

A comparison of themes and narratives of K-pop artist Min Yoongi's translated lyrics under  
two aliases

Roosa Manninen  
Bachelor's Thesis  
English  
Languages and Literature  
Faculty of Humanities  
University of Oulu  
Autumn 2021

## Abstract

While K-pop is a growing phenomenon in the West, not much of its lyrical contents have been under academic investigation. This thesis examines the themes and narratives in English translations of K-pop idol and rapper Min Yoongi's lyrics from two albums. In each album, Min uses a different stage name: Suga in the album *Wings* and Agust D in the album *Agust D*. The aim of the study is to find out whether these different aliases show in the lyrics of the songs. The methods of analysis are thematic analysis, for the full albums, and semantic analysis, for two specific songs chosen from the albums: *First Love* from *Wings* and *The Last* from *Agust D*. The semantic analysis further focuses on comparing the narratives and narrators of the songs.

The thematic analysis revealed that the overall themes of the albums were very similar, but there were differences in, for example, the most prominent vocabulary themes used. The narratives were found to be undefined in both of the songs, however, *The Last* had only one interpretation supported by the lyrics whereas *First Love* had many due to the metaphorical use of the word "piano" in the song. Both songs used personal voice, a first-person narrator, in the narration of the stories, but the texts seemed to be aimed at different audiences. Overall, the differences in the songs were caused by the aliases, the different target audiences of the aliases, and the rules and censorship of the K-pop genre. The biggest differences were the rawness and vulgarity in Agust D's lyrics and the generalization and ambiguity in Suga's lyrics.

## Tiivistelmä

Vaikka k-pop (korealainen popmusiikki) on kasvava ilmiö länsimaissa, sen sanoituksia ei ole juurikaan tutkittu akateemisesti. Tämä tutkielma käsittelee englanninkielisiä käännöksiä k-pop idoli ja räppäri Min Yoongin sanoituksista kahdelta eri albumilta keskittyen teemoihin ja narratiiveihin. Minillä on käytössä kaksi eri artistinimeä: Suga albumilla *Wings* ja Agust D albumilla *Agust D*. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää näkyvätkö artistinimet laulujen sanoituksissa. Analyysien menetelminä käytetään temaattista analyysia koko albumien analysointiin, sekä semanttista analyysia kahden albumeilta valitun kappaleen analysointiin. Albumilta *Wings* valittiin kappale *First Love* ja albumilta *Agust D* valittiin kappale *The Last*. Semanttinen analyysi keskittyy analysoimaan kappaleiden narratiiveja sekä kertojia.

Temaattinen analyysi osoitti, että albumien yleiset teemat olivat lähellä toisiaan, mutta eroja löytyi muun muassa eri sanastoteemojen käytöstä ja yleisyydestä. Kummankaan kappaleen narratiivi ei ollut tarkasti määritelty, mutta *The Lastin* sanoitukset tukivat ainoastaan tiettyä tulkintaa, kun taas *First Love* oli monitulkintaisempi johtuen sanan “piano” metaforisesta käytöstä. Molemmat kappaleet käyttivät minäkertojaa narratiiveissa, mutta kappaleet vaikuttivat olevan suunnattuja eri yleisöille. Yleisesti ottaen kappaleiden erot voidaan nähdä johtuvan artistinimistä, niiden erilaisista yleisöistä, sekä k-pop genren sisäisestä sensuurista ja säännöistä. Suurimmat erot olivat vulgaarius ja karkeus Agust D:n sanoituksissa sekä monitulkintaisuus ja yleistäminen Sugan sanoituksissa.

## Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Background and previous research .....	4
2.1. K-pop idols.....	4
2.2. Aliases .....	4
2.3. Songwriting.....	6
2.4. Narrative.....	7
2.5. Fan translations .....	8
3. Data .....	10
3.1. Min Yoongi (민윤기).....	10
3.2. The albums: <i>Wings</i> and <i>Agust D</i> .....	11
3.3. The songs: <i>First Love</i> and <i>The Last</i> .....	11
3.4. Genius.....	12
4. Methodology .....	14
4.1. Thematic analysis.....	14
4.2. Semantic analysis .....	15
5. Analysis and findings.....	16
5.1. Thematic analysis.....	16
5.1.1    Wings .....	16
5.1.2    Agust D .....	18
5.2. Semantic analysis .....	20
5.2.1    Narratives .....	20
5.2.2    Narrators.....	22
6. Discussion and conclusion .....	24
References.....	26
Appendix A. Original Korean lyrics	
Appendix B. Tracklists	
Appendix C. Themes by album	

## 1. Introduction

Popular music has been a common topic in linguistic studies but to this day little research has been made on Korean pop (K-pop) lyrics, at least studies published in English. This is undoubtedly because K-pop is a fairly new phenomenon in Western cultures as well as the Western music scene. K-pop's first major break was in 2012 when PSY's Gangnam Style gained major global success through YouTube. Today, Korean boy group BTS' singles have reached the top of the Billboard Hot 100 chart, and more and more people have found and listened to K-pop globally despite the language barrier. The formation of a community of translators shows the skills and dedication of K-pop fans all over the world and also represents the growing Western interest in K-pop. This thesis aims to fill the gap in academic studies on the lyrical contents of K-pop songs as well as the study on aliases in K-pop.

Much like Western popular music, K-pop is an umbrella term that includes many different genres of music like k-rap and k-rock, even though these genres are also talked about separately. In this thesis, K-pop is used to refer to the most generic idol pop music, excluding a lot of the subgenres. Western pop is defined similarly, focusing on songs that are charting in the US, which is the biggest music market in the West. The content of the term 'K-pop' differs slightly from the Western concept of popular music, however. In addition to music, the term K-pop also includes big performances, dynamic choreographies, and luxurious fashion as key factors (Howard, 2021). While these aspects also appear in Western pop music, they are more prominent in K-pop. For example, when a K-pop group releases new music, a big part of their promotions is performing in Korean music shows, like *Inkigayo*, and *Music Bank*, which showcase new songs and follow Korean music charts. These shows air weekly and award the best charting songs of each week, meaning that the songs can receive awards only a week after their publication, making the views on their performances important.

K-pop is separated from other Korean music because of its Western influences. K-pop is a combination of Korean artists and Western music styles, and Lie (2012, as cited in Nielbock-Yoon, 2020) argues that K-pop has gotten its success from the "non-Korean musical elements" (pp. 16–17) of the genre. In addition to these musical elements, code-switching (CS), the act of changing languages, is an essential part of K-pop which differentiates it from other Korean music as well as Western pop. In K-pop, "...English–Korean CS has become a more standard, generic, and customary practice" (Nielbock-Yoon, 2020, p. 37), but switching to other languages, like Spanish, is also

possible. Another difference is the ‘purity’ of K-pop lyrics. While songs about sex and drugs, for example, are accepted and popular in Western popular music, they are not as common in K-pop, and the lyrics of those songs are not as explicit as in Western pop music. The overall stylistic and musical differences will not be addressed here because of the lyrical focus of the thesis. Code-switching is also not addressed since the data is translated song lyrics where the CS is not apparent.

