaunet and Lindberg's "folkloric authenticity", where one of the general ideas is that music is seen as a way to express the cultural values and experiences of a community – such as blues and R&B (Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010: 470). Corona approaches Gaga's "celebrat[ion] of the freakish", stating that Gaga attempts to "explicitly link herself to categories of individual Otherness. By celebrating the 'monster', the 'freak', the 'misfit', she is able to build a

sense of subcultural membership". (Corona 2011: 2.) According to Davies, there is a credibility that comes from an association with a subculture, since women are associated with the mainstream and their access to acceptance in a subculture is limited (Davies 2001: 307). It is to be noted that rock culture values otherness and marginality, based on "the mass marginality of youth", as opposed to the category of "adults" associated with mass society and the mainstream (Keightley 2001: 124–125). Taken further, the texts can also be read as creating a discourse of misfits as exceptional individuals. Exceptionality and uniqueness resonate with the ideas of artistic genius. Allusions to this idea can be seen in the quote "'I don't have the same priorities as other people'" (Hiatt 2009: 58).

Overall, the construction of traditional authenticity in the interviews successfully combines the traits of both folk and art discourses, emphasizing Gaga's close relationship with her community, and her creative and original inner self (cf. Frith 1983: 39–57; Frith 1987: 136). Since the context of *Rolling Stone* is a form of rock canon formation and of popular music criticism, and since rock value judgments are dependent on the myth of authenticity (Frith 1987: 136), how the journal discusses Gaga is not insignificant, but rather it is crucial that Gaga and her music be constructed as authentic. By articulating in terms of traditional authenticity discourses, the texts construct authentic artistry and value for Gaga, and maintain *Rolling Stone's* position as pure and uncommercial, representing genuine and sincere music.

## Artifice and self-invention

Ultimately, being gaga means being phony (Halberstam 2012: xii).

The analyzed texts involve a tension between authenticity and artifice, which according to Marshall is what popular music displays in its construction of celebrities (2014 [1997]: 194). For instance, Hiatt's article from 2009 can be read as constructing the discourse of a true self for the most part. Right at the end, the constructed system of meanings is complicated: a dichotomy between authenticity and lies or delusion is created. First, Gaga is said to want to inspire her fans to find their true selves.

But more important, she wants to inspire her fast-growing fan base – which now ranges from downtown drag queens to suburban eight-year-olds – to *find their true selves*, to shoot their fear in the face. “I operate from a place of delusion – that’s what *The Fame*’s all about. I used to walk down the street like I was a fucking star”, she says, her voice rising. “I want people to walk around delusional about how great they can be – and then to fight so hard for it every day that the lie becomes the truth”. (2009: 61, emphasis added.)

The fans’ “true selves” is in the latter part constructed to be more of a delusion, a lie, that becomes reality, becomes truth, if one believes in it enough. One’s “real self” is a construction, not authentic or true. This construct is also a way of making one’s voice heard: “If I had come out as who I was, no one would be listening. Now people are listening” (Strauss 2010: 71). The interviews construct a discourse that is opposite to the idea of a true self: there is instead, a discourse of artifice or outright lies, stressing the constructional nature of identities. The constructedness of Lady Gaga as an identity is highlighted in statements such as her describing a scenario in which she was in a hospital, with fans waiting for her outside: “I’d come out as Gaga. I wouldn’t come out in sweatpants” (Strauss 2010: 70). In this discourse, Gaga is something to be put on and to be worn, a performed role. Similarly, “It’s just me, and people will see that what’s underneath is still me”, is the way Gaga describes her image in the video for *Alejandro* (Strauss 2010: 68), while continuing, “Ок, so there’s still a little Lady Gaga there”, when later in the video, she is dancing with rifles coming out of her breasts. Especially the latter statement feeds the discourse of Gaga as a construction, leaving it vague who the “just me” in the video actually is in that case, which exemplifies the tension of authenticity and artifice inherent in the texts.

