

University of Tartu
Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics
Department of Semiotics

Eleni Alexandri

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF K-POP: THE MAKING OF BTS UNIVERSE

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Supervisor:

Katre Pärn

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INTRODUCTION

A continuous and rapid growth in the popularity of the music genre known as K-Pop, which is an abbreviation for Korean popular music, is observed during the last few years. K-Pop, is part of the very conscious, systematic and meticulous export of culture, known as “Korean Wave”, that is, the soft power politics of South Korea. In addition to strengthening the national economy, another equally important effect of the successful spread of the Korean Wave on the (now) global market is the re-establishment of the Korean national identity, the consolidation of the country as a viable and competitive force, and the communication of the Korean culture and tradition with the rest of the world. At the same time, the success of the Korean Wave, but more specifically of K-Pop, presented the opportunity and fertile ground for the conception of extremely creative and artistic productions, worthy of research.

Before moving to the discussion of the goal of this study, and the main analysis, it is important to present the history and gradual evolution of Korean pop music into today’s global phenomenon. Therefore, the following subchapters present the Korean Wave, K-Pop music and a brief overview of its development through time, and last but not least, BTS band.

THE KOREAN WAVE (HALLYU)

The Korean Wave, also known as *Hallyu* (or *Hanryu* in Korean – not so often used), is a term coined by Chinese media during the 1990s (Ahn et al. 2013; Han & Lee 2008) to describe the phenomenon of Korean pop culture, and the increasing popularity and impact in (initially) Asian countries, such as China, Japan, and Taiwan (Han & Lee 2008; Kallen 2018; Shim 2006).

The creation of the Korean Wave was a governmental initiative as a plan of salvation and survival from the great Asian financial crisis of 1997. Korea already had a long and dark history of occupations, civil wars and poverty, thus, this crisis could have been the *coup de grâce* for the nation (Mason 2018; Rhyu 2015). In this crucial moment, the heads of state agreed to the vision of Lee Soo-Man, a Korean artist, who had just returned from South California. Lee, aspired to bring the latest trends of the American culture and MTV aesthetics to Korean reality, and he believed, before anyone else, that the mixture of the two cultures would create a unique hybrid result, which could be potentially be the next big export of South Korea (Kallen 2014).

Hallyu includes a wide range of socio-cultural products, such as TV series, films, music, fashion, video games, even subway operations, stock trading and e-government tactics (Ahn et al. 2013; Han & Lee 2008; Rhyu 2015; Shim 2006), while its distinctness lies on the fact that South Korea is the only country that while emerging and developing, managed to export cultural elements and technologies (Jin & Yoon 2017). The first successful step towards the expansion of *Hallyu* was the K-drama (another abbreviation meaning Korean dramatic television series) “What is Love All About?”, which in 1997 aired for the first time on Chinese state television, gaining the attention of approximately 120 million people, and achieving the highest ratings in the history of Chinese television (Heo 2002; Rhyu 2015). However, this was only the beginning; the audience of K-dramas soon began to discover Korean music and K-Pop stars became regional, cultural icons, with great impact on youth; from clothing and make-up, even to plastic surgeries (Shim 2006).

It can be seen from the aforementioned that, *Hallyu* is not a fixed and stable phenomenon, but it has evolved, and grown over the years. Bok-Rae Kim in 2015, premediated this advancement, and suggested the four different stages of the Korean wave. *Hallyu 1.0*, according to Kim, existed in the time period between 1995 and 2005, it was product-oriented, located in Asia, and it involved K-dramas and movies. *Hallyu 2.0 or neo-hallyu*, expanded in North America and Europe, was stars-oriented, and was spread through online platforms. *Hallyu 3.0* is foreseen by the author taking over the world, as a stars, creators and brand-oriented export, spread through cross-media, and evolving from K-Pop, to the more general K-Culture. Eventually, the development will lead to *Hallyu 4.0*, the K-Style, which will make the Korean lifestyle considered as mainstream (Kim 2015).

KOREAN POPULAR MUSIC (K-POP)

K-Pop refers to pop music produced in South Korea, excluding North Korea, where music production is led by the government and includes mainly patriotic odes and anthems (Hartong 2006). K-Pop is characterized by the amalgamation of different music genres, Korean traditional musical elements (*p'ansori*, *samul nori*, *ppongjjak*), and dynamic choreographies (Mackenzie 2019; Morelli 2001).

[In K-Pop] the genres have been lifted from their historical and cultural contexts, resituated and “indigenized” (to use Appadurai’s term) into Korean culture. In the process, these Western popular genres have been emptied of some extramusical associations that would disrupt a listener’s expectations of stylistic coherence. Instead, this music has been transformed and new musical associations were created (Morelli 2001: 249).