The aim of the thesis is to find out whether aliases show in the lyrics of K-pop artist Min Yoongi, and if so, how. The data of the thesis are translations of two albums that Min Yoongi has been a part of under different aliases; solo album *Agust D* (2016) under the name Agust D, and group album *Wings* (2016), by BTS, under the name Suga. One song from each album was selected for a more in-depth analysis of the translated lyrics, *The Last* from *Agust D* and *First Love* from *Wings*. In addition to the primary aim, the aim is to answer the secondary questions: Do the themes of the songs fit in with the thematic framework of their respective albums, and how do the narratives and narrators of *First Love* and *The Last* differ from each other?

The thesis starts with an overview of previous research and background information. Then the thesis moves on to introduce the data. After that, the approach and methodology of the analyses will be explained followed by the analysis and findings section itself. Finally, there will be a discussion and a conclusion.

## **2. Background and previous research**

This section presents previous research about songwriting, aliases and translations. Even though the thesis is not about the act of translating, it is necessary to address it because of the significance it makes in the analyses made in the thesis. Previous research on narratives and narrators will also be addressed as well as background information on K-pop idols.

### **2.1. K-pop idols**

K-pop is highly commercial, and the idols are just as important as the music itself, being not only singers or rappers, but also entertainers, appearing in advertisements, or acting in Korean dramas, for example. In addition to entertaining and performing skills, idols are usually required to learn languages, like English and Japanese, for better communication with fans (Padget, 2017). These languages also help with singing since English code-switching is common in K-pop, and many groups occasionally publish albums fully in Japanese. In order to get the required skillset, idols (and idol trainees) have strict schedules, and, for example, dating is often banned in order to please the fans as well as to be able to focus on the work (Padget, 2017).

In addition, idols are usually refrained from mentioning any brand names in song lyrics as well as shows or even personal live streams. When wearing branded clothing, the brand name is often partially covered with tape and when speaking, instead of saying the brand name, for example, Netflix, the idol says ‘online streaming service’ or something similar that generally describes the brand (unless they are promoting that brand). Idols also refrain from swearing in order to protect their pure public image. Because of this, there is practically no swearing in K-pop, especially in title tracks, but in recent years there have been a slight rise in songs that feature English swear words. In K-rap, however, swearing is allowed and can be found in multiple songs, possibly due to the desire to be separated from the idol image of K-pop groups.

### **2.2. Aliases**

Presenting oneself with a fictitious name, be it a pen name, pseudonym, stage name or whatever else, is not a new phenomenon in the field of arts. Formilan and Stark (2020) have listed three different types of name-altering practices in musical artists:

*[P]seudonymity*, that is, the adoption of an alias, more or less divergent from the artist's given name; *polyonymy*, that is, the use of multiple aliases, over time or simultaneously, to release and perform music; and *anonymity*, which can take the form of resolute concealment behind an alias, or complete dismissal of names. (p. 573)

Additionally, Formilan and Stark (2020) noted that “these name-altering practices are not mutually exclusive nor strictly sequential” (p. 573). These terms and explanations can be broadened beyond the musical field to all of literature.

In literature, women especially have used pen names to conceal their identity in times when male writers were more accepted than female writers (Taylor, 2018). In her study, Taylor identified four reasons to get a pen name: “to preserve anonymity, to enable the writer to work in different genres, to help in branding, and to replace a real name that is ‘too difficult to pronounce and spell, too long, etc.’” (p. 115). She found that most of the female romance writers in her study used pen names as their brands. Short Anglo names were preferred for easiest pronunciation and memorability, which reflects the audience of the writers. Polyonymy was also common since writers created different pen names for different genres of literature. This was to help the audience know what to expect from the author. The pen names divided by genre were created mostly for advertising purposes and often the author was not anonymous and would even hold events where they publicly signed copies of books under different names (Taylor, 2018).

Something the romance writers in Taylor's study have in common with electronic music artists in Formilan and Stark's study (2020) is polyonymy. Formilan and Stark explained that name-altering gives freedom to the artist to explore and test different aspects of their art. Many artists had multiple aliases, and each alias produced music for a different subgenre. However, instead of trying to gain mainstream popularity, the name changes were to avoid branding and keeping the musician as an underground artist. Another difference with the writers was that anonymity was more common in Formilan and Stark's (2020) study, making it easier for the artists to create a performing character.

While anonymity is not a common practice in K-pop, pseudonymity and polyonymy are. Stage names are common, especially if the artist's own name would be difficult to pronounce for foreign fans. With the audience of K-pop growing global, stage names become more important and need to be considered from a global perspective. Another common reason for a stage name is the uniqueness of



it; since Korean names often only have three syllables, it is inevitable to have many namesakes. An example of this is the name Kim Taehyung; the name of a BTS member whose stage name is ‘V’. His name is difficult to pronounce for foreigners and there are multiple Kim Taehyungs in Korea, for example in another K-pop group called Kard, is a member with the same name who also uses a stage name, J.Seph. Some stage names are shortened versions of the idol’s names, like I.N. (from Stray Kids) created based on the second syllable of his name, Jeongin, in order to make the spelling and pronunciation of the name easier.

### **2.3. Songwriting**

There is no one correct way to write a song, as with any kind of art (Harrison, 2017; Bennet, 2014). This makes songwriting a creative job. Songwriting includes, for example, creating lyrics, melodies, and harmonies, as well as producing and mixing; this thesis focuses on writing lyrics. The terms ‘songwriter’ and ‘artist’ are used here as synonyms, with the assumption that the artists in question also write their own songs or songs for others.

McIntyre (2008) has studied a system of creativity in Western popular music which “comprises of a *domain* of knowledge, a *field* or social organization that understands that knowledge, and an *individual* whose task it is to make changes in the domain” (p. 41). Domain includes the practices and rules already existing in songwriting. Field is a broader term that includes everyone that affects the domain, for example the audience, everyone who works on the song, and the music market as a whole. Individual refers, in this case, to the songwriter who is a unique individual who molds the domain and field of songwriting with new ideas and conventions. In the case of popular music, in addition to understanding music theory, a songwriter needs to be aware of the trends in music in terms of current, past, and possible future popular topics. This way they can add something new to the existing domain, and, for example, the songwriter’s experiences can give them a unique point of view on a trendy topic. In addition to personal experiences, in the last few years it has become more popular to blur the lines of genres and subgenres, which also gives songwriters more stylistic freedom. In sum, songwriting is a mixture of original ideas, trying new things, and giving the audience what they want.

## 2.4. Narrative

Narrative has been a popular focus in studying literature, but only recently has it been applied to studying song lyrics, despite storytelling being a fundamental part of lyrics and songwriting (Randle & Evans, 2013). Song narratives have been categorized into four types: *closed* and *open* reading, and *defined* and *undefined* narrative (Randle & Evans, 2013). The reading of the narrative is open if the story has multiple supported interpretations and closed if the lyrics support a single interpretation. Defined narratives have interrelated events that the actors take part in during a specific time and setting which affects the story, whereas undefined narratives are more ambiguous, they do not disclose a time or setting, and the acts or events have no effect on the story or characters. Undefined narratives are close to what Nicholls (2007) explains as typical of popular music: describing “static cameos, vignettes, or states of mind” (Abstract) instead of a narrative moving between settings. In Randle and Evans’ study, narrative is further divided into four components: “event, actor, time, and setting” (2013, p. 134). The components are explained as follows:

Events consist of sequential, interrelated actions that the actors (not necessarily people) undertake or experience. ... Time and setting serve to solidify the narrativity of the events by placing them in a chronological and spatial context and relation to one another. (Randle & Evans, 2013, p. 134)

The terms and categorizations mentioned here will be used in the analysis section of this thesis.

