

Eva Battista

**Postmodern Aesthetic Practices in American Music Videos:  
Lady Gaga (de-)constructed.**

My paper intends to focus on the representation of gender in the American music video, which serves as an aesthetic platform of postmodern culture. The music video as a fairly recent aesthetic medium emerged in the context of the culture industry or rather music industry allowing the distribution of music on a larger scale. The music video is seen as a product of mass consumption in contemporary postmodern society. I consider the works of popular culture as a significant part of today's culture and society. Popular culture and contemporary society influence each other in a reciprocal manner. I will investigate the dynamics of this interdependency as a discourse relying on the theory of culture as a signifying practice in the tradition of *Michel Foucault*.

With the example of the female superstar *Lady Gaga* I will analyze the presentation of gender as a performance that is played out in her music videos as well as in other public appearances such as award shows etc. *Lady Gaga* comes off as an eccentric and outspoken public figure and presents herself as being radically opposed to conformity. She plays with the visual codes of *Drag* breaking down the binary system of essentialist gender roles and the notion of beauty – exemplifying the destruction of a prevalent constructed system in the post-structuralist sense of *Jacques Derrida*. As a consequence, the notion of gender roles and female beauty will be resignified or reconstructed completing the process of *deconstruction*.

I want to argue that postmodern aesthetic styles such as parody and the plurality of references to traditional styles serve as tools for revealing the constructedness of gender roles. The parody of the female beauty standard and of the exploitation of the female body in the music industry works via exaggeration and irony reaching levels of the absurd and grotesque.

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