However, this is not only a characteristic of K-Pop, but one of the factors of the successful story of South Korea, “the miracle on Han River” as characterized by many (Rhyu 2015). In his book *The Spirit of Korean Development* (2015) Sang-Young Rhyu, explains how the ability of Korean people to blend modern with traditional national elements, to incorporate global trends, without losing their identity, is a key factor for the development of the nation and the economic, technological, and socio-cultural leap South Korea has achieved. Likewise, the acceptance towards external impact and this adaptability are the key components of other Korean success-stories, for example Hyundai and Samsung (ibid.).

The continuous influence, the acceptance, and adaptability are also sustained by the history of Korean music. Korea, since 108 BC, when it was conquered by the Chinese Han Dynasty, and later on while being under the Japanese rule, has been impacted by several cultural, including musical influences. After WWII, and the Korean civil war (1950-1953), which led to the division of the peninsula, the musical influences came from the West, and mainly from America. Stars like Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe visited South Korea to attend events organized for the support and encouragement of US Army, and the Korean audience became familiar with the current popular music (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Korean Culture and Information Service 2011). Nevertheless, the government of that time tried to stand up to the invasion of these music genres, considering them to

oppose its ethics. This led to censorship and complete bans on foreign music from all media (Kallen 2014).

During 1960s, the popularity of the band Beatles reached South Korea, and gave rise to the first local rock bands, while 1970s was the era of hippies, anti-conformism and revolutionary youth (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Korean Culture and Information Service 2011). This ignited once again the government's opposition to any kind of music that disrupts the people, and opposes its values, thus censorship continued intensely, and the promoted music was easy-listening, radio-friendly, romantic ballad; all that, until the assassination of the dictator Park Chung-Hee. Some years later, in 1987, South Korea was democratized and in spite of all the social changes that followed, music was finally free (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Korean Culture and Information Service 2011; Mason 2018).

This evolution through the history of music in South Korea paved the way for K-Pop, by cultivating over the years the aforementioned flexibility and adjustability to foreign influences, and by the democratization of Korea that brought liberation of music and media. As mentioned already, the decisive factors on the emergence of K-Pop, was the Asian financial crisis, along with the vision of Lee Soo-Man; however, the day K-Pop was born, according to music experts and culture specialist, was in 1992, when the boy band Seo Taiji and Boys appeared for the first time on an MBC show, and performed their iconic song "Nan Arayo" (Mason 2018; Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Korean Culture and Information Service 2011; Mackenzie 2019; Morelli 2001; Shim 2006;). The performance was criticized harshly in the show by the judges, however, the few minutes they were on stage was enough to change the history of Korean music.

The bassist, singer, and songwriter Seo Taiji, along with the two rapper-dancers, introduced the genre of hip-hop, dressed in baggy clothes, and dancing in a style, which resemblance popular American boy-bands. The hybridity of their songs and their lyrics that gave voice to the oppressed youth, while criticizing the educational system and the hypocrisy of the society made them stand out (Shim 2006). The band gave rise to the first generation of K-Pop, which can be divided into four or five generations, depending on the researcher (Mackenzie 2019).

The next milestone of K-Pop was in 2012, when the artist Psy presented to the global audience his over-the-top, up-beat, eccentric song “Gangnam Style” and broke the internet, becoming the first music video clip to reach one billion views on YouTube (Gruger 2012; Mackenzie 2019; Mason 2018). Although this mixture of genres in combination with the foreign lyrics faced an American audience that was not ready to welcome K-Pop in its totality, thus PSY stayed in the history as a one-hit wonder (Mason 2018). However, this changed when the boy band BTS introduced itself to the world.

BTS (BANGTAN SONYEONDAN)

In 2013, the boy band BTS, in Korean Bangtan Sonyeondan, which translates into Bulletproof Boy Scouts, debuted, under the label of Big Hit Entertainment, a small company completely ignored by the big three record labels (SM Entertainment, JYP Entertainment, YG Entertainment) dominating the music industry at that time (Doré & Pugsley 2019, Kallen 2014). The band consists of Kim Namjoon, who goes by the stage name *RM* or *Rap Monster*, and is the leader of the band, Kim Seokjin, whose stage name is *Jin*, Jung Hoseok, introduced to the audience as *J-Hope*, Min Yoongi, known as *Suga*, Kim Taehyung, with the stage name *V*, Park Jimin, as *Jimin*, and finally Jeon Jeongguk, known as *Jungkook*. Their global recognition is dated between 2017 and 2018, while since 2017 they are winning every year the *Top Social Artist Award of Billboards Music Awards (BBMA)* (Lynch 2020; Ju 2019). With numerous other award nominations and wins, growing steadily every month, and an economic contribution to South Korea’s GDP in 2019 that reached 4.9 billion dollars (Elberse & Woodham 2020), as well as constant comparisons by BBC, Forbes and other prestigious online sources to Beatles, Metallica and other music legends, and a double invitation from United Nations to give a speech during the General Assembly, it is evident that BTS is an outstandingly successful band.