In addition to overall narrative and plot, the narrator of a story is a key factor for the storytelling aspect of a song or text. Burns (2010) has studied the narrators in female pop-rock artists’ songs and mentioned multiple ways to identify and examine the narrator. Firstly, the reader or listener notices the *status* of the narrator; who is the narrator and what is their connection to the story. Then, the audience determines if the narrator is reliable (*identity*), and what point of view they tell the story from (*stance*). Moreover, Sniader Lanser (1992, as cited in Burns, 2010) introduces three types of narrative voice: *authorial*, *personal*, and *communal*. In short, authorial voice has an omniscient third-person narrator, personal voice has a first-person narrator who tells their own story from their perspective, and communal voice includes multiple voices narrating, possibly using the pronoun ‘we’. This thesis focuses mostly on personal voice since the songs used as data have first-person narrators who are telling their own stories.

## 2.5. Fan translations

As the research materials are translated versions of the original, mostly Korean, song lyrics, it is important to discuss translations between languages. This is done to help understand how the translations might differ from the original text, especially because it is lyrical text, and it can be assumed to be translated (at least partly) by fans instead of professional translators.

Translating lyrics is similar to translating other texts but it still brings its own issues to address. Similar to translations of other texts, there are two types: *literal* and *literary* translations (Apter & Herman, 2016). Literal translations are based purely on the meaning of the lyrics while literary translations incorporate other aspects of the original lyrics like rhymes and connotations (Apter & Herman, 2016). Translations are commonly a combination of the two. The type of translation also varies depending on the environment; lyrics translated for an artist to sing live are most likely literary translations and lyrics put online for fans to read at home are most likely literal translations. In Körkkö's study (2019) about audiovisual translation in subtitles, the professional translator took riskier choices, while the fan translating group favored less edited, literal translations. However, the fan translation group omitted more elements from the translation than the professional translator. The professional translator feels more confident changing the form of the original sentences because they know the rules and different methods of translating, whereas non-professional translators play it safe with translating as close to the original as possible while still keeping the translation understandable in the target language.

In addition to the literary issues of translation, a decision needs to be made by the translator whether to domesticate or foreignize the translation. Apter and Herman (2016) explain the terms as follows: “[a] domesticating translation is ‘smooth,’ written in a natural-sounding target language” (p. 31), and conversely “[a] foreignizing translation emphasizes the foreign cultural elements of the source text, with or (more often) without further explanation...” (p. 31). So, for example, in a domesticating translation, place names found in the original text would be changed to corresponding place names that are more familiar to the people of the target language, whereas the names would be left as in the original in a foreignizing translation, being truer to the original text but requiring more effort from the reader to understand the context. In K-pop, fan translators often add translator's notes to their texts in order to explain any cultural references that may be unfamiliar to the audience, trying to make the translations as understandable as possible to everyone, which is typical of fan translations because

of the broad target audience. Fan translating in general is quite common in K-pop through lyric translations as well as translating interviews and other materials. Fans have even created groups and organizations of translators because of the nonstop content flow from artists. In a Billboard interview fan translators said that they translate content for the sake of other fans and to be able to spread the message of the group for a larger audience (Kelley, 2017). Most of the translating happens between Korean and English which can be hard since the syntaxes of the two languages are very different. It requires the translator to reformulate the sentences, and at the same time shows the skills and dedication of the fan translators.

### 3. Data

This section introduces Min Yoongi, his songwriting process and his aliases. After that, the albums will be introduced briefly with a closer inspection to the individual songs that will be analyzed further. Genius, the source of the data, will also be introduced.

#### 3.1. Min Yoongi (민윤기)

Min Yoongi (family name Min), born March 9th, 1993, is a South Korean rapper, singer, songwriter, and producer best known by his stage name Suga. He is a part of a K-pop boy group called BTS (방탄소년단, rom. *bangtansonyeondan*) along with six other members. The group was formed in 2013 and is under one of the biggest record labels in Korea today, Big Hit Music (formerly known as Big Hit Entertainment). Min has said in interviews that he began making music and writing lyrics at the age of 13 (BANGTANTV, 2021, 16:42), and before joining the company, Min had made a name for himself in the underground rap scene of South Korea under the name of Gloss. The group writes their own songs collaboratively with the company's songwriters, and Min currently has over 120 songs credited to him by the Korean Music Copyright Association (n.d.) (However, the English language version of the site only finds credits for 45 songs where the original Korean site finds them all). This shows that Min is experienced as a songwriter and knowledgeable on the domain and field of K-pop songwriting, making him a good focus of analysis.

Min constantly writes songs, and he explains that when he makes a new song, he creates beats first, followed by the melody and finally lyrics (BANGTANTV, 2021). For songs that go to BTS, he sends the lyrics and songs to Bang Sihyuk, who is the founder of Hybe Corporation including Bighit Music, and gets feedback on them, and then repeats the cycle until the songs are finished (Recording Academy / GRAMMYs, 2018). Min has said that he feels more pressure when writing songs for an album with a specific theme or concept than just writing freely about his feelings and experiences (BANGTANTV, 2021). In the same interview, he mentioned that he wrote for a BTS album at the same time as an Agust D album and that he does not necessarily divide the two in the writing process.

Min Yoongi's stage names are more like nicknames than actual given or last names. The idol stage name 'Suga' is most likely inspired by the shortened version of the basketball position 'shooting guard', which Min used to play before becoming an idol. Suga also happens to be a short Anglo name

that is easy to pronounce, spell and remember for fans all over the world. It also creates a sweet and positive association and image of him which is useful in marketing. Agust D is Min's rapper alter ego's name, under which he has published two solo albums. It is also a fairly short name, under seven letters like recommended in Taylor's study (2018), that, when read backwards, spells out Dt Suga; Dt refers to Daegu town where he grew up and Suga refers to his coexisting idol name. Min Yoongi, like the people in the two studies mentioned before (Formilan & Stark, 2020; Taylor, 2018), also created a different stage name for another genre of music he wanted to publish. By doing this, he separated himself from the BTS branding, giving him more creative freedom over his solo work.

### **3.2. The albums: *Wings* and *Agust D***

*Wings* is BTS' second full-length album, released on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The album includes 15 songs in total; seven group (or subgroup) songs, and one solo track per member with the exception of one member having two solo songs. Storywise, the album is inspired by a book called *Demian* by Herman Hesse which is a coming-of-age story. There is, for example, a quote from the book in the music video of the title track, *Blood, Sweat & Tears*. *Agust D*, released on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016, is the first mixtape album of Min Yoongi's solo project under the name of Agust D. The album name will be written with italics to distinguish it from the artist's name. The album includes 10 songs and has three songs that have featuring artists. The album mostly consists of autobiographical songs about Min's life and artist career.

The albums were released under the same record label, BigHit Entertainment. Both of the albums can be considered K-pop, however, the BTS album is more mainstream K-pop, and the Agust D album falls more under K-rap or K-hiphop. As they were released close to each other, both in the fall of 2016, they are a good pair to analyze and compare. The tracklists of the albums can be found in Appendix B.

