



Research Paper

‘The Cultural Transformation of the Biblical Imagery, Myths and Traditions: An Analysis of the Adaptation or It is The Cultural Appropriation in Lady Gaga's Song “Judas”’

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ABSTRACT: *Lady Gaga a well known figure as 'mother monster' and 'Queen of pop' and also one of the most celebrated artists of all time has been controversial for her music videos and fashion sense, especially her vision regarding religion, sex and gender empowering experiments with modern culture is unique. In this paper I have discussed her most controversial and approachable music video "Judas", from the album, Born this Way, a watermark of her music career that landed her atop of the most experimental music diva of all time. She uses the imagery of Judas' betrayal as a backdrop which throws up some interesting themes.*

Keywords: *Sacred, redemption, holy, evil, testament, orthodox, betrayal and love.*

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta (March 28, 1986), one of the most admired American singers of all time is reputable among people as Lady Gaga. She has been one of the most influential icons in the pop music industry, not only with her incredible fashion sense but for her socio-political influence on modern culture. She has been plausible for her unconventional, provocative creativity and visual experiments with her music videos. She became laudable singer and songwriter the following years with the release of her albums, *The Fame* and *The Fame Monster* in 2009 and peaked atop with full length albums, *Born This Way* (2011), *Artpop* (2013) and *Joanne* (2016). She has played leading role in the mini-series, *American Horror Story: Hotel* (2015-16) for which she has won a Golden Globe Award for Best Actress, and for the critically appreciated musical drama movie *A Star is Born* (2018) she has nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actress. After sold 27 million albums and 146 million singles as of 2016, Gaga is one of the best selling music artists in the musical history. She has been declared Billboard's Artist of the year. She has ranked number four on VH1 Greatest Women in Music in 2012, and second on Time's 2011 readers pole of the most influential people of the past ten years and has named Billboard's women of the year in 2015. (Wiki, 2019)

Lady Gaga has the entire spark for lighting up the firecrackers in the sky of art and music with her two main demonstrated abilities: Firstly, her videos reflect the power of woman to shape the modern culture about religion. It will be not wrong to say that Gaga is a producer of new culture. She uses her creativity as a power to create meaning transforming the religious myths. Secondly, her videos demonstrate how modern values still dominant cultural meanings. Every time period has changed the meanings of culture. Now modern age is doing the same. Gaga is the modern artist and she plays modern cultural perspectives honestly. "Judas" itself represents a commentary on the moral confusion and contradiction on religious values in contemporary society where Christian values still holds dominance.

Analysing Lady Gaga's songs literary appropriation and adaptation it is also important to consider her music and Catholic adaptation abilities. Although Gaga is not a traditional academic research subject, but several academic researchers from different areas have written about her, however the present literature review will mainly focus on her influences and inspirations how her songs have driven Gaga to write and visualise them. One of Gaga's trademarks is that she writes and performs songs that allow her to put her into fictional but close to social situations and, in this way, she plays the character of someone else and narrates from her empathetic perspective. Some of her songs have been inspired by her personal life and some by Christian myths. Her songs can be seen as adaptations of Biblical parables: the original sources are studied by Gaga as the Catholic student. By using adaptation theory, this study will give an interpretation of Lady Gaga's songs with myths and traditions.

II. INTRODUCTION OF MUSIC VIDEO:

The music of the album *Born This Way* composed in the synth-pop and dance-pop styles while consolidating different forms of instrumentation such as electronic rock and techno. It is holding a wide range of genres, such as opera, heavy metal, disco, house, and rock and roll, while its lyrical themes including sexuality, religion, freedom, feminism, and individualism make it strong and impactful album. Despite divided between religious and conservative leagues, the album was well received by music critics, who praised its creative musical styles and Gaga's voice. *Born This Way* has received three Grammy Award nominations, including Gaga's third consecutive nomination for Album of the Year. Several religious groups have condemned the album for its use of religious symbols and imageries of Christianity and its framework on sexuality. In Lebanon, *Born This Way* was banned by the General Secretary Department that deemed the album is disdainful and disrespects the Christianity. The songs including the album are: "Marry The Night", "Born This Way", "Government Hooker", "Judas", "Americano", "Hair", "Scheiße", "Bloody Mary", "Bad Kids", "Highway Unicorn (Road to Love)", "Heavy Metal Love", "Electric Chapel", "You and I", "The Edge of Glory", "Black Jesus+Amen Fashion", "Fashion of His Love", "The Queen" and "Gagavision" miniseries. (Wiki, 2019) Three tracks in the album create similar allusion: Synth buzz "Bloody Mary" referencing Mary Magdalene's love and hatred having the sound of church organ and strings, "Electric Chapel" deploys the religious undertone and "Judas" defines the Bible stories with modern appraisal.

It is true that sensational pop icon Lady Gaga has never blushed by any kind of controversy. She addresses religious themes repeatedly in her songs, including "Black Jesus," "Bloody Mary," "Disco Heaven," "Electric Chapel," "Alejandro," and "Venus". Her one of the most controversial songs of all time is her fourth track "Judas" from the album *Born this Way*. It has been critiqued as blasphemous, sacrilegious and religious raid on one hand and an indulging piece of art on the other hand. It was released by Interscope Records on April 15, 2011 as the second single written and produced by Gaga. At the 2011 Much Music Video Awards Gaga won the 'Best International Artist Video' award for this video "Judas." (Wiki, 2019)

The video "Judas" has the bold appearance of religious themes. But the most discussed themes are two; a) protest of gender presentation and b) sub-ordination of women uphold by dominant religious thoughts. The character of Mary Magdalene embodies a feminist view in Christianity. She is the prophet of women's own religion and culture where resistance and the power of gender exist, as Gaga commented, 'Resistance is diagnostic to power.' (Baronessa, 2016) She has intentionally introduced a figure of rejection to resist the patriarchal gender ideology. Indeed, Magdalene is a stigmatized and enigmatic religious figure that's why she is the protagonist of Gaga's video "Judas."