An equally significant aspect of the band’s excellence however, is the messages they address through their songs; similarly to Seo Taiji and Boys, BTS lyrics often evolve around topics such as the oppressive and unfair structure of the society, the deprivation of speaking, thinking and feeling freely, the problematic educational system, but also mental

issues as depression, while they try to suggest the alternative of self-love and self-development (Cha 2020). Furthermore, in her work *Philosophizing About BTS* (2020) Cha Min-Joo, suggests that BTS message harmonizes with philosophies of great thinkers like Nietzsche, Hegel, Deleuze, Adorno, and others (ibid.)

Finally, an additional factor that makes BTS distinguishable and worthy of further research is the story-telling element in their body of work, mainly expressed and observed through their music videos.

The close reading of BTSs music by Korean popular culture specialist Lee Ji-Hang sheds light on [the narrative growth of their music world]. According to her, the world of BTS music structures the BTS Universe, namely “BU”. The BU began with the release of the album *The Most Beautiful Moments in Life, Part 1* (2015) and extended to the album *Love Yourself* (2018). BTS members star in the album’s music videos and enact the respective dark personal stories of drug addiction, attempted suicide, epileptic seizure, arson and violence. (Ju 2019: 27-28)

Lee Ji-Hang, in the book *BTS and ARMY Culture* (2019) presents her idea of the “network image” to describe the almost web structure of the music video clips and additional videos of BTS, which are interconnected with each other and create a certain narration (Lazore 2019). Additionally, Rolling Stones India published an article in 2020 titled “Building the BTS Cinematic Universe” (Sawardekar 2020), trying to highlight the connections of music videos and interpret their symbolic elements, although this is not surprising for BTS devoted fan base, who are called ARMY. The last few years, BTS fans have written numerous blog entries, and uploaded hundreds of videos proposing their own theories about the connectivity of the music videos, the meaning behind every symbolism, and the meaning behind every intertextual reference.

Finally in 2019, Dongkyung Lee submitted his Master’s thesis titled “Intertextuality and Transmedia Storytelling in K-Pop: Focusing on the content analysis of BTS”. In this research, Lee sought to answer key questions about intertextuality by analyzing the transmedial storyworld of BTS, and he attempted to create a model of K-Pop’s success, a triptych, consisting of the entertainment company, the idols, and the fans. In addition, the author offered a dissertation which contains reference to valuable Korean-language-based

articles on the topics of intertextuality and transmedial storytelling, introducing them to the English-speaking readers, analysts, and researchers.

DELIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH

As seen from the information presented in the preceding paragraphs, there is plenty of information around about K-Pop, the Korean Wave and BTS. Most of the studies though, focus on the contribution of K-Pop in the Korean GDP and tourism, Korea's development into one of the strongest economies in the world thanks to *Hallyu*, and the social changes that followed this growth (Xiaowei 2009; Shin & Kim 2013; Oh & Lee 2014; Bae et al. 2017; Lim & Giouvriss 2017; Messerlin & Shin 2017; Seo & Kim 2019); others tend to focus on the importance of the fan base and the social media as a factor of the success of K-Pop, the social behavior of the fandom as a translocal or completely virtual community (subculture) (Siriyucasak & Shin 2007; Jung 2011; Jung & Shim 2013; Marinescu & Balica 2013; Otmazgin & Lyan 2014; Sung 2014; Yoon 2018) and the element of participation along with the production and re-creation of media content by the fans (Magoncia 2014; Aisyah 2017; Oh 2017; Swan 2017, 2018; Yoon 2017; Aisyah et al. 2019; Cruz et al. 2019; Lynch 2020). Additionally, there are studies on the issues of masculinity of K-Pop idols, and gender inequalities (Maliangkay 2013; Oh 2015; Sari 2016; Lin & Rudolf 2017; Oh & Oh 2017; Almqvist-Ingersoll 2019). Finally, there are some studies on the aesthetics and unique characteristics of K-Pop music videos (Kim 2016; Dorè & Pugsley 2019), and on the BTS Universe (BU), like the aforementioned thesis of Lee (2019).

Consequently, there is a reasonable ground for the continuation of the study and the further research, given not only the constantly developing nature of K-Pop and the evolving work of BTS band, which remains active, producing more and more content, but also to fill the gap of addressing the transmedial nature of BU. The main difference with the similar studies is that, apart from the semiotic approach which is going to be implemented in the present work, the focus is on the meaning-making mechanisms and the examination of how the transmedial universe of BTS is being structured and expanded.

For these reasons, this thesis will examine the BU through the prism of semiotics, exploring the integration of the poetic world of BTS and the storyworld of band's body of work; the materials to be taken into account are not only the music videos or teasers and promo videos of BTS, but also the official Webtoon *Save Me* (2019), produced by Webtoon platform in collaboration with Big Hit Entertainment, and the two mobile games "BTS World" (2019) and "BTS Universe Story" (2020), produced by Netmarble mobile game developer corporation, and Big Hit Entertainment.