### **3.3. The songs: *First Love* and *The Last***

*First Love* is Min's solo track from the album *Wings* and was written and produced by MISS KAY and Suga. It is a love story about the first love or passion that Min ever had: the piano. The story features a piano that has always stood by Min through the rollercoaster of his life. *The Last* is the seventh song on the album *Agust D* and was written and produced by Agust D, June, and Pdogg. It is

an autobiographical story about the insecurities and mental battles of an idol rapper that start from Min's trainee days.

The songs were chosen since they both deal with the beginning stages of Min's career but have different perspectives on it (and although the study will not include musical aspects of the songs, it is worthwhile to note that they sound very different). Also, both of the songs are rap-based B-sides and neither of them has a proper chorus, leaving more unique verses to analyze. The analysis will be limited to these two albums and songs because of the length and scope of the thesis.

### **3.4. Genius**

The English translations of the lyrics from Genius (*Agust D - Agust D (English translation)*, n.d.; *BTS - Wings (English translation)*, n.d.) will be used as the main data due to the lack of official English translations. The references for the original Korean lyrics can be found in Appendix A. The data is referred to by the album and song names in the thesis.

Genius is a company and a website founded in 2009 for sharing song lyrics, translations, artist information and music news (Genius, 2009). Genius works collaboratively; originally the site was created by scholars but now anybody can add information under an account. The users collect Genius IQ for example by adding annotations, asking questions, and upvoting and downvoting information others have put up. The more IQ an account has, the more reliable the user is deemed, and they are given freedoms, for example, letting them add songs to the site (Genius, 2016). Users' annotations are, however, checked by editors before becoming official. If any information is added to a page without going through an editor (by more experienced users), or if there are any problems with the annotation or comment, the text has a warning before it saying, for example, that it has not been confirmed or is missing a source.

Genius has guidelines on how to create annotations to the songs on the website. These "Annotation Commandments" include instructions and requirements on, for example, grammar, plagiarism, formatting, and objectivity (Genius, 2018). The site also shows the users who have contributed, edited, or accepted a specific piece of information about a song or an artist, giving more accountability to the users responsible for the information. This makes Genius more reliable which is one of the

reasons for selecting this site as a source for the data collection. Despite this, the translations on the site can be assumed to be fan translations and thus somewhat subjective.

One can argue that because the lyrics in Genius are for the fans to read at home, they are literal translations and not meant to be performed as is. They are created for the fans to know what the song is about and are presented separate from the musical aspects of the song which makes it safe to assume that they are leaning more towards literal translations. There can be some foreignizing in the Genius translations; however, they are made for an English-speaking community which does not include just one culture but many all over the world, so the translations are most likely not targeted towards a specific culture but the overall online community of English speakers. The Genius translators can also come from different backgrounds, and there is often more than one contributor per song which helps with the translations not taking a specific culture's point of view or undertone and keeping the translations more objective.



## 4. Methodology

This section defines the methods of analysis. Practical criticism will be used as the analytical framework of the thesis since the data is fairly small and the approach is qualitative. Practical criticism is a part of literary criticism that focuses on the text alone instead of, for example, the author's intention or the time of publishing (West, 2017). Peck and Coyle (1995) summarize it as "criticism based on the close analysis of a text in isolation" (p. 3). Because of this approach, close reading, defined by paying close attention to the text, was chosen as a tool for the analysis. In this thesis the close reading focuses on the narratives and narrators found in the texts.

### 4.1. Thematic analysis

The two albums, *Wings* and *Agust D*, will undergo a thematic analysis as it is suitable to address the research question: do the two different stage names have an effect on the themes of the albums? Of course, the BTS album's themes are less in Min's control, but it is interesting to know if, and how, the theme affects his lyrics, or, in the case of this thesis, the translations of his lyrics.

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). Because thematic analysis is a broad concept, it is important to state the approach of the study clearly since it carries biases towards the data. For this thesis, the focus is on finding similarities and differences in the themes of the two albums and further see how the themes of the two specific songs analyzed fit into the thematic framework of their respective albums. The aim is to be as objective as possible in identifying and creating the themes, however, some subjectivity is unavoidable. An inductive approach will be used to create the themes and a latent approach to analyze them in the contexts of the songs.

The phases of the analysis follow the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006), including six phases of data inspection, analysis and report. For this thesis, each song on the albums was first read through and initial codes were created based on the data. Once that was completed, the codes were defined further, and an effort was made in order to create similar names for the codes between songs. The themes were created based on the codes and by combining some of the smaller codes into larger themes. Then, it was made sure that the themes were unique and there were similarities within themes and differences between themes. The final step of the analysis was then to present the findings in a

coherent and logical way, giving enough examples in order to illustrate the existence of the themes. The phases of the analysis have now been explained to avoid a pitfall of unclarity mentioned by Braun and Clarke (2006). The number of examples from the data might not be enough because the thematic analysis is only a part of the thesis' focus and there are two albums to analyze, not leaving much room to dedicate for each album in the text. However, the simplified list of themes can be found in Appendix C. Another pitfall of not actually analyzing the data will be avoided by doing the analysis in a latent matter, where analyzing happens already in the creation of the themes.

## 4.2. Semantic analysis

Semantics is the study of meaning, and it is used “to understand the nature of language and human language abilities”, according to Goddard (2011, p. 1). Language expresses meaning through, for example, “words, grammatical constructions, [and] intonation patterns” (Goddard, 2011, p. 1) which are all a part of semantics. Understanding these small parts of language and what function they play in communicating meanings, is crucial to understanding the meaning making of the whole language. Semantics is problematic, especially because languages carry cultural values with them which makes “a universal system for describing meanings” (Goddard, 2011, p. 14) essentially impossible.

In the classic conceptual theory of meaning, it is described that “a meaning of a word is a structured idea, or ‘concept’, in the mind of the person using that expression” (Goddard, 2011, p. 8), referring to the intended meaning of a passage or utterance. Structuralist theories on the other hand explain that “to understand the meaning of a word ... we have to understand how it functions together with, and in contrast to other, related words” (p. 9), giving it a more context-based definition. The structuralist theory of meaning will be used in this thesis to inspect the song lyrics in the contexts of the songs.

The data was manually analyzed by doing a line by line and verse by verse close reading of the two individual songs. *First love* has seven unique verses and one repeated verse whereas *The Last* has fifteen unique verses to analyze. The narratives and narrators of the songs will be identified, analyzed, and compared utilizing terms pertaining to narrative from Randle and Evans (2013) as well as terms pertaining to the narrator from Burns (2010). These aspects of the texts were chosen based on the data after the initial read through.

## 5. Analysis and findings

This section discusses the thematic and semantic analyses and their findings. The thematic analysis will first examine the albums separately and then compare them. After that is the semantic analysis of the narrative and narrators of the individual songs.

### 5.1. Thematic analysis

The aim of the thematic analysis is to find out if the songs fit in with the thematic framework of their respective albums and if there are differences or similarities between the themes of the albums. The themes of *Wings* and *First Love* are analyzed first, followed by *Agust D* and *The Last*. Finally, the thematic frameworks of the albums are compared with each other. For clarity in presentation, the themes are divided based on their complexity: *complex themes*, like ‘love’, require interpretation, and *simple themes*, like ‘nature’, are based on vocabulary. Furthermore, the themes are divided into three overlapping categories in order of specificity: *overall themes*, *main themes*, and *specific themes*. Overall themes are constructed from main themes, which are constructed from specific themes. Complex themes are found in all of the levels, whereas simple themes are all specific.