The video "Judas" has a Biblical storyline where Norman Reedus played Judas Iscariot and Lady Gaga played Mary Magdalene that deems it to the realm of theatre as well as entertainment. Before the release of the video the 'Catholic League' accused Gaga for the use of religious imagery and her role as Magdalene in the video. Gaga replied with the abstract message, 'Let the cultural baptism begin. If they were not who you were taught they would be, would you still believe?' (Vena, 2011) Her inspiration behind the video is songs like "Sacred" from Deshepeche Mode and "Like a Prayer" by Madonna, which also containing the controversial religious themes. Madonna kisses Jesus while Gaga rides with Jesus in her video. VH1 found the other inspirations of the films like *Our Lady of the Assassins*, *The Wild Angels* and *Romeo+Juliet* and American television series *Lost*. (Wiki, 2019)

The song is an Electro-house^[1] come out with the story of a woman who is Magdalene. She falls in love with a man who betrayed her who is Judas. Magdalene represents the human race and Judas is Evil. Gaga explained that the song is about honouring one's darkness in order to being oneself into the light. The story also explicates about repentance and about following one's glory of being free. Betrayal, forgiveness and destiny are also the leading lobes in the video. On a talk show *Last call with Carson Daily*, Gaga explained to the host, "Judas", is about always falling in love with the wrong man over and over again. It is a very, very dark song. It's rad.' (Hombach, 2010, p. 174) Gaga has interpreted Biblical imageries in her own style. Gaga wanted to paint a Federico-Fellini esque^[2] video with the parable of Apostles those are the revolutionaries of the modern Jerusalem. And Magdalene is the only woman among them. Jason Lipshutz from *Billboard* writes it as a 'motorcycle mayhem meets biblical betrayal.' (Lipshutz, 2011)



Figure.1: A still from the music video “Judas”, Lady Gaga as Mary Magdalene’s mysterious glance finding Judas among following apostles.

In order to be able to appreciate Gaga’s work as adaptation or appreciation or cultural appropriation, first, it is important to understand some theories of adaptation and appropriation. With a basic understanding of adaptation theory in a close detail of three different songs, it can be argued that the most important thing Gaga does is that she takes the characters from the original context and gives them a different visual ability and free them from their conventions.

III. WHAT IS ADAPTATION:

In contemporary cinematic culture, it is easy to find adaptations based on comic books of Marvel to the novels of Jane Austen. But it will be unjustified to think adaptation can understand only about literature and films alone. Today there are also song covers rising up the pop charts, video games, toys and even theme park rides as adapted works. So, the question rises, what is not adaptation? The answer is arguing that most of the re-imaginings in any form- parody, translations, condensation, remakes are indeed adaptations while allusion and music sampling or any brief usage of a pre-existing text are not.

In simple words, an adaptation is the transfer of any kind of genre into another kind of genre. Genres such as opera, musical theatre, film, video games and so-on that transfer expressions from one mode to another. Each genre deals in a different way with artistic devices such as point of view, interiority/exteriority, time and tense, ambiguity, irony, symbols and silence. It is often considered a type of derivative work. Julie Sanders in her book, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, gives the definition of adaptation as a, ‘specific process involving the transition from one genre to another: novels into films; drama into musical; dramatization of prose narratives and prose fiction; or the inverse movement of making drama into prose narrative.’ (Sanders, 2005) Gaga transferred a parable into music video; she used biblical imageries like sacred heart, passion of Christ and also took symbols from other cultures like ‘Eye of Horace’ to build up her creativity.

Linda Hutcheon has mentioned some elements of the adaptation in her book *A Theory of Adaptation*, those help to define its process: What? (Forms), Who? (Adapters), Why? (Reason), How? (Audience), Where? (Contents) and When? (Time). (Hutcheon, 2006) Firstly, it is important to identify what we are adapting. Is it of story, concept, action, character, climax, location, settings, costumes, dialogues or genres? Desmond and Hawkes note that, ‘for the transition to be successful, it is important that the adapter understands the story as well as the means of expression of both discourses.’ (Desmond and Hawkes, 2006) Secondly, who is adapting. Is it writer, painter or film maker? Each artist has his/her own style to express the art. Third, what is the reason of adaptation? There can be many reasons behind the adaptation; light up the awareness for the traditional orthodox, rituals and myths, introduce the audience history of own culture or other cultures and many more. Fourth, what is the medium to reach the audience and what kind of variety is of audience, is it reader or watcher or the listener. Next, what is the source of the content is adapted, from book or from traditional manuscripts or

just from the folk tradition. And the last is what the time period of adaptation is and what the time period of the original source was.

Hutcheon defended three modes as the basis for much of her discussion: a) telling, b) showing, and c) interactive modes. (Hutcheon, 2006) When a word is read, it creates an image or concept in mind that signifies its meaning. For example; red word directs the image of rose that's meaning is flower or love. When a frame of an image is watched, the effect comes immediately- the image has no need of the identification of mind but it directly appeals the eye. Media speaks through its frame just as literature through words. But the soul of both is same. It is also truth that adaptation is a parasite which depends on literature for meaning.