More evidence in support of the increasingly expanding transmedial character of BU and the intentional and meticulous plan on behalf of Big Hit Entertainment, can be found in the recent statements of Bang Si-Hyuk, founder of the label, who announced on the 21st of August 2019 the collaboration of his company with Chorokbaem Media for the production of a K-drama series called *Youth*. The series aim to expand further the storyline presented in BTS music videos as well as the Webtoon *Save Me* (2019) and elaborate on the fictional story of the seven members (Bucksbaum 2019; Mendez 2020; Ramli 2019).

Unfortunately, this media content cannot be included in the current research, since the series is still in production. Additionally, other extra materials contributing in the expansion of the BU, are the books *Most Beautiful Moments in Life: Notes 1* (BHE 2019) and *Most Beautiful Moments in Life: Notes 2* (BHE 2020), which are not going to be included due to the date of their publication that did not leave enough time for a proper examination and evaluation.

Hence, this study will focus on the analysis of the poetic world (as defined by Shcheglov and Zholkovsky in poetics of expressiveness) in the music videos of BTS, highlighting the main themes and motifs, concentrating on the structure and building of the world. In continuation, it is going to be examined how these elements are being translated into the additional material of the analysis, with attention to the affordances of respective medium, and aiming at the insight of the components that rationalize the transmedial nature. Finally, the emergence of a new layer of narration is going to be studied, along with its influence on the interpretation of the individual components.

Lastly, regarding the theoretical framework and methodology of the following analysis, there are some main sources that lay the foundations; the work of Yuri Shcheglov and Alexander Zholkovsky (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987) on the poetic expressiveness is

going to be utilized in an alternative way, since the theory is going to be applied on visual modalities instead of verbal text. Their work is going to offer the possibility of highlighting the main (local and invariant) themes and motifs of BTS music videos, which are considered the central textual genre surrounded by the additional media that expand the BU.

In the analysis of the visual modality of the materials, the theories of meaning by David Bordwell are going to be employed, complimented by an almost parallel examination of Erwin Panofsky's pictorial analysis and layers of meaning with the different layers of translation, as presented by James Holmes, enabling a smooth transition from the in-depth look of the poetic world, to its intersemiotic translation to the additional media. For the last part, the main concepts are going to be drawn from Henry Jenkins and his valuable theories on transmedial storytelling.

The aim of this research is to re-construct the poetic world of BTS, a group that has gained global recognition and has established its position in pop culture, and discover the real dimensions of BTS Universe that exceeds the borders of the same-titled franchise. The observation of recurrent motifs and structural elements in the totality of the music videos, sparked the hypothesis that the BTS Universe, transcends the borders of the franchise; thus through analyzing the materials, the expected result is an answer to whether there is indeed a link between the BTS oeuvre, and why it is not included in the official franchise. Additionally, the aim is to discover the mechanisms by which the messages BTS are communicating to the world are translated into different media platforms, and whether the narrative emerging from this transmedial system is affecting the interpretation of individual components. Expectably, this analysis will provide some insight on the meaning-making mechanisms of the creation of transmedial storytelling in contemporary Korean music industry, and will pave the way for further studies.

1. TOWARDS POETICS OF EXPRESSIVENESS

The fundamental message of the poetics of expressiveness is this: poetics concerns the way in which something is successfully expressed by something else. This message makes the poetics of expressiveness a part of contemporary semiotics (Shaumuan 1985: 381)

Around the late 1950s, a new theoretical concept was introduced by Alexander K. Zholkovsky and Yuri K. Shcheglov, called poetics of expressiveness, or for short, PE (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987:1). This approach and method of analysis of the structure of literary texts, provided a list of tools and terms; some of them were already introduced previously by other scholars, presented now afresh, in a developed and redefined version (for instance, the concept of devices, by Eisenstein¹), while others were novel contributions, namely poetic world (for short PW).

PE draws inspiration from different ideas from linguistics, formalism, structuralism, and of course, semiotics. Even if not in a direct way, the development in these fields and the various contributions of scholars that positively influenced the general way of thinking, worked as a rippled effect, and paved the way for PE.

The first breakthrough happened at the end of the 1950s, when it was observed by scholars at the time that the traditional grammar and descriptive linguistics are not sufficient enough for deeper analyses, and most importantly for the study of mechanisms and features of meaning (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987:22; Chomsky 1968). This realization gave birth to generative grammar, and specifically to the transformational generative grammar (TG). The first attempt by Chomsky to introduce TG and illustrate its function was in his book *Syntactic Structures* (1957), however, the first concrete version of it was some years later, in the book *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965). Generative grammar studied and canonized the rules and principles that a sentence, formed by the speaker,

¹ Eisenstein was also influenced by his mentor, Vsevolod Meyerhold, while working on his concept of “devices”; PE of A. Zholkovsky and Yu. Shcheglov preserved the terminology of Eisenstein, who in his turn, kept using the terminology of Meyerhold, namely “RECOIL”. (Shcheglov; Zholkovsky 1987: 123)

should follow; every part of the phrase is adding up a new element, however, when the formulation ends, there can be no change or alteration of the components. On the contrary, according to transformational generative grammar, the end result can be modified, by transforming the structure and by removing or adding components.