#### 5.1.1 Wings

The initial round of coding resulted in slightly over 40 different codes which were then sorted into the final themes (Appendix C). Specific themes, apart from simple themes, were not included in Appendix C for the sake of clarity. The most prominent overall themes of *Wings* were found to be identity and growth, which is logical given that the album is inspired by a coming-of-age story. The overall themes were constructed using smaller theme-units found from the data, for example, the main theme of ‘growing up’ is under the overall theme of identity and includes the specific themes of ‘childhood’ and ‘being lost’ (which can be found in Table 1 along with the specific themes of *First Love*).

Table 1. *Most prominent specific themes of First Love*

<i>First Love</i>			
Places	Love	Childhood	Music
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- corner</li> <li>- childhood house</li> <li>- elementary school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- looked up to you</li> <li>- yearned for you</li> <li>- touched you</li> <li>- I feel so nice</li> <li>- you accepted me</li> <li>- without you I am nothing</li> <li>- two of us</li> <li>- by my side</li> <li>- I won't let you go</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- childhood</li> <li>- small finger</li> <li>- taller than my height</li> <li>- looked up to you</li> <li>- mom</li> <li>- elementary school</li> <li>- guided</li> <li>- grew up</li> <li>- when I was around 14</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- piano</li> <li>- played the piano</li> <li>- white jade-like keyboard</li> </ul>
Being lost	Reminiscing	Going away	Hurting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- couldn't see an inch in front of us</li> <li>- lost</li> <li>- fell into a pit of despair</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I remember</li> <li>- back then</li> <li>- first met you</li> <li>- I had completely forgotten</li> <li>- those days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- neglected</li> <li>- dust piling on</li> <li>- the last</li> <li>- don't leave like this</li> <li>- you'll do well on your own</li> <li>- meet you again</li> <li>- I was gone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- crushed shoulder</li> <li>- despair</li> </ul>

Because the analysis has a latent approach, most phrases were categorized based on their meaning in the context of the song. For example, “small finger” does not automatically mean that the person is a child but, in this case, it can be categorized into ‘childhood’ because of the context of the lyrics around it. Moreover, while similarities between themes were kept to a minimum, some overlapping between them could not be avoided, for example, in Table 1 “elementary school” can be found under ‘places’ and ‘childhood’ because it is a physical place as well as a reference to the part of childhood when the character was in elementary school. Most overlapping happened between complex and simple themes.

*First Love*'s complex themes fit in with the rest of the album with a few exceptions. With the album having main themes like ‘hurting’ and ‘growing up’, many of the specific themes found in *First Love* fall under these themes. However, the specific theme ‘childhood’, for instance, appears only in *First Love* and *Boy Meets Evil*. The themes ‘reminiscing’ and ‘going away’ appear only in *First Love*, separating it from the other songs of the album. Also, ‘hurting’ is not as prominent of a theme in *First Love* than it is in the other six songs it was found in. Because *First Love* is a love story, it was not

surprising that ‘love’ was one of its most prominent themes. Perhaps more surprisingly, it was the only song on the album to include ‘hate’ as a theme, even if it appeared only two times.

The simple themes of *First Love* included ‘places’, ‘music’, and ‘swear words’. Here, “bastard”, which happened to be the only swear word in *First Love*, is counted as a swear word since it was used to strengthen an expression in the text. From the simple themes of the song, ‘places’ was common in the album, while the other two appeared in only two other songs. Swear words were found also in *Cypher 4* with two instances, and *Am I Wrong* with only one instance. Music vocabulary was found in *Cypher 4* and *2!3!* in addition to *First Love*. ‘Nature’ and ‘religious’ were the most prominent simple themes on the album, however, they did not appear in *First Love* at all. Because of this, it appears that *First Love*’s complex themes align with the album’s themes better than the simple themes.

#### 5.1.2 Agust D

Two out of the ten songs from *Agust D* were not included in the thematic analysis. In track 4, *skit*, Min talks with his older brother at a restaurant, and because the track is in the form of a conversation and lacks the musical elements and structure of a song, it will not be included in the thematic analysis of the album. Track 9, *Interlude ; Dream, Reality*, is omitted from the analysis due to the only lyric of the track being the word ‘dream’. The initial coding process of the eight remaining songs resulted in about 40 codes which were then used to assemble the themes (Appendix C). The overall themes of *Agust D* were found to be identity and success, which supports the autobiographical nature of the album. Identity was constructed from main themes of ‘mental struggles’ and ‘being an idol’, and success was constructed from main themes of ‘being an underdog’, ‘determination’, and ‘arrogance’.

Table 2. *Most prominent specific themes of The Last*

<i>The Last</i>			
Being an idol	Mental illness	Identity	Swear words
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- famous idol rapper</li> <li>- performance day</li> <li>- the heads of thousands nodding to my hand gesture</li> <li>- Show Me the Money</li> <li>- debut</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- my weak self</li> <li>- depression</li> <li>- OCD</li> <li>- I developed social anxiety</li> <li>- self hatred</li> <li>- feeling estranged in reality</li> <li>- my mind was gradually polluted</li> <li>- psychiatric ward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- on the other side of the famous idol rapper / stands my weak self</li> <li>- Min Yoongi is dead already (I killed him)</li> <li>- nobody knows me well</li> <li>- I feel like I'm turning into a monster</li> <li>- I've denied my nature many times</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- hell no</li> <li>- damn</li> <li>- I don't give a shit</li> <li>- I don't give a fuck</li> </ul>
Places	Greed	Success	Answering haters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- psychiatric ward</li> <li>- the bathroom</li> <li>- Tokyo Dome</li> <li>- AX hall</li> <li>- gymnastic stadium</li> <li>- the toilet floor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I thought success would make everything fine</li> <li>- I've exchanged my youth for success / and that monster demands for more wealth</li> <li>- to ruin and swallow me with greed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the things I've only imagined turns into reality</li> <li>- my childhood dreams are in front of my eyes</li> <li>- now Tokyo Dome is right in front of my eyes</li> <li>- my fans keep your head high with pride</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it's not that I couldn't but I didn't</li> <li>- selling ourselves or not / you all say we couldn't do it but we didn't</li> <li>- who do you think you're fooling</li> <li>- pretending you've gone through all the miseries</li> </ul>

As illustrated in Table 2, in *Agust D*, some overlap happens both between complex themes as well as between complex and simple themes. All overlap between complex themes is partial, for example, under 'identity' is the sentence "on the other side of the famous idol rapper / stands my weak self" from which two phrases have also been chosen to other themes, "famous idol rapper" to 'being an idol', and "my weak self" under 'mental illness'. This reflects the multiple interpretations and meanings possible in lyrical texts depending on their specificity. Overlap also shows the closeness of the themes on the album.

The complex specific themes of *The Last* are very close to the main and overall themes of *Agust D*. Both of the overall themes of the album can even be found as specific themes of the song in Table 2. On the other hand, 'greed' is a less relevant theme on the album and can only be found in two other songs, *Give it to Me* and *Tony Montana*. 'Answering haters' is the least prominent on the album with

the only other song to have it being *Tony Montana*. From the simple themes of the song, ‘swear words’, which was the most prominent simple theme of the album, was found in six out of the eight songs analyzed and ‘places’ in four out of eight songs. In addition, *The Last* included simple themes of ‘nature’ and ‘references’, for example, which appeared a few times on the album. A simple theme found only in *The Last* was ‘religious’ and it was only apparent in two lines. Since the song has 15 unique verses, it is no surprise that many of the album’s simple themes appear in it. It is also not surprising that many songs share similar simple and complex themes since the album was written mostly by Agust D himself.