Critic George Bluestone discusses the media's ability to handle, 'time and space'; time is about a specific time period of original content and adapted work and space is the specific place that has been presented in both original and adapted work. He has identified three characteristics of time- a) transience, b) sequence and c) irreversibility. (Bluestone, 1961) McFarlane refers to extra cinematic codes like: a) language codes (accent or tones of voice), b) visual codes, c) non linguistic sound codes (musical and other aural codes), d) cultural codes (regarding people and their life at particular times and places). (McFarlane, 2019) The presentation of characters through body language has considered a key element of a 'performance.' And the performance of the performers has been an important element of the mise-en-scene. The on-screen facial expressions, gestures, positioning, movement and speech of the performers hold the real experience of original character.

IV. WHAT IS APPROPRIATION:

appropriation is the part of adaptation but in more appropriate and in less creative manner. It has been defined as 'the capture, into a different art, of real object or an existing piece of art.' Appropriation in art has been used as the practice by artists using pre-existing objects in their art with little transformation. The notion of appropriation is attributed to the Russian linguist and critic Michael Bakhtin (1895-1975). The elements those can be transformed into the process of appropriation are: practices, beliefs, ideas, values, traditions, rituals, language and speech, modes of communication, material objects and performances.



Figure.2: A painting of Monalisa with its appropriation art work

In music, appropriation is the tool to use borrowing elements for creating a new piece. It is opined as placing the elements in a new content. Gino Stefani, makes appropriation the chief criterion for his 'popular' definition of melody. 'Melody,' he argues, 'is music "at hand" it is that dimension which the common musical competence extracts, appropriation and uses for a variety of purposes: singing, whistling, dancing and so on.'(Stefani, 2019)

V. WHAT IS CULTURAL APPROPRIATION:

Cultural appropriation is the adoption of elements of one culture by the people of another culture. It has been defined broadly as the use of a culture's symbols, artefacts, genres, rituals or technologies by the members of another culture. It is also mandatory discussing with cultural politics. It involves the exploitation of marginalised and colonized cultures. There can be occurred some kind of harms as: a) Cultural dominance- the use of elements of a dominant culture by members of a subordinated culture that imposed by dominant culture. b) Cultural exploitation- the appropriation of the elements of a subordinated culture by a dominant culture without basic mutuality, permission or compensation. It creates cultural discrimination.

VI. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CULTURAL APPROPRIATION AND CULTURAL APPRECIATION:

When someone borrows elements from one culture that does not belong to him/her and reproduces it into a meaningless pop-cultural item, it is cultural appropriation. On the other hand, cultural appreciation truly honours the nation, art and culture from that it has come. It takes the time to learn the original content, interact with it to understand a culture that is different from another.

VII. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ADAPTATION AND APPROPRIATION:

adaptation is an explanation or meaning of a text or a symbol while appropriation is complicated. It is closer like duplicating objects. For example many duplicate companies sell their products on the behalf of branded companies, many times their brand spellings are so close to the original and we couldn't able to identify original. Adaptation often involves a cultural change, an updating of the text for current audience. For example: Ramayan has written in Sanskrit that is an ancient language. In modern time, language is simpler and is containing new words with the development of technology. Today people are less capable to understand Sanskrit language. And adaptation introduce them this old epic in their understanding way. Appropriation is less clean and re-interprets a text or image through a political change. Adaptation is a creative process, with a new perspective, a new interpretation of the same subject. Adaptation also transcends imitation- it adds supplements, and expands on the original. However appropriation is secondary to the original. Adaptation has three categories: a) Transposition- shifting the original to a new genre, culture, space and time. b) Commentary- adaptation that comment on the politics of the source text or the new work or both. c) Analogue- adaptation stands alone. It does not require knowledge of original source. Adaptation techniques: a) Parallelism- following/mimicking original text. b) Amplification- adding, expanding original. c) Reduction- cutting down on the original. d) Proximation- bringing the text closer to the audience's frame of reference/moving adaptations closer in time. Appropriation does not clearly signal it is close to source text or not. There are two broad categories of appropriations: a) embedded text and b) sustained appropriation. Embedded texts and interplay are the stand-alone works and modern reworking of their originals. Sustained appropriations are those that closely mimic the original. There has been great controversy over sustained appropriation that it is homage or plagiarism.

This study will mainly focus on the lyrics and visual appearance of the song because they both resemble the connection with sources. However, it will sometimes be necessary to discuss the music and lyrics of other songs, so they will not be ignored completely. Important stills from the video, as well as other important stills can be found in this paper.