Transformational generative grammar is very crucial for the development of linguistics and semiotics, since it highlighted the two different structures of a text: deep structure and surface structure. These two terms, which are going to be described below in more detail, are indeed used in PE, however, it is important to note that, as Vladimir Ivanov pointed out, PE and generative grammar are not analogous (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987:5). The main difference is that PE is an approach towards a text (T), which is emerging from a theme (θ) with the help of expressive devices (EDs); but this emergence, or *derivation* (in Shcheglov's and Zholkovsky's terms) is a result of the collection and combination of elements that carry part of the theme, not indiscriminately of all components of the text under analysis (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987:5)

Another fundamental element for the creation of PE was the meaning – text model that also gave prominence to deep and surface structure of the text (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987:5). The model was a result of the collaboration between Igor Mel'čuk and Alexander Zholkovsky at the early 1960s, and as Mel'čuk states, Zholkovsky's concept of *wordlets* played a significant role to the projection of the two structures (Mel'čuk 2018).

Both of these two theories, TG and the meaning – text model consisted the necessary intellectual background and contributed in the formation of certain terminology, that would eventually allow PE to investigate the relations between structures (deep and surface) and meaning (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987:23), or in other words, between expressive devices (EDs) and theme (θ) (Shaumyan 1985: 380).

At the same time, the scholarly ambience of that period was already going through changes, with formalism giving its place to structuralism. Formalism, and more specifically Russian formalism, took place in Russia in the beginning of the twentieth century. The two main representatives were The Society for the Study of Poetic Language (also known as OPOYAZ) and The Moscow Linguistic Circle (Pilshchikov 2016). In a general and simple way it could be stated that the main focus of formalism was the text in

its totality and autonomy, separated from any extra-textual elements and influences, such as political ideologies, history, society and culture, or even the reflection of author's psychology²; or in other words "a demonstrative refusal to have anything to do with content in the construction of scientific poetics" (Zholkovsky & Shcheglov 1967: 74)

Notwithstanding the general belief regarding to formalism and the limitation it is considered to pose, many scholars proved that this movement was more complex and inclusive, with more fluid boundaries. Among them, Vladimir Propp, Viktor Shklovsky, Juri Tynianov, and Sergei Eisenstein played a significant role in the development of the field. Victor Shklovsky's work included concepts such as: devices as means of transformation from common language to poetic, defamiliarization (or, the renewal of perception), and the concept of invariant functions (Zholkovsky 1978: 263-264). Invariant functions is a concept also connected with the work of Vladimir Propp, while his work *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), inspired many studies, and influenced many new theories, among them PE (Rudy 1986:561; Zholkovsky 1978:263-264). Juri Tynianov, introduced the concept of literary personality, presenting a new take in the analysis of literature (Pilshchikov 2016), keeping in mind though that the expression of the author's life and personality is included in the study, only when the elements that demonstrate this correlation, are critical and closely related to the text (Kalugin 2015). Finally, as mentioned already, a great contribution to formalism, literature and film studies was the highly influential work of Sergei Eisenstein. His work introduced a new way of analyzing art, focusing on "thematic-expressive structures" (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987:2), while among his concepts, there are the ones of expressive devices and invariant themes (Zholkovsky 1978:263-264), which highly influenced the theory of PE.

After 1920s, structuralism and semiotics came to foreground, and even though formalists tried to adapt into this new intellectual environment, the attempts were not sufficient enough; thus there was a collapse of the Moscow Linguistic Circle (Pilshchikov 2016). For structuralism, literature is analyzed not as a close-ended work, but open-ended text, including all the extra-textual information that formalism was intentionally neglecting, but also reader's, and different interpretations of texts. Text, which was the "hero of

² This is something that we see as a prominent element in PE, since the 'obsessions' and 'complexes' of the author are being repeated, consciously or not in his work, creating invariant themes and forming his *Poetic World* (Shcheglov; Zholkovsky 1987:145)

semiotics” in 1970s (Chernov 1988: 13), is to be understood as anything that can be studied and analyzed, provided that the message has been coded at least twice (Lotman 1988 [1981]: 53), or a message with different codes and sub-codes, which is to be interpreted by the receiver based on social and cultural conditions; “an empty form to which various possible senses can be attributed” (Eco 1979:5).