As it has been shown, the albums’ overall themes (identity and growth in *Wings*, and identity and success in *Agust D*) are similar but when diving deeper into the analysis, many differences emerge. Taking the two songs as examples, the prominent complex themes are completely different. The simple themes of the albums are also almost opposites; *Wings* having ‘religious’ as the most prominent while it appears in only one song in *Agust D*, and *Agust D*’s most prominent simple theme being ‘swear words’ while it appears in *Wings* only three times with very few instances. Apart from the individual themes, the thematic framework of *Agust D* is much smaller than *Wings*’, partly due to the smaller number of songs, but the identified themes are also conceptually closer to each other in *Agust D* than in *Wings*.

## 5.2. Semantic analysis

The semantic analysis is divided into narratives and narrators. Both songs are described individually first, starting from *First Love*, and then compared with each other. The aim is to find similarities and differences from the narratives and narrators of the songs that could be the result of the different aliases.

### 5.2.1 Narratives

The narrative of *First Love* leans towards an open undefined narrative, meaning there are multiple possible interpretations supported by the text and the narrative elements are vague. The events of the story revolve around the piano and the narrator’s actions towards it. The piano is, along with the narrator, the only actor in the story. The piano is described to be brown and have white keys, while the narrator’s appearance is not addressed at all, instead they are described by the memories they have with the piano. It can be argued that the piano is the love interest in the story since it is being referred to as “the piano” as well as “you”. However, “you” in this case could mean a broader abstract concept

of music or any sort of passion that the narrator has, leaving the interpretation to the reader and resulting in an open reading. While there are distinct events in the story that move forward mostly in chronological order, like the narrator leaving the piano behind and then returning back to it, the setting and time are often left very vague. The most specific time mentioned in the song is “when I was around 14” and the only physical setting is the narrator’s childhood house which is only mentioned in the intro and outro verses. A more specific phrase pertaining to time is found in verse 5, “After the dawn, two of us / We welcomed the morning together”, however, the meaning is more metaphorical than literal, and thus it does not contribute to the time of the narrative. Overall, the narrative consists of moments in the narrator’s past being told by the narrator in the present. Most of the expressions are vague, like “back then” and the setting is not clear, creating an undefined narrative.

The narrative of *The Last* is also undefined but it supports one interpretation instead of many, making it a closed narrative. The song is about mental health and goes through different scenarios and memories of the narrator as well as their thoughts on themselves, finishing with the current state of the narrator. The narrator is, for the most part, the only actor in the story; the narrator’s parents are mentioned in one verse as well. The parents appear in the most specific event described in the song which is a visit to a psychiatric ward where the doctor asks the narrator if they have “(censored)”, presumably meaning if they have self-harmed, had suicidal thoughts, or even attempted suicide. This is the only part of the song with clear possibility for multiple interpretations, along with a more vague questioning of the narrator in “Min Yoongi is dead already (I killed him)”. The narrator is, again, not described visually but through their memories and struggles. The story also uses many vague expressions of time, like “that time” and “those days”, which do not disclose the events timewise, making them ambiguous and undefined. While there are also more specific expressions of time and setting, they are not interrelated with each other but separate memories of different times. Some expressions, like “now Tokyo Dome is right in front my nose”, carry more metaphorical meaning than physical location of events, which does not disclose the setting of the story any further. The events of the story are not interrelated, and the narrative consists of flashbacks of specific situations while the narrator explains about their mental journey, making the narrative undefined.

Both of the songs have undefined narratives that consist of memories of the narrator. This is not surprising, as Nicholls (2007) has described popular music often consisting of fixed scenes and descriptions of mindsets. Although the actor is defined more clearly in *The Last*, the events are not interrelated in either of the songs, the descriptions of settings are vague, and the timeframes are



unclear during the events, creating undefined narratives in both of the songs. The narratives are then separated by *First Love* having multiple supported interpretations because of the metaphorical nature of the piano, and *The Last* only having a singular interpretation reflecting the personal topic of the song.

### 5.2.2 Narrators

When examining the narrator of *First Love*, personal voice is evident throughout the narration with the repeated use of the first-person “I” structures. This means that the narrator is a character in the story, or more specifically, the main character along with the piano, which is the love interest addressed often with “you”. The narrator tells the story with a mix of past and present tense, indicating that the story is a collection of memories, for example, through sentences like “I remember back then” that continue in past tense. Some other lines are in present tense as well, however, they indicate a dialogue or an utterance that was said at the time of the memory, like “I feel so nice mom I feel so nice” said by the narrator as a child in verse two.

*First Love, verse 4*

*Don't worry even if I leave  
You'll do well on your own  
I remember when I first met you  
Before I knew it you grew up  
Though we are putting an end to our relationship  
Don't ever feel sorry to me  
I will get to meet you again no matter what form  
Greet me happily then*

Verse four can be read as a continuous monologue by the narrator or a dialogue between the narrator and the piano due to the ambiguous line “Before I knew it you grew up”. This could be an indication of spiritual or mental growth but because there are references to the height of the narrator in previous verses and that the narrator grew past the piano’s height, it would make more sense for the piano to say the line. Because the stance, or point of view, of the narrator changes occasionally to the piano, this is the most ambiguous part of the lyrics in this aspect. The identity of the narrator is otherwise reliable and sincere, which is created by talking about the struggles and negative sides of the relationship with the piano, or ‘first love’, as well as the positives. The mention of a “childhood house” and the first-person narration also adds personal aspects in the text and makes the reader believe and relate to the narrator.

The narrator in *The Last* also mostly uses a personal voice with “I” structures, indicating that the narrator is a character in the story. It can be argued that they are the main character because there are essentially no other recurring characters, and the narrative revolves around the narrator’s memories and thoughts. The narrator is telling the journey of their mental struggles of becoming an artist in a very raw and honest way, even including specific memories that many people would probably want to hide, for example, “When I hid inside the bathroom / Because I was scared of people” or a visit to the psychiatric ward. This vulnerability makes the reader or listener trust the narrator, even when they are slightly ambiguous. The identity and status of the narrator are unclear in the song; “famous idol rapper” refers to someone who has a similar identity with the alter-ego Suga, but further, in the line “Min Yoongi is dead already (I killed him)”, it is clarified that Min Yoongi, the person behind the alter-egos is dead and that the narrator is the one responsible. Because of the mention of Min’s name, it can be assumed that the song is personal and somewhat autobiographical, and it could mean that the story is told by the alter-ego Agust D or some other ‘truest’ form of Min Yoongi. The narrative voice also changes occasionally near the end of the song to a communal voice using “we”, for instance, in “It’s not that we couldn’t do it / But that we didn’t want to, shit”. It does not become apparent from the text itself who this “we” includes, adding to the ambiguity of the narrator; however, if the reader is familiar with Min and BTS, the connection with the group explains the pronoun change, since Min got famous with the group instead of as a solo act, the “we” referring to BTS as a group.