Weisethaunet and Lindberg’s concept of “Authentic inauthenticity” may be of help in understanding Gaga’s self-production. The concept links to pop music: artificiality and artistic identities as constructions are in the key role, as opposed to rock, where truthfulness is demanded in artistic identities. Glam rock and punk in particular brought forward these artificial elements in self-production. Madonna and David Bowie are good cases in point in their constant self-creation and construction and in producing different artist selves, such as Ziggy Stardust in Bowie’s case. (Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010: 473–475.) Gaga, according to

Hiatt's first article, lists both Bowie and Madonna as her influences. Similarly, in rock'n'roll, Elvis offered an optimistic example of personal reinvention, and this inauthenticity gave the genre appeal. Likewise, in disco, authenticity was avoided; instead, the focus was on creating radical new styles of clothing and a world of celebration and escape. Both genres reflected the tastes of marginalized groups such as gays and blacks in the case of disco. (Barker & Taylor 2007: 149, 236.) Disco's aesthetic of artistic identities resembles Gaga's image, although the guest stars involved in her albums imply an attempt to distance herself from this aesthetic in order to move closer to rock, just as the texts simultaneously discuss truthfulness: Gaga is not a role.

I understand Keightley's term "authenticity of Modernism" to have close ties to the previous concept. According to this idea, true artists must always keep moving and reinventing themselves. Innovations, development, change and experiments are key words. It is more important to stay true to your own artistic ambitions than to think of the audience, as opposed to the close relationship between artist and audience in the authenticity of Romanticism. Shock effects and the use of technology are celebrated. (Keightley 2001: 135–136.) In particular, the last sentence strongly resonates with Gaga's image and performances, seen in quotes such as "her future-shock style" or "She reigns over a self-created, plasticized aesthetic universe with Madonna-esque assurance" (Hiatt 2009: 58). According to Corona, "when the image of someone like Gaga becomes so closely associated with spectacle, the question of authenticity inevitably emerges. -- Gaga has avoided the authenticity dilemma by affirming that she is the persona she inhabits on stage" (Corona 2011: 9–10). The shock style and self-invention raise questions about the performer's authenticity, as can be seen in a quote from Gaga: "I was being bullied by music lovers, because they couldn't possibly believe that I was genuine. I was too different or too eccentric to be considered sincere" (Hiatt 2011: 44).

As a contrast to the above-mentioned leather jacket photo, in the streets of New York with all its street credibility, the photo spread from the first article can be interpreted as constructing a discourse resonating with the other strand, with artificiality and self-production. Gaga is wearing a plastic bubble outfit against a pink foamy background; the pose can be read as highly phantasmic, artificial and doll-like. Similarly, the photo collage from 2010 constructs conflicting discourses:

on the one hand, a childhood photo is captioned "The young Gaga", creating a sense that she was indeed born that way; on the other hand, according to its caption, a photo from 2007 features "The proto-Gaga Stefani Germanotta", implying that at that stage she was still Germanotta, building and testing the prototype that would only later materialize as the construct of Lady Gaga.

The constructedness of Gaga parallels Toynbee's (2000: 32) argument that when musicians transform themselves into stars, they commodify themselves, converting themselves into "shiny object[s]". From this angle, Gaga seems like a successful product of image commodification. Furthermore, through analyzing the interview quote of "[t]he former Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta [being] on a mission: to prove that Lady Gaga is art" (Strauss 2010: 68), it can be argued that instead of her music, Gaga herself is the work of art and end product of her creative process. Her persona is the shiny object offered for consumption. Moreover, the self-commodification offers Gaga's fans a hopeful example of self-invention and the "utopian potentiality" to lead a life that has been changed (Toynbee 2000: 32).

The previously discussed theme of authentic self-expression, which manifested in quotes describing Gaga crying, breaking down onstage, or expressing her deepest feelings through her music, is roughly contrasted with other quotes that form an opposing pole, at times even with comical tones: "I wrote that song [*Speechless*] to soothe my spirit, but nobody gives a shit if the chorus isn't good. I don't mean to sound crass, but just that's how I view music. Not everybody gives a shit about your fucking personal life" (Strauss 2010: 71). The statement neglects the importance of honest self-expression altogether, simultaneously sniping at so-called therapy music, which was one result of the idea of a tormented artist, linked to personal authenticity (Barker & Taylor 2007: 192). The quote continues: "Music is a lie. It is a lie. Art is a lie", stressing the artificial nature of art and music, thus following the discourse of authentic inauthenticity, and the authenticity of Modernism.