VIII. ANALYSIS OF MUSIC VIDEO:

"Judas" is the one art piece of many adapted patchworks. Gaga borrowed every element from appropriate source content, from lyrics to language and make up to costumes. The pattern of presenting all these elements is very neatly arranged by Gaga. The presentation comes in a sequence of her thoughts and ideas with her lyrics, props and characters as Lyrics-Visuals-Sound-Visuals-Lyrics-Sound. With the opening of music video, the Red Cross appears with the black heart in colour on it. Original sacred heart is red in colour and symbolises the love of God for mankind. This symbol belongs to the devotion of Roman Catholic Church that concerns the suffering love and passion of the Christ's heart toward humans. It also presents the connection of blessed Mary of the Divine Heart with God. The sacred heart of Jesus was pierced with the lance with his crucifixion and always presents in images with crown of thorns. So, the cross with black heart does not indicate the Christ's sacred heart but Judas' betrayal heart. If red heart is the symbol of God's love, this black heart represents Judas' hatred. It can also be interpreted that the love of Mary Magdalene is not pious. She has torn between Jesus and Judas so, Red Cross is her religion that is Jesus and black heart is her love that is Judas. Behind the cross symbol a motorcycle gang, wearing black leather jackets, skull mark prints on their backs is riding on the road. Five of the Twelve Apostles Simon, Philip, Thomas, Judas and John are following Jesus as Rick Gonzalez. Modern Jesus is wearing a golden crown of thorns. Gaga as Mary Magdalene is sitting behind the Jesus on his motorcycle but looking back for Judas. At the surface, it is looking like a girl is the beloved of a good man who still wants an evil man. The inspiration behind the song is a soul is longing for the devil in the back while clutching the source of the light ahead. It is like moving towards future but still holding the bad memories of past. Gaga does it more clearly singing the line, "I'm love with Judas." Henderson continued her motivation with saying in Lady Gaga Superstar, 'song conjured the imagery of a disturbed vision of hell.' [Henderson, 2010, p-277]



Figure.3: Appearance of Red Cross in the opening of the video

8.1. Title of the song: The title of the song is “Judas,” on the name of the one among three protagonists of the video; Judas Iscariot (died c. 30-c. 33 AD). The character of Judas is interpreted with different point of views that makes him more complicated and more mysterious. He was villain or victim it is under consideration. Judas was the one of the original Twelve Disciples of Jesus Christ. The name Judas has a Greek rendering of the Hebrew name Judah^[3] which was common among Jewish people. But now he has become the archetype of the traitor or betrayal in modern culture. According to all four canonical gospels^[4] Judas betrayed Jesus to the Sanhedrin^[5] by kissing him and addressing him as Rabbi to reveal his identity to the assembly of people who had come to arrest him. The Gospel of Matthew 26:15 states that Judas committed the betrayal in exchange for ‘Thirty pieces of silver.’ The Gospel of Luke 22:3 and Gospel of John 13:27 give the explanation that he was possessed by Satan. The Gospel of Mark the earliest Gospel gives no motive for Judas betrayal but gives the statement about ‘Jesus is predicting it’ at the ‘Last Supper.’ According to Matthew 27:1-10, after learning that Jesus has to be crucified Judas decided to return the money to chief priests and committed suicide by hanging. The priests used the money to buy a field to bury strangers in it. It was called the Field of Blood^[6] because it had been bought with blood money. The Gnostic Gospel of Judas praises his role in triggering humanity's salvation and called him as the best of the apostles. In the film *Dracula* (2000), Count Dracula is revealed as Judas Iscariot. In the plot, God punishes Judas not only for betraying Jesus but attempting suicide at dawn, by turning him into the first vampire and making him afraid of silver for taking 30 pieces of silver. His suicide attempt at dawn becomes the cause of his Vampire generation’s burning reaction to sunlight.

Since the middle ages literature, Judas has been portrayed as a personification of the Jewish people. His betrayal has been used to justify Christian anti-Semitism. His red hair shown in Spanish literature by Spanish artists and in English literature by William Shakespeare, as the practice of Renaissance character portrayal of Jews: it was regarded as symbol of negativity. In various paintings based on Last Supper, Judas has depicted with a dark colour halo. Lady Gaga used the character of Judas as the Evil side of human. She has not made it complicated to understand. Judas is the betrayal and she is the victim of him like Eve was of Satan.

8.2. Twelve Apostles/Disciples: An Apostle, in Greek; means ‘who is sent off.’ The purpose of their sending off was usually to convey a message, thus ‘messenger’ is a common and alternative meaning of the word, other meanings are such as ‘ambassador’ and ‘envy.’ Twelve Apostles or the twelve chosen followers of Jesus were: Simon Peter^[7], Judas Iscariot, Andrew^[8], James^[9], John, Philip, Thaddeus, Bartholomew, Thomas, James^[10], Matthew^[11], and Simon the Canaanite. One of the Twelve was a tax collector, and several others were fishermen who plied their trade on the waters of Galilee. They devoted their services to Jesus Christ nearby two millennia ago. Jesus is stated in the Bible to have sent out the Twelve, ‘whom he also named apostles,’ ahead into the city to prepare a meal to celebrate Passover before his death, and after resurrection to spread the message of the gospel to all nations. In the video all twelve roadies those are following Christ go ahead pretending as they will prepare party in Electric Chapel.

8.3. Mary Magdalene: Saint Mary Magdalene is one of the three protagonists of the video, other two are: Judas and Christ. Like Judas she was a Jewish woman. She travelled with Jesus as one of his followers and was a witness of his crucifixion, burial and resurrection. She is mentioned by her name twelve times in the canonical gospels, more than most of the apostles. She is known in many Christian traditions as the ‘apostle to the apostles,’ only one who truly understood Christ’s teachings. She is considered to be a saint by the Catholic, Eastern orthodox, Anglican and Lutheran churches with a feast day of July 22. During the Counter Reformation,

the Catholic churches used her as a symbol of penance. Other Protestant churches honour her as the heroine of faith. In the eastern orthodox "hymns of Holy Wednesday" Judas is contrasted with the woman who anointed Jesus with expensive perfumes and washed his feet with her tears. And she has been identified as Magdalene. The reason to contrast these two figures Magdalene and Judas in "Hymns" is encouraging people to avoid the role of betrayal instead imitate Magdalene's way of repentance. The Gospel of Luke 8:2-3 mentioned her as a wealthy woman. The same passage states about her that seven demons driven out of her. In Luke 7:36-50 belief that she was a repentant prostitute or promiscuous woman. All four Gospels identify her, either alone or as a member of a larger group of women, in a good light or in a dark side. But it is true that Magdalene's closeness to Jesus resulted in tension with the other disciples particularly Simon Peter. In the movie and the book, *The Vinci Code* she has mentioned as the wife of Jesus Christ.