Ferdinand de Saussure, who is considered as the father of structuralism, had an impact on the study of text with his theories of sign, langue and parole, and synchronic and diachronic linguistics. Roman Jakobson, previously co-founder of Moscow Linguistic Circle, and member of OPOYAZ, became one of the most important scholars of structuralism, pointing out that the analysis of literature cannot be reduced to linguistics, since there are expressions that require specifically a semiotic approach (Pilshchikov 2016). Claude Lévi-Strauss presented his theory of *binary oppositions*, in his book *The Naked Man* (1981 [1971]), highlighting the function of opposites in language, literature, but also in thought. Finally, it is important to note the contributions of post-structuralism movement, at the second half of twentieth century, and the works of Roland Barthes, with prominent example *Image-Music-Text* (1977), including the “Rhetoric of the Image”, and “The Third Meaning”.

The historical overview presented aims to highlight the importance of all these theoretical frameworks which, whether they had a direct impact on the work of Shcheglov and Zholkovsky or not, formed the surrounding scene and created the appropriate, fertile ground for the emergence of poetics of expressiveness.

1.1. POETICS OF EXPRESSIVENESS: THE THEORY

Poetics of expressiveness, as mentioned already, is a theory introduced by Alexander Zholkovsky and Yuri Shcheglov, originating from Zholkovsky’s idea that he started formulating around the 1950s. Sebastian Shaumyan has characterized PE as “a grammar of artistic structure” (Shaumyan 1985: 380). The fundamental idea of PE is that text (T) is a manifestation, or in other words *derivation*, of its theme (θ) with the aid of the expressive devices (EDs); an artistic communication between theme (θ) and components of the text

(e.g. Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987; Zholkovsky 1978; 1980; 1985). It is also important to point out the nature of θ and EDs, the first one being non-expressive, that is, the θ does not possess an inherent ability to communicate its meaning, while the latter is meaningless, that is, EDs, as stated by the name of the term, do not encompass a meaning, but they function as devices that communicate, and *express* the given message (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987; Zholkovsky 1978; 1980).

A derivation imitates the logic of the artist's behavior; as for the logic of the reader's perception (and of the critic's analytic thinking), it is identified by the reverse procedure of *subtracting* EDs from the text. Each step of the derivation (resp. subtraction) i.e. each application of an ED, is made by consulting the *dictionary of reality (DR)*, common to the author and readers (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 25)

Much like in natural languages, there are many different dictionaries providing all the ready-made, necessary components for their correct function and usage by the speakers. In poetics and more specifically PE, the DR presents a collection of elements, that is, objects and phenomena of the world, which are created on the basis of a shared code between the author and the reader(s). Every 'translation', will affect the understanding and interpretation of the text, thus its derivation. An important note which has to be made is that in some occasions, ready-made components are not sufficient for the expression of a message; returning to the analogy with natural languages, there are times that the speaker might improvise and create a new 'unofficial' word, combining already existing elements. This elusive thematic result can be achieved in PE as well, with the aid of EDs (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 45-46).

Theme is defined as "the initial element of derivation", "a value statement" diffused in the text by EDs; i.e. it is the common message of all the levels, images, fragments and other components of the text" (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 27), and "the most abstract level or representation" (Zholkovsky 1985: 107). As explained in the book *Poetics of Expressiveness: A Theory and Applications* by Yuri Shcheglov and Alexander Zholkovsky (1987), θ is the first of the four levels of text, and can be categorized in two different Classes. Class I Themes are the ones that refer to messages about the world around us, our life, while Class II Themes include messages concerning the tools of art, linguistic and stylistic codes, "pronouncements" about language, genre and plot (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 27). Interestingly, in the article Poems written only by Alexander

Zholkovsky, there is a mentioning of a third class; Class III Themes, which encompass themes with intertextual messages, either concerning the semantics (idea) or structure (code) of the text (Zholkovsky 1985: 108).

In addition to this first, initial level of the text, there are three more levels that need to be mentioned. The next level is deep design (DD) of the text, a slightly less abstract entity that can be defined as the “most general artistic outline of structure” or “the “expressive solution” of the theme” (Zholkovsky 1985: 110). The important thing about the nature of DD is that, in contrast to “non-expressive” θ , this level is “expressive” (ibid.). DD is followed by the next, less abstract levels of the text, deep structure (DS) and surface structure (SS); similarly to the TG they correspond, accordingly, to initial, fundamental “composition” and “texture” of the text (ibid.), the least abstract and more obvious level. Of equal importance, however, is to introduce the component of sphere. Spheres are divided into three main categories: the referential sphere, including ideas and meanings, the stylistic/code sphere, which encompasses codes and constructions, and the intertextual sphere, that covers any type of intertextuality (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 14).