With Gaga, there are constant doubts of inauthenticity, manifested for instance in copyright and trademark issues. Gaga has been involved in several lawsuits both as defendant and as plaintiff. For instance, the lawsuit between her and her former producer Rob Fusari "fuel[ed] the public's need to see Gaga as performed", as Fusari claimed that Gaga was originally his creation, thus implying that there was a time when Lady Gaga did not yet exist, and when Germanotta

was not yet Gaga. (Davisson 2013: 148–155, 137–140.) In her songs *Alejandro* and *Born This Way*, to name two, she has been accused of exploiting and plagiarizing other songs, mainly by Ace of Base and Madonna, respectively (Ventzislavov 2012). Ventzislavov also describes her image as one of "purported originality", into which the public buys and regards as art, because of their ignorance of the predecessors Gaga successfully "repackages", such as Bowie, Madonna, Björk, Manson, Peaches, and Alice Cooper (Ventzislavov 2012: 63).

I read these texts as protecting Gaga from accusations of inauthenticity, distancing her from mindless pop: "In the face of tween pop's relentless cuteness assault, Gaga – who worships Andy Warhol and Grace Jones, and thanks David Bowie and Madonna for inspiration in her liner notes – is a pop star for misfits and outcasts" (Hiatt 2009: 58). The statement combines both traditional and modern authenticity discourses in this argumentation, by highlighting the sense of community and by mentioning artists known for their self-invention and pop art. According to Keightley, this combining of both authenticity of Romanticism and Modernism is not unprecedented – on the contrary, "many will move back and forth across the table", and utilize "hybrid versions of authenticity". The performers who successfully combine Romantic and Modernist authenticity, "in a productive tension", are hailed as the "most innovative" by rock culture. (Keightley 2001: 138–139.) This combination of discourses accounts for the confusing moments in the interviews when the tension between authenticity and artifice is most apparent.

## Fluid identity

Little baby girl, you can be whatever you want (Hiatt 2009: 60, a quote by Gaga's mother to Gaga).

If the previous authenticity discourses evaluate the authenticity of a performer's self, the texts at times take it one step further, shattering the whole idea of a stable person or persona whose genuineness is subject to scrutiny. Comparably, in relation to Gaga, Craig N. Owens suggests, "the female pop-musician is increasingly becoming monstrous in her ability to shift shape, inhabit temporary identities, and to go with the flow" (Owens 2014: 112).

This fluidity or oscillation can be seen as reaching Gaga's external image, in quotes such as: "In truth, Gaga's attractive, slightly off-kilter features – ethnic nose, prominent front teeth – seem almost *infinitely mutable*: One day she looks like Debbie Harry, the next, Donatella Versace" (Hiatt 2009, emphasis added) or "Gaga turned 25 in March, but often seems much older or younger" (Hiatt 2011). Apart from her features, in the next two quotes, her sexuality and gender are also constructed as fluid: "When she uses words like 'fierce', or describes her sexual conquests of beautiful men, one sees why the hermaphrodite rumors about her have been so persistent: she seems, at times, like a gay man trapped in a woman's body" (Strauss 2010: 68). The fluidity of Lady Gaga's image even goes beyond the category of "human", intimating the possibility that she is either an alien ("For a young woman who's dressed like an alien empress, Lady Gaga is acting strangely human" [Hiatt 2009]) or a robot ("As we reach Burbank, Gaga closes her eyes for a minute. 'I'm rebooting', she says. 'Activate Lady Gaga program'" [Hiatt 2009]). Gaga goes beyond human parallels with the cyborg manifesto (Haraway 1991), where boundaries and dichotomies are blurred, and identities and categories destroyed. She moves beyond the dichotomy of male-female through the claims of her being a hermaphrodite, and beyond the status of human with her allusions to aliens and robots. Gaga is quoted as wanting to create transcendent performances, which in turn resonate with the discourse of authenticity as transcendence of the everyday (Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010: 476) and which demand being more than human: "I don't want people to see I'm a human being. I don't even drink water onstage in front of anybody, because I want them to focus on the fantasy of the music and be transported from where they are to somewhere else" (Strauss 2010). According to Gray, her performances are "transformative and metamorphic in nature" (Gray 2012a: 8), which also stresses the fluidity of her image. Finally, referring to the hermaphrodite rumors, Gaga is quoted as saying: "When they start saying that you have extra appendages, you have to assume that they're unable to destroy you" (Strauss 2010: 74). The fluidity or lack of definition offers protection, for example from the media, as the quote implies. The fluidity or oscillation between different subject positions may serve as protection from the doubts regarding her authenticity as well.