Gaga's song "Judas" is sung from Magdalene's perspective. She gives Magdalene more power and more respect with her strong appearances than Bible. Portraying her as a prostitute who is 'beyond repentance,' Gaga drew a picture of a slave of sin. She keeps crawling up to evil, and serving it, even though she knows that evil will surely harm her. She is a metaphor that an evil modern woman serves Satan. Gaga symbolically resists the hegemony of Western Christian values about woman where either she is virtuous like Mary or evil like Eve. Gaga celebrates her as a 'whore superstar,' a prostitute that can't be reformed. She adopted the Luke Gospel's sayings and modified Magdalene's character in her own way. She says Magdalene has sold herself for fame, who behaves savagely and immorally in exchange for money. Gaga reclaims the words 'wench' or 'fame hooker' as a source of power by revitalizing herself as a bold sex symbol or 'proud whore.' The song "Bloody Mary" is a spooky ballad by Gaga also sung from the perspective of Mary Magdalene:

I won't cry for you

I won't crucify the things you do

I won't cry for you, see

When you're gone I'll still be bloody Mary. (Gaga, 2011)

Judas is also the subject of one of the oldest surviving English ballads which dates from the 10th century. In some ballads, the blame for the betrayal of Christ was placed on his sister ^[12]. And Gaga resists this kind of gender injustices of religion through her songs. It is right for her that being evil is better than being offering of forged faith.

8.4. Jerusalem: Jerusalem is one of the oldest cities in the world and is considered holy to the three major Abrahamic religions- Judaism, Christianity and Islam. During its long history Jerusalem has been destroyed at least twice, besieged 23 times, captured 44 times and attacked 52 times. In 1538, Suleiman the Magnificent rebuilt the walls around the city for a last time. Jerusalem has been sacred to Judaism for closely 3000 years and Christianity for around 2000 years and for Islam 1400 years. It has been sacred to the Jews since King David proclaimed it his capital in 10th century BCE. It is mentioned in Bible 632 times. In literature and in pop culture Jerusalem occupied an important place as the symbol of religious values and cruelty, where Christ lived and crucified. In long poem "Elene," Constantine sent his mother Helen to find true cross of Christ where she started kill Jews people for their sin to kill Christ. In video "Judas" Christ, Judas and Magdalene are Jews so they live in Jerusalem not in the time of 1st century but of 21st century. It has been portrayed as a modern city where all apostles are searching relief in disco bars and on roads. So, the 'time' has changed not 'space.'

8.5. Libation: In the opening scene of "Judas" two times the practice of libation appears, first time Philip pours the grain on road and second time John did it. Libation is a ritual pouring of the liquid or grains as an offering to a god or a spirit or in memory of the dead. It could be poured with religious meaning on an altar or the earth. It was the part of ancient 'Judaism' and mentioned in the Bible. In East Asia pouring of rice into running water like a stream symbolizes the detachment from Karma and bad energy.



Figure.4. A still from the video "Judas", Philip pouring the grain on the road in the account of libation

8.6. Passion of Christ: In Bible, 'The Passion' is mentioned as a short time period of final hours of Jesus' life, ending with his crucifixion and death on Good Friday. It also included events such as, Last Supper, Jesus' agony in the garden, his arrest by Sanhedrin priests and his trial before Pontius Pilate. These all parts in four Gospels are known as the 'Passion narratives.' When Jesus was arrested by Priests, Pilate offers the crowd which one they will choose to free between Christ and criminal Barabbas and crowd chosen Barabbas. They placed a crown of thorns on his head and mocked by saying, 'Hail, king of the Jews.' He was hanged by a cross and pierced his heart by a lance; all of this golden jewellery worn by modern Jesus is fashioned on the instruments of 'the passion.' The mace Gaga is holding suggests the scourge with which Jesus was beaten. All these are the tools by which he was tortured and killed and became the 'man of sorrows.' But Christianity followed a tradition of transforming these evil devices into symbol of Christ's glory.



Figure.5. A still of Christ wearing Golden jewellery in the video "Judas"

8.7. Electric Chapel: All four gospels marking the beginning of Christ's 'passion' with his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Crowd started gather around him and believed in his teachings. The Last Supper of Christ with his Apostles took place on the first day of Passover, the festival of Unleavened Bread ^[13]. This place was located on Mount Zion outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. The disciples reclined there and ate dinner with Jesus. It was foretold to Apostles one of them would soon betray Christ, and his prediction about 'denial of Peter.' Gaga changed the 'space' with modern Electric Chapel where all Apostles are dancing and enjoying in dancing lights. She has also a music track with the same title, in which she refers it as the place of modern man's self realisation: 'Confess to me where you have been/ Next to the bar/ pray for your sins/ Right under the glass disco ball.' (Gaga, 2011) When Christ is giving blessings to his followers, Gaga sings about Judas,

When he comes to me I am ready
I'll wash his feet with my hair if he needs.