Both of the songs have a personal narrative voice, with the exception of few lines in the ending verses of *The Last*, and they tell the story by using memories, *First Love* more so than *The Last*. However, *First Love* is closer to a private love letter for the piano, or the first love symbolized by it, whereas *The Last* is more comparable with a letter made for others to read. This is evident from the use of “you” in the songs. In *First Love*, the narrator addresses the piano as “you”, personifying it as the love interest of the story, whereas the use of “you” seems to be directed towards two groups of people in different parts of *The Last*: fans and haters, meaning that the song would be meant to reach these people.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

This section summarizes and discusses the findings in terms of the research questions. The study is also evaluated and ideas for further research are discussed.

The aim of the thesis was to find out whether the aliases show in the lyrics of K-pop artist Min Yoongi, and if so, how. Based on the analyses, this thesis shows that the lyrics of Suga differ from the lyrics of Agust D. The thematic analysis found that the overall themes of the albums were very similar, but upon further inspection many differences occurred. The thematic framework of *Agust D* was narrower than that of *Wings*, and *The Last* fit in with the album's framework better than *First Love* in *Wings*. The complex themes of *First Love* aligned better with *Wings*' themes than the simple themes, which suggests that the song was made to fit in with the specific thematic framework of the album and shows that the album had more songwriters working on it, resulting in different vocabularies. The tighter themes in *Agust D* might be the result of the more personal topics on the album, the autobiographical nature of the album, and the fact that Min was the only, or main, songwriter in all of the songs. This was only possible to do since Min did not have to write for a group and take their experiences into consideration, and the target audience is smaller for the solo alias, meaning he did not need to generalize his emotions and experiences.

Both aliases had personal lyrics based on Min's life but, as said above, the audiences of the aliases still appeared to have an effect on the lyrics. While the narratives of both songs were undefined, and similar to Nicholls' (2007) description of popular music songs, *First Love* had an open reading with multiple interpretations supported by the text whereas *The Last* only supported one interpretation. This can be linked to the target audience of *Wings* being very broad, because it gives the audience the power to make the story their own which means more people are going to find it relatable. Also, the addressing of the audience in *The Last*, and the lack of it in *First Love*, can indicate that *The Last* was made for a smaller audience and *First Love* was directed more towards the general public, which reflects the audiences of the two aliases. Despite Min saying that he has written for both BTS and Agust D at the same time not necessarily thinking what song to release where, due to the rawness and swearing in *The Last*, it was most likely meant to be in a solo release; the song probably would not have made it on a general K-pop album with such vulgar lyrics. Thus, the main differences in the songwriting of Suga and Agust D are the rawness in Agust D's lyrics and vocabulary, and the generalization and ambiguity of feelings and experiences in Suga's lyrics.

The results of this study are only valid if the translations in the data are correct (as correct as translations can be), and if the translations were to be taken from elsewhere or if the original Korean lyrics of the songs were to be used as data, the results would most likely be slightly different. The thematic analysis used some songs that Min was not a part of writing, making the thematic analysis of purely his lyrics impossible with this data. The analyses were also done manually by the researcher, limiting the study to some unavoidable subjectivity, and thus, if the exact study would be done again by someone else, the results could be different. More studies on the topic should be conducted to fill the gap in academic interest that is currently evident. Similar studies with the original Korean lyrics could be done, as well as taking the musical aspects of the songs into consideration in the thematic and semantic analyses. Studying the changes and development in the songwriting of Min Yoongi or any other polyonymous K-pop artist would also broaden the field of K-pop studies as well as studies on aliases in music.

## References

### Primary sources

*Agust D - Agust D (English translation)*. (n.d.). Genius. Retrieved October 10th, 2021, from <https://genius.com/albums/Genius-english-translations/Agust-d-agust-d-english-translation>

*BTS - Wings (English translation)*. (n.d.). Genius. Retrieved October 10th, 2021, from <https://genius.com/albums/Genius-english-translations/Bts-wings-english-translation>

### Secondary sources

Apter, R., & Herman, M. (2016). *Translating for singing : The theory, art and craft of translating lyrics*. Bloomsbury Academic.

BANGTANTV. (2021, February 28). *BTS (방탄소년단) SUGA's BE-hind "Full" Story* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/2Lnq5tdS86Y>

Bennet, J. (2014). *Constraint, creativity, copyright and collaboration in popular songwriting teams*. (Publication No. 27557525) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Surrey]. ProQuest Dissertations. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/64d0b4055390d97bda0c52fba95c1acd/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

Burns, L. (2010). Vocal authority and listener engagement: Musical and narrative expressive strategies in the songs of female pop-rock artists, 1993-95. In M. S. Spicer & J. R. Covach (Eds.), *Sounding out pop: Analytical essays in popular music* (pp. 154–192). University of Michigan Press.

Formilan, G., & Stark, D. (2020). Underground testing: Name-altering practices as probes in electronic music. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 71(3), 572–589. <https://doi.org.pc124152.oulu.fi:9443/10.1111/1468-4446.12726>

Genius. (2009). *About Genius*. Retrieved October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, from <https://genius.com/Genius-about-genius-annotated>

Genius. (2016). *How Genius works*. Retrieved October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, from <https://genius.com/Genius-how-genius-works-annotated>

Genius. (2018). *How to annotate & edit on Genius*. Retrieved October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, from

<https://genius.com/Genius-how-to-annotate-and-edit-on-genius-annotated>

Goddard, C. (2011). *Semantic analysis: A practical introduction*. Oxford University Press.

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/semantic-analysis-9780199560288?cc=fi&lang=en&>

Harrison, C. (2017). The songwriting coalface: Where multiple intelligences collide. *Journal of Pedagogic Development*, 7(3), 58–67 <http://hdl.handle.net/10547/622373>

Howard, K. (2021). *Korean pop music: Riding the wave*. BRILL.

Kelley, C. (2017, December 21). *Meet the BTS fan translators (partially!) responsible for the globalization of K-pop*. Billboard. <https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/bts-fan-translators-k-pop-interview-8078464/>

Korean Music Copyright Association. (n.d.). *Greetings*. Retrieved October 15, 2021, from <https://www.komca.or.kr/foreign2/eng2/K0101.jsp>

Körkkö, T. (2019). *A comparison of commercial and non-commercial Finnish subtitles of Game of Thrones*. [Bachelor's thesis, University of Oulu]. Jultika. <http://jultika.oulu.fi/Record/nbnfioulu-202001041003>

McIntyre, P. (2008). Creativity and cultural production: A study of contemporary Western popular music songwriting. *Creativity Research Journal*, 20(1), 40–52. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10400410701841898>

Nicholls, D. (2007). Narrative theory as an analytical tool in the study of popular music texts. *Music & Letters*, 88(2), 297–315. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gcm006>

Nielbock-Yoon, J. (2020). Conflicting language ideologies and contradictory language practices in K-pop. *Bochumer Jahrbuch Zur Ostasienforschung*, 43, 15–40.