The theme of being more than human continues when Gaga admires Kiss' Paul Stanley flying across the arena, although on this occasion she stresses the

performativity of the moment: "I want to do that. But I don't want it to be in a stage moment, I need to re-create it in an everyday situation. I need to be in the supermarket and fly across" (Hiatt 2011: 44). Gaga is quoted as wanting to spread performativity to everyday life; the limits of performance and everyday life need to be blurred, thus blurring her own performative nature – when does the performance end, or start? Education scholar Michael A. Peters states that Gaga offers us in her performance "a proliferation of a series of life-stage, art-life encounters that blur the dualisms of art and the everyday" (Peters 2012: 218). The texts blur the boundaries of normal life and art [performance], of person and persona, and of private and public. "The precise demarcations between persona and authenticity are, to say the least, slippery, and this slipperiness is part of Gaga's act". (Switaj 2012: 36.) Similarly, Gaga may "exist in an 'offstage' manner" when actually performing, or contrastingly, be in costume in paparazzi photos, blurring the distinction between private and public selves and challenging the dichotomy between a "real" and an "artificial" identity (Switaj 2012: 35–36). A quote from Hiatt describing a moment immediately after a concert exemplifies this when Gaga exists in a "private" moment, acting in an "onstage" manner:

She'd taken her bows, the crowd was streaming up the arena stairs. But as the recorded version of 'Judas' blared over the sound system, Lady Gaga began to move again. On the far-right side of the stage, in view of only a dozen or so straggling fans, she kicked up her stripper boots, dancing harder than she had all night. The show was over, but the performance hadn't ended. It didn't look like it would ever stop. (Hiatt 2011: 47.)

Her performance stretches beyond the stage and into everyday life. Similarly, it is mentioned that Gaga dresses in her "future-shock style", both on- and off-stage – exemplified by a story of Gaga going shopping for tortellini "in a transparent bodysuit" (Hiatt 2009: 58). Switaj (2012) sees Gaga as a never-ending performance, where there is nothing behind the star image, and the performance is what is real, in a Butlerian sense, as we are all constantly performing. This argument is persuasive, considering Gaga's statement in the material: "What I will say to you is that when I am not onstage, I feel dead, and when I'm onstage, I feel alive," she says. - - "I don't feel alive unless I'm performing, and that's just

the way I was born". (Hiatt 2011: 47.) The last sentence constructs an intriguing conflict: her true nature is that of performance, which keeps her alive.

Even if Gaga is a constant performance, I would ask *what* is being performed, arguing that especially in *Rolling Stone* the performance of rock authenticity, which entails constructions of a sincere, true self, is needed, especially as the audience will expect an impression of sincerity and commitment from the artists in order to perceive them as good, that is, authentic (Frith 2004: 28). This is exemplified by the repeated reminders that Gaga is always Gaga, and how it is not "a mask". Similarly, while Leibetseder (2012: 77–78) finds Gaga's fluidity of identities to be her forte, even in her fluidity Gaga still manages to confuse, since her fluctuating and queer performance style is at odds with her essentialist and non-queer lyrics portraying a fixed identity in the song *Born This Way*. To quote Torrusio (2012: 169), "Like the Roman Janus face of transition, the monsters of our culture are consistently planting themselves at a crossroads, resisting our categorization, denying us the security of pinpointing their subject position". Gaga's image oscillates so that it is difficult to capture it for inspection.

The analyzed texts propose several, even contradicting flashes of different discourses and thus subject positions, from which the reader has the freedom to choose. The wide array of discourses serves a wider audience. Similarly, according to Torrusio (2012: 166), Gaga offers her public several images of herself, from which they can choose the ones they find pleasing. According to Gray, Gaga strives for creating a new, authentic identity where we can all "just be", for instance through the different characters Gaga plays in her videos (Gray 2012b: 129, 140). Authenticity, a holy Grail that is never truly and fully attainable for anyone, but constantly pursued, is in Gaga's case pursued through a different tactic: not through a single person, but instead several, contradicting ones, which is closer to our human nature in real life. Moreover, taking into account Gaga's manipulative and playful approaches to interviews, such as mimicking the interviewer, the interactions with the media can be read as a play, constantly toying with real and fake, with intimacy and enacting intimacy. The whole act can be seen as criticizing the concept of authenticity altogether, and questioning whether reaching the goal is ever possible.