Forgive him when his tongue lies through his brain,
even after three times he betrays me. (Gaga, 2011)

These lines show her paradoxical relationship with Jesus and Judas. Gaga revealed the metaphors and the meaning behind the song;

Judas is a metaphor and an analogy about forgiveness and betrayal and things that haunt you in your life and how I believe that it's the darkness in your life that ultimately shines and illuminates the greater light that you have upon you. Someone once said that if you have no shadows then you are not standing in the light. So the song is about washing the feet of both good and evil and understanding and forgiving the demons from your past in order to move into the greatness of your future. (Vena, 2011)

Judas was the betrayer; he sold Jesus but Peter the leader of The Twelve also denied knowing Christ three times that night when Jesus was arrested. But it can also be for Christ himself because once Martin Luther addressed to his friends:

Even pious Christ himself had committed adultery three times; once with Magdalene, once with the Samaritan woman at the well and once with the adulteress he had let off so easily. (Roper, 2017)

In the Borbarities, also known as the Phibionites were early Christian Gnostic during the late fourth century A.D. including "The Questions of Mary," "The Greater Questions of Mary," "The Lesser Questions of Mary," and "The Birth of Mary." "The Greater Questions of Mary" contained an episode in which, during a post-resurrection appearance, Jesus took Mary to the top of a mountain, where he pulled a woman out of his side and engaged in sexual intercourse with her. Then, upon ejaculating, Jesus drank his own semen and told Mary, 'Thus we must do, that we may live.' Upon hearing this, Mary instantly fainted to which Jesus responded and telling her, 'o thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?'

8.8. Red Sarong: Gaga wearing red sarong with red blouse carving cross on it dances with singing lines, 'I'll bring him down/ a king with no crown.' (Gaga, 2011) It seems that she take a form of desires and religion at the same time. If Sarong is a traditional cloth of East countries red colour gives it flaming appearance. And crosses embroidered on her blouse make it more complicated to understand but beautiful in look. It clearly appears that Gaga is pointing towards Judas to break him down, because it is Judas who has no crown but Christ. She emerges like a goddess who is celebrating someone's death ceremony. 'It is a phenomenal video; really powerful, really impactful,' Gaga told. (Hombach, 2010)

Gaga is not sympathizing with one of history's most hated villains in next lines she sings: 'I'm just a holy fool, it's so cruel/ But I'm still in love with Judas.' (Gaga, 2011) But explains her own restraints to follow evil way and longing for redemption. 'Holy fool' is an oxymoron about Gaga's psychological conflict and Judas is the personification of evil. These lines present the foulness of Eve how she tempted by Satan and ate the fruit of knowledge, from sinful tree. And she accepted her attractions towards evil. In "Electric Chapel" she encourages people with singing, 'Follow me/ don't be such a holy fool/ follow me/ I need something more from you.' (Gaga, 2011)

8.9. Peter: She addresses Judas' sins and people's forgiveness for him with the lines; 'I couldn't love a man so purely/ even prophets forgave his goofy way.' (Gaga, 2011) But in next lines she points towards Peter one of the twelve apostles of Christ; 'I have learned love is like a brick/ you can build a house or sink a dead body.' (Gaga, 2011) Christ called Peter by this name- he would be the rock on which he would build his church. He is also the one who went out to Christ when Christ was walking on the water. Peter managed to walk on water before being feared, and began to sink like the proverbial stone. Gaga points towards Peter during the line 'Build a house' and towards her during 'or sink a dead body' that reminds the 'Dialogue of the savoir.' The dialogue consists of a conversation between, Jesus and three Disciples- Judas, Matthew and Magdalene. Simon Peter, annoyed at Mary's dominance of the conversation, tells Jesus, 'my master, we cannot endure this woman who gets in our way and does not let any of us speak, though she talks all the time.' Magdalene defends herself, saying; My master, I understand in my mind that I can come forward at any time in interpret what Pistis Sophia has said, but I am afraid of Peter, because he threatens me and hates our gender.

The Gospel of Thomas 114 generated considerable controversy:

Simon Peter said to them: let Mary go forth from among us, for women are not worthy of the life. Jesus said, Behold, I shall lead her, that I may make her male, in order that she also may become a living spirit like you males. For every woman who makes herself male shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

In the ancient world, it was almost universally believed that women were inferior to men and those they were, in essence, 'imperfect men' who had not fully developed. The contrast of Judas and Peter with Magdalene refers the same exploiting behaviour. Gaga resists their behaviour first Judas' and then take the charge against Peter. It was the Peter who also three times denied Jesus' knowing. During the Last Supper, Jesus predicted it before that Peter would deny knowledge of him before the rooster crowed next morning. Later night Jesus was arrested and Peter first denied to a servant's girl in Luke 22:54-57. When priests were bringing Christ into the high priest's house he followed them and sat down among them. A servant girl saw him seated in the firelight and said, 'this man was with him.' But he denied, 'woman, I don't know him.' The second denial comes to the same servant girl in Mark 14:69-70 when she saw him there she said again 'this fellow is one of them.' Again he denied. The third denial was to a number of people as he curses in Matthew 26:73-75. They asked him, 'Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away.' Then he began to call down curses on himself and swore 'I don't know the man!' suddenly a rooster crowed and Christ looked at him then Peter remembered the words of him; he went outside and wept bitterly.

8.10. Eye of Horace: Close ups of Gaga with stark imagery, including eye make-up which was compared to the Egyptian 'Eye of Horus'^[14] bring her more close to the religious practices of ancient time. 'Eye of Horus' is an Egyptian symbol that was used to 'intend to protect the Pharaoh in the afterlife and to ward off evil.' Gaga signified herself as the living symbol of protection. While trying to protect Jesus from the fights she attempts to warn him about his apostle's impending betrayal, and suddenly hypnotized by Judas' allure. Indirectly she mocks on the superstitious culture of ancient era. She recreated a scene from the Bible in Luke 7:38 when Magdalene washes the feet of Christ presenting her devotion to him. In 'Judas' Judas also presents there and pours cans of Beer on her buttocks. This scene emphasised that Mary faces a tension between rebellion and obedience.