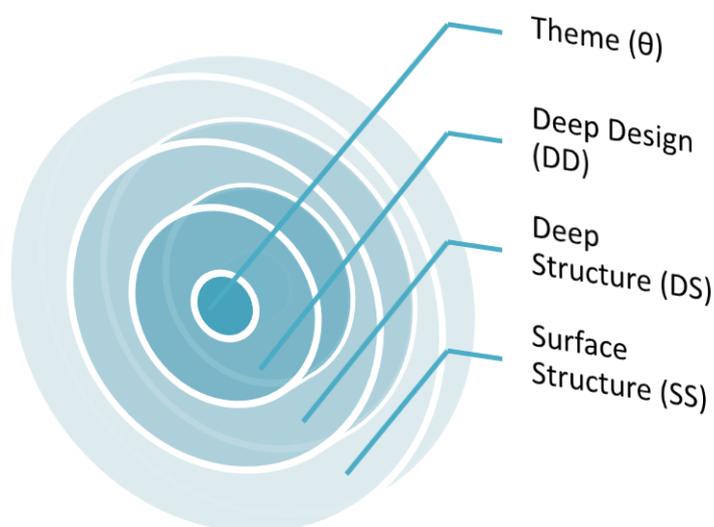


Figure 1, The Four Levels of Text Created by author on the basis of Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987,

Another term that needs to be clarified, playing a significant role in the theory of PE, but also useful for the following analysis, is the motif (M). Ms are defined as “grammatical and other stylistic patterns” (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 15), or the recurrent elements of T used by the author (A) (ibid, 146).

Finally, the last crucial component of PE, are the expressive devices (EDs). As mentioned already, they are the “meaningless” elements of the text, however, they do possess “inherent expressive effects” (EE) (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987:30), that is, an abstract natural ability which accompanies the function of each ED (e.g. in the book: ‘harmony’ as an expressive effect of *concretization* and *concord*). EDs enable the derivation of T from its θ (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 25, 28; Zholkovsky 1980: 60); metaphorically speaking, EDs “give voice” (expressiveness) to θ , allowing the message of the text “to be heard”. It should be noted that during this process, the θ is not being altered or modified, and its essence is being preserved just “heightened” (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 3; Zholkovsky & Shcheglov 1976: 208; Zholkovsky 1978: 264). Based on Eisenstein’s theory, the EDs are presented in a new way;

ED is not a *concrete step of a derivation* [...] Neither is it a *concrete transformation rule* specifying that such a step is possible [...] EDs are *rule types, or schemes of rules*, underlying concrete transformation rules (Zholkovsky & Shcheglov 1976: 225)

The list of elementary EDs are the following:

- **Concretization** (CONCR); it is the device based on which an element within a text becomes more concrete and specific (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 52). It is important to note that the concrete transformation rules mentioned in the previous quotation are based on this fundamental ED, that is, CONCR (ibid, 225). Not only thematic elements or codes are being concretized via the different EDs, but also the θ itself. (Thus we can talk about concretization via any type of ED)
- **Augmentation** (AUGM); it should not be mixed up with *hyperbole* (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 54); it can be divided into *AUGM proper* referring to the enhancement of an object’s properties, or *positional AUGM*, that is, highlighting an element, giving it a distinct, apparent “strong position” (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 53)

- **Repetition** (REP); as it can be easily understood by the name, this ED is functioning as a replication of the same element, mainly to offer emphasis (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 54)
- **Division** (DIV); based on DEV, the components that consist a given element, are broken down and presented separately (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 55-56). This function can provide different artistic results depending on the use, by extending and enumerating all properties of an element, giving emphasis, or deepening a description.
- **Variation** (VAR); it is again understood by the name of the ED, that based on this function, the element is being partitioned, much like DIV, however, here, there are different concretized manifestations of the initial element that works as an umbrella (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 57). (e.g. different tones of the color red, different types of flowers or trees)
- **Contrast** (CONTR); CONTR is essentially forming a polarity between one element and its opposite. It should not be confused with VAR (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 58-59).
- **Preparation** (PREP); PREP is a very crucial ED, since it is often used in storytelling, and additionally it encompasses in a higher degree the aspect of *Reader's Involvement*; it includes three important sub-categories of this elementary ED: **Presentation** (PREST), **Presage** (PRESG), and **Recoil** (REC) (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 61). The EE of PREST is defined by the authors "the same as "generic" PREP" (ibid.), however the other two EDs present a more intricate formulation and consequently a more engaging effect. PRESG functions is a way that the thematic element which is being expressed - with the aid of this ED - is not appearing in a complete form from the beginning, but its building up as the text unfolds, creating a *Path* towards its revelation. Thus "PRESG [is] one of the most successful and widespread devices" (ibid, 99). Finally, REC, has a more impactful and sudden effect, since at the beginning of the text, the thematic element which is expressed by this ED, do not start in an abstract, reduced form, but in a reversed reflection (ibid, 123). With this technique, it is possible for the *Author* (A) to move to other constructions, like SUDDEN TURN (S-TURN) to enhance the dazzling effect of his plot (ibid, 130).