With all the fluidity, do the texts create freedom for her to be seen as authentic, because her ever-changing image never stops long enough for us to be able to as-

sess her authenticity? One secret of Lady Gaga's success may be the fluctuation of discourses around her image and persona, as it produces intriguing friction, seducing her audience into trying to solve the mystery. Similarly, Marshall argues that the secret to Bowie's and Madonna's "continuing appeal is the continual deferral of the resolution of the enigma; the authentic self is never revealed completely". Because of the importance of authenticity for popular music discourse, their enigmatic images will be further strengthened. (Marshall 2014 [1997]: 194.) It can be argued that the power of even the most artificial star is based on popular music culture's fixation with authenticity.

## Conclusions

"Let's talk about the real you", and I'm like... who? What are you looking for?  
(Hiatt 2011: 46.)

The purpose of this article was to ask what sorts of authenticity discourses are constructed in *Rolling Stone's* three cover stories of Lady Gaga. According to the analysis, the texts construct discourses that utilize the values of both traditional and modern strands of authenticity. According to Lawrence Grossberg, in the context of the logic of authentic inauthenticity "the only authenticity is to know and even admit that you are not being authentic, to fake it without faking the fact that you are faking it" (Grossberg 1993: 206). However, I would argue that in the research material the traditional craving for authenticity is not completely displaced by the logic of authentic inauthenticity, but rather the material constructs discourses benefiting both of these logics. The texts are fluctuating between opposite authenticity discourses: that of Romanticism, of truth, of a traditional self-expressing creative genius, and of Modernity, of artifice, self-creation, and transparency. Lady Gaga is portrayed *both* faking it without faking that she is faking it, and faking that she is not faking it. The presence of traditional authenticity discourses in Gaga's star persona are supported by Varriale's parallel findings in her analysis of Gaga's interview in *Noisevox* (2012), focusing on the "romantic" and "folk discourse" in the material.

By combining both folk and art discourses, highlighting the close connection between Gaga and her audience, incorporating elements of artistry, such as suf-

fering and dedication to the art, and by alleging an association between Gaga and already established and authenticated artists in the rock genre, the texts construct a traditional authenticity for Gaga while simultaneously concealing the commercialist aspects of her work as well as the problem of her musical genre, which rock culture treats with suspicion. Modern authenticity discourses treat Gaga as part of the continuum of canonized, self-inventing artists such as Bowie and Madonna. Fusing both traditional and modern authenticity discourses creates the tension and fluctuation around Gaga's persona, which is further strengthened by the dissolving of categories surrounding her persona such as sexuality, gender and the category of human being. Moreover, the fluidity of performativity that dissolves concepts such as onstage and offstage, or person and persona, further complicates her image. The twisting identities, while increasing the appeal around her persona, divert attention away from the classic accusations aimed at performers like Gaga: the dismissal of dance music as non-intellectual and feminine, and her substantial commercial success.

Although a long time has passed since the original countercultural rock phenomenon of the 1960s, with its concomitant values of authentic communities and original self-expression, where *Rolling Stone* has its roots, the interviews under analysis would appear to imply that it is still impossible to wholly abandon traditional authenticity discourses. Similarly, Dilling-Hansen (2015) argues in her analysis of Gaga's fans that they experience Gaga as "real", in the process of this evaluation making use of rock authenticity discourses. Gaga cannot construct herself as mere performance or construction, since the musical value judgments are still interwoven with the argument over authenticity. Similarly, *Rolling Stone* also has its image at stake as the representative of a select community of rock culture. Furthermore, commercially, the journal benefits from the constructed illusion of intimacy since this serves as a buying incentive. Would Gaga have been able to latch onto her success if her image had not spoken to a wide range of music fans, including those who appreciate rock's aesthetics of authenticity? Gaga is now a superstar whom *Rolling Stone* can interview and whom rock critics can appreciate without losing their authority or credibility – thanks to the ability of her image to utilize authenticity wherever and in whatever way needed. The dichotomy of authentic and artificial artist identities is indeed false: no performer is ever totally "real" – to quote Barker & Taylor (2007: x), "Authenticity is an ab-

solute, a goal that can never be fully attained, a quest". Gaga's constructed artistic identity, which alternately benefits both traditional and modern authenticity discourses and dilutes the categories of "real" and "fake", serves as a reminder of the impossibility of total authenticity. Nonetheless, it appears rock culture still needs its Holy Grail: we need the pursuit for authentic performer identities.

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