Padget, F. (2017). *What are the difficulties of being a Korean pop idol and to what extent do they outweigh the benefits?* Academia. [https://www.academia.edu/31969209/What\\_are\\_the\\_difficulties\\_of\\_being\\_a\\_Korean\\_pop\\_idol\\_and\\_to\\_what\\_extent\\_do\\_they\\_outweigh\\_the\\_benefits?sm=b](https://www.academia.edu/31969209/What_are_the_difficulties_of_being_a_Korean_pop_idol_and_to_what_extent_do_they_outweigh_the_benefits?sm=b)

Peck, J., & Coyle, M. (1995). *Practical criticism*. Macmillan International Higher Education. <https://books.google.fi/books?id=jjldDwAAQBAJ&lpg=PR9&ots=rYVJZ8wa27&dq=practical%20criticism&lr&hl=fi&pg=PA3#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Randle, Q., & Evans, K. (2013). So what does "Set Fire To The Rain" really mean? A typology for

analyzing pop song lyrics using narrative theory and semiotics. *MEIEA Journal*, 13(1), 125–147. <https://doi.org/10.25101/13.7>

Recording Academy / GRAMMYs. (2018, September 19). *BTS on songwriting, success & their fans* | *GRAMMY Museum* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/x0Onpm5iYHo>

Taylor, J. (2018). Animating creative selves: Pen names as property in the careers of Canadian and American romance writers. *American Ethnologist*, 45(1), 112–123. <https://doi-org.pc124152.oulu.fi:9443/10.1111/amet.12603>

West, D. (2017). Practical criticism: An early experiment in reader response. *Language and Literature*, 26(2), 88–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963947017704725>

## **Appendix A. Original Korean lyrics**

*Agust D - Agust D.* (n.d.). Genius. <https://genius.com/albums/Agust-d/Agust-d>

*BTS - WINGS.* (n.d.). Genius. <https://genius.com/albums/Bts/Wings>



## Appendix B. Tracklists

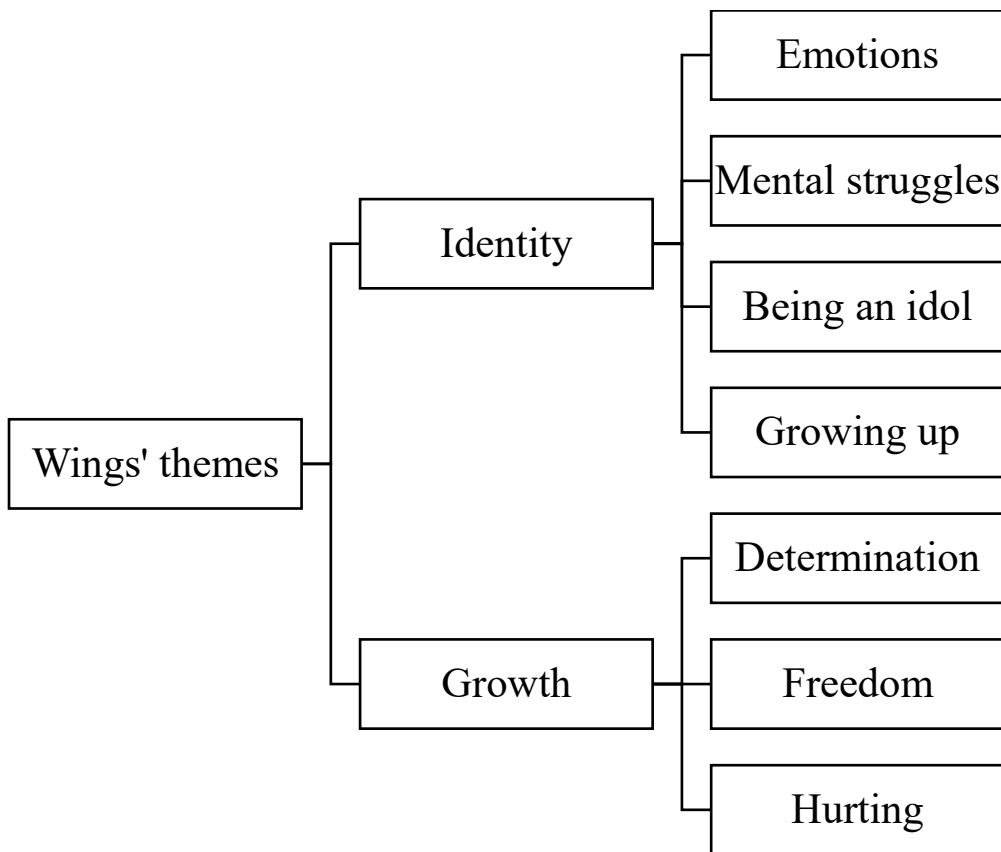
### *Wings*

1. Intro : Boy Meets Evil
2. 피땀눈물 (Blood, Sweat & Tears)
3. Begin
4. Lie
5. Stigma
6. First Love
7. Reflection
8. MAMA
9. Awake
10. Lost
11. BTS Cypher 4
12. Am I Wrong
13. 21세기 소녀 (21<sup>st</sup> Century Girl)
14. 둘! 셋! (그래도 좋은 날이 더 많기를)  
(2! 3! (Still Wishing for More Good Days))
15. Interlude : Wings

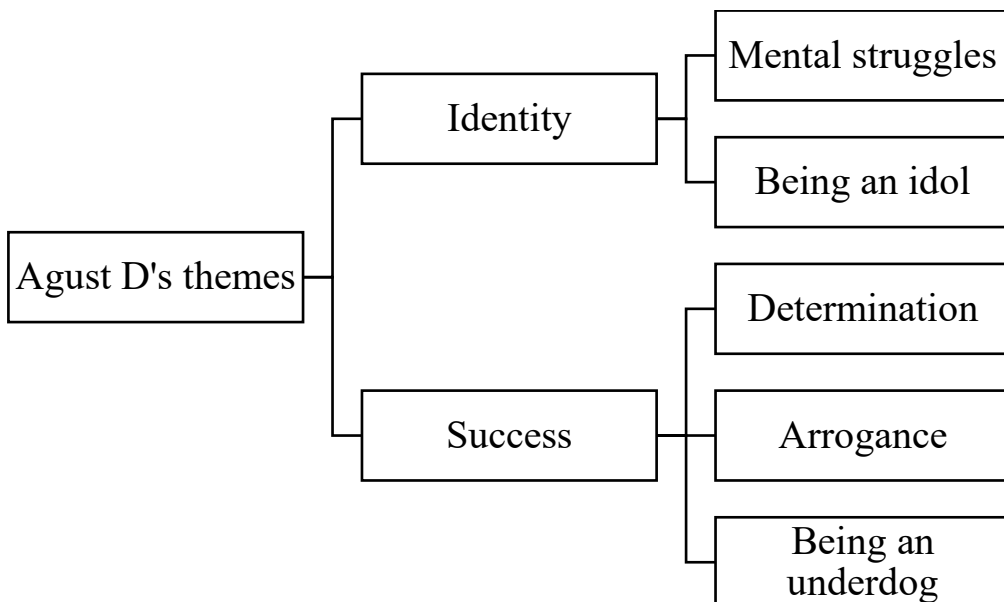
### *Agust D*

1. Intro : Dt sugA (Feat. DJ Friz)
2. Agust D
3. give it to me
4. skit
5. 지리사일사팔 (724148)
6. 140503 새벽에 (140503 at dawn)
7. 마지막 (The Last)
8. Tony Montana (Feat. Yankie)
9. Interlude ; Dream, Reality
10. so far away (Feat. 수란 (Suran))

**Appendix C. Themes by album**



Simple themes in order of relevance: religious (9), nature (8), alternative spellings (4), places (3), swear words (3), music (3), family (3), references (2), brands (1)



Simple themes in order of relevance: swear words (6), places (4), alternative spelling (3), nature (3), references (3), religious (1), brands (1)