- **Combination** (COMB); COMB is another ED whose nature and EE can be easily understood by its name. COMB is merging two (or more) elements, to form a new one. As explained by the authors, this ED can “create a “new reality” representing the artist’s world view” (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 62-63)
- **Concord** (CONCD); it is the ED which can mitigate the oppositions and differences between elements by highlighting their common properties, and unifying features, nonetheless without altering or modifying them in essence; it is “working towards the effect of organic unity” (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 66)
- **Reduction** (RED); it is presenting partially the thematic entity, which is being represented through ‘reduction’ by one of its properties. Much like PREP, it includes the element of *Reader’s Involvement*, since there should be an attempt by the addressee to comprehend and resemble the initial thematic entity by its abstract depiction.

There is, however, a further point to be considered. As the authors point out, the concretization of theme or thematic entities via EDs, creates a plurality which leads to a greater clarity regarding the interpretation of the reader, avoiding (even if not completely) the ‘wrong reading’ of the text, or in Shcheglov’s and Zholkovsky’s terms “helps neutralize “parasitic themes”” (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 70). This is a notable remark, since it can provide a logical argument on how an analytical approach based on PE can be considered a scientific method, instead of a biased, subjective interpretation, and additionally to offer an explanation on how the researcher can avoid the themes which the writer might unconsciously include in his work (cf. Bordwell 1991, on symptomatic interpretation)

1.2. POETIC WORLD

One of the major innovations of the poetics of expressiveness is the treatment of entire oeuvres, that is, sets of texts by one author. A metalanguage for the description of these sets of texts is based on the following concepts: (a) “central theme”: the most general thematic invariant of an oeuvre; (b) “invariant motifs”: its recurrent manifestations; (c) “poetic world”: the derivation of all the invariant motifs from the central theme; (d) “local theme”: that specific

part of a text's theme which is not accounted for by the author's invariants. (Shaumyan 1985: 380-381)

The sentiment expressed in the above quotation embodies one of the most important aspects of PE, that is, the construction of the poetic world (PW) of an author (A). Towards this construction, the researcher should find all the expressive similarities that assemble the identity of the author; all the recurrent thematic entities (invariant motifs (Minv)), the most frequently used EDs, the techniques applied in the creation of the texts, the messages and ideas that share common features and through reduction they can be summarized in one central theme/invariant theme (θ_{inv}) (Zholkovsky 1980: 60-61). Each text might have a local theme (θ_{loc}) which expresses an idea relevant to the specific piece under study; however, this message is by nature in harmony with the θ_{inv} of the A. The two components are then being subsumed into one new entity, which is the text's integral theme (θ_{int}). As presented in the form of an equation by Alexander Zholkovsky (1980:60):

$$\theta_{int}(T) = \theta_{inv}(T) + \theta_{loc}(T)$$

Based on the theory of PE and the construction of PW of an A, there can be a further step, that is, the comparative analysis of three different types: Comparison of Entire PWs, Comparison of Individual Motifs, and Comparison of Concrete Texts (Zholkovsky 1980: 61). This contrastive poetics can juxtapose the artistic identities of different authors, but also point out how a Minv that is being observed in two (or more) PWs appears like the same, essentially though it carries a different meaning and functions in a different way. This comparison is not only going to demonstrate the various operations of language, neither the multiple semantic values of a sign, but also the impact of historical and sociocultural influences both in the initial choice of the A, but also in the interpretation of the reader. "PW is an invariant *message* by a given author which forms part of its *code*" (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987:147), however, there are other codes that impact the creation of the text and its interpretation, namely, codes of human thinking, codes of art in a general framework, codes that are imposed by the specific era in time (what we might call trend), and more (Zholkovsky 1985:106). As Jakobson stated in his course lecture on Russian formalism in the University of Brno: "...an integral understanding of the sign helps to include poetics [...] in semiology, the study of signs" (Pilshchikov 2016)

1.3. DISCUSSION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

After presenting the path towards PE, and its crucial components, it is important to establish a common code for the use of terminology in this study.

The first major point is the identity of the *author*. Applying the theory of PE to the oeuvre of BTS creates an issue of who should be addressed as the author of this PW. Given the complex nature of music videos, that is, a *multimodal* product (Elleström 2010: 36; Leeuwen 2005: 281), and an *intermedial discourse* (Vos 1997: 326-327), it can be very arduous to appoint a person as the one and only author, responsible for the overall artistic result presented to the viewer. The challenge of using PE as a method of approaching music videos, and reconstructing the PW of the band's body of work, is that the themes and messages are not contained only in the music and melody, they are not only in the lyrics, nor only on the visual product; they are diffused in all these modalities, transmitted and communicated via the languages of the above-mentioned sign systems (which can be further divided into more subsystems, if we analyze deeper the visual components that make up a video).

This research, as mentioned in the introduction, is going to focus on visual modalities, not taking into account the music and lyrics of the video clips. This does not pose any issues in the construction of the PW, or the derivation of the various themes, since the theory still applies. It is the combination of the different languages which enhances and emphasizes the expressiveness of the message.

Big Hit Entertainment, the label representing BTS