Figure.6. A still of Lady Gaga as Mary Magdalene in video “Judas” wearing the makeup on eye as mark of Eye of Horace.

8.11. Mary in Blue cloak: The blue top worn by Mary and heart shaped Red crystal on it displays the sacred heart of Jesus. It is the symbol of God's boundless and passionate love for mankind, a depiction also used by Gaga in her earliest video “Alejandro.” It can be also interpret that the heart is of Magdalene herself and she is equally pious as Christ. She represents her passion for all women those want a different perspective of religion towards them. Blue colour of dress makes her appearance more independent and strong.

8.12. Golden Gun: ‘In the most Biblical sense, I am beyond repentance/ Fame hooker, prostitute wench, vomits her mind.’ (Gaga, 2011) In these lines Gaga reminds the Magdalene’s presence in Bible as prostitute or driven by evil souls. Bible says, she is beyond repentance as she is woman. She doesn’t show her disability to redeem herself, but question over the religion in terms of the traditional views. In Bible, Peter defends Jesus with a sword when Judas comes to finally betray Jesus. But Gaga take it more feminine and seems to be defending Jesus in place of Peter holding Golden gun. Then Christ signs her not to do it she applying lipstick on Judas' face becomes participator in the betrayal. Golden Gun is the symbol of feminine atrocity. It doesn’t kill people with bullets as men’s gun does but with the virtue of woman that is lipstick. Lipstick also signifies the impulsion of female character. It is her identity and her pride. ‘But in the cultural sense, I just speak in future tense/ Judas, kiss me if offended or wear ear condom next time.’ (Gaga, 2011) If the main portion of the song is told in privacy then middle eight lines is about Magdalene’s views in public. If in first lines Gaga is telling about the Biblical presentation of woman, in these lines she tells about woman in her own way in public: that she just thinks about future and does not care what religion or tradition has fixed her image. If her relationship with Judas is sin then people should cover their ears and should avoid her. She directly critiques the way of people to treat a woman, they do not completely accept her but also do not hesitate interfering in her life.

8.13. The birth of Venus: the Birth of Venus is a painting by the Italian painter Sandro Botticelli probably made in the mid 1480s. In the painting goddess Venus is emerging at the shore after her birth fully grown. According to Athenaeus^[15], the idea of Aphrodite or Venus’ rising from the sea was influenced by the courtesan Phryne (371 BC). During the time of the festivals of the Eleusinia and Poseidonia, she often used to swim nude in the sea. A sea shell often found in the feet of Venus that is the symbol of female vulva. In video “Judas” first it looks like Gaga is the Venus who is rising from the sea, but immediately she drowns in the water. Water is a symbol of purification but also of destruction and death as Noah's flood and the Red sea drowning the Egyptians. It could be correlated with the purification and redemption or the fall of Magdalene. In “Bloody Mary” she rejects the idea of social depiction of woman as the object of entertainment as she sings;

We are not just art for Michelangelo^[16]
To carve. He can't rewrite the agro of my furied heart.
I'll wait on mountain tops in Paris cold
J'veux pas mourir toute seule^[17]. (Gaga, 2011)



Figure.7. a still of Lady Gaga standing on the rock as the painting ‘Birth of Venus.’

8.14. Anointing of Jesus: In the Last Supper when Jesus prayed and thanked God for the meal, he broken the bread and shared the wine with the disciples. He said this bread is his body, broken for them and the wine a symbol of his blood would be poured out for their sins to be forgiven. After the meal, Jesus washed the feet of the disciples. And said to all we love each other like this not serve. Same account an unnamed woman washes Jesus' feet with her tears and dries them with her hair. Jesus says, 'Her sins which are many, are forgiven, for she has loved much.' In a slightly different account, Mary of Bethany does the same and then anoints Jesus' feet and head with precious perfume that was objected by Judas as a waste of wealth. The anointing of Jesus' head or feet event is recorded in the four gospels. The event in Luke features an unknown sinful woman, using long hair to dry Jesus' feet. In John's gospel the woman is named as Mary. Criticism surrounding the event is pointed at Mary for using an expensive ointment which could have been sold and the profit could be given to the poor. In the Matthew or Mark or John accounts, Jesus interprets the anointing with a preparation for his burial as he would be crucified not many days has left. Criticism in this account is directed at Jesus for allowing a sinner to touch him. But Jesus connects the action with her forgiveness and the lack of hospitality of his host. Some accounts also hold that anointing is actually two separate events, occurring at the beginning of Jesus' ministry in which he offers forgiveness to a sinful woman and the other in which he is anointed in preparation for his burial.



Figure.8. A still of anointing Jesus by Magdalene and counter of Judas.

8.15. Betrayal: Judas stated to Priest before his betrayal, 'Whoever it is I kissed, he is the one; take him into custody, and lead him away under guard.' Luke's gospel accounts it as Satan entered Judas at that time. Judas says and kisses Christ, 'fellow, for what purpose are you present?' and Jesus asked, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man ^[18] with a kiss?' According to the Synoptic Gospels, the kiss was given in the Garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper and led directly arrest of Christ by Sanhedrin. The scene is always included the kiss itself and the arrest of Jesus in the cycles of the Life of Christ or Passion of Jesus. In the video "Judas" event takes place in Electric Chapel where all apostles and people are gathered for enthusiasm. Magdalene tried to protect Christ but he refused and signs her to keep calm. Judas kissed Christ and all people points out them. But suddenly Magdalene's flashback as anointing Christ comes in her mind and she feels like Venus who is not taking birth but drowning in water. Magdalene falls on the feet on Christ and surrender herself to people in place of Christ. This change of climax atop the video at the height of creativity and makes it original in itself. It is not the story of neither Christ nor Judas but of sacrifice of a Woman who was sinful. The betrayal scene in video shows not only Judas' hypocritical attitude but also of Christ towards women. It is not only the betrayal of Judas but also of Christ. It seems more real and more practical than any religious testament what is the actual place of a woman in society and what people think about her. Gaga is master in it.



Figure.9. A still of kissing Judas to Jesus Christ.

8.16. Mary's redemption: Magdalene's redemption presents the true way how to purify own sins. It is not about crying like Peter, not about suicide as Judas did, not about die for people accounting their sins but it is regret and fully devotion for a single being while struggling with inner devil. Gaga sings this struggle;

I wanna love you

But something's pullin me away from you

Jesus is my virtue,

And Judas is the demon I cling to. (Gaga, 2011)

The video is the journey of a woman's transformation from the love of a devil to love of the faith. And sacrifice helps her win in this battle of good vs. evil. If Christ is virtue of love then Judas is the Satan who doesn't want her let go. In "Bloody Mary" she explains more; 'Love is just a history that they may prove/ and when you're gone I'll tell them my religion's you.' (Gaga, 2011)

8.17. Lapidation: The video ends with the death of neither Judas nor Jesus but of Gaga as she's stoned to the death by the crowd. She seems to be a woman who is caught in flagrante delicto ^[19]. In Bible when Jesus accounted with such situation he said to crowd 'Let he who is without sin cast the first stone' and people dropped the stones. But in video it seems that with Jesus betrayal also, there is no one to speak up for Magdalene. The Jewish Torah^[20] serves as a common religious reference for Judaism about stoning that is the method of execution. It is a punishment for zina^[21]. Jesus and the woman taken in adultery is a passage found in the Gospel of John 7:53-8:11 that has been the subject of much scholarly discussion. Mosaic Law tells it as the punishment of stoning to adultery. Jesus said, to the adulteress who was brought to him, 'Neither will I condemn you; go and sin no more.' A common tradition and Christian theological belief held that the woman caught in adultery was Jesus' female disciple Mary Magdalene with whom he was also engaged. But Gaga reveals the patriarchal sexual rules and limitations about their hybridism. Everything is acceptable for man's mistakes and there are many ways to correct them but these mistakes become sins from the perspective of woman. There is no way for regret or redemption but the punishment. In video Magdalene suffers for Christ and Judas' betrayal and their adultery. That happens in real life there no man comes to save a woman. But Gaga makes it the strength of a woman that she is able to bear any kind of worse suffering for whom she has devoted herself and this is her true love. In song "Bloody Mary" she sings; 'When Pontius comes to kill the king upon his throne/ I'm ready for their stones.' (Gaga, 2011)



Figure.10. a still of the climax of video where Magdalene stoned to death.

Gaga revealed the concept behind the song when Magdalene cried in the last scene after her death; I believe that Mary Magdalene was both fully divine and fully human. She has to be strong when Jesus fulfils the prophecy to die for everyone's sins, but she still has the moment of humanity where she's upset to let him go. She had to be a superstar, but she must have cried too. (Down, 2016)

IX. CONCLUSION:

Lady Gaga has encoded a deeper message regarding feminism, religious patriarchy and most significantly, religious cultural hegemony. In this way, we can see the video as deliberately appropriating Christian story-lines and imagery, as a form of social resistance to dominant religious power structures, namely the social influence of Christianity in the modern western world. Christ, Judas and Magdalene are more close to the modern human. They are more corrupted, darker from inside. Lust, luxury and love for meaningless life are the common features of a modern man and all these are present among these three. Gaga presented every aspect of religion in modern perspective honestly. Its corruption, hypocrisy and gender discrimination every element is balanced in this video. She doesn't have copied the religious content as it is but made it original with her own hard work on presentation. It is an original piece in itself. It is the ability of Gaga that is not possible for any other artist that her one single movement or reflection of her image tells the complete story in few seconds. The cultural transformation of biblical imagery, myths and traditions is successfully taken place in the video and has proven itself the masterpiece of Christianity in music adaptation.

Notes

1. Electro house is a form of house music characterized by heavy bass and a tempo around 130 beats per minute.
2. Movies by director Federico Fellini with Catholic themes.
3. God is praised
4. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (written between AD 70 and 100).
5. Court or assembly of twenty three or seventy one rabbis, or in the Garden of Gethsemane.
6. Akeldama
7. A fisherman
8. Peter's brother
9. John's brother
10. Matthew's brother
11. Tax collector
12. Predicted as Mary
13. The remembrance of Israel being freed from slavery to Egypt, specifically when the angle of death passed over the homes of the Israelites, those had lambs blood over the doors.
14. Wadjet, wedjat or udjat, is an ancient Egyptian symbol of protection, royal power and good health.

15. Greek rhetorician and grammarian
16. A painter
17. I don't want to die alone
18. Son of God
19. Caught-red-handed
20. The first five books of the Hebrew Bible 'Tanakh'
21. Adultery by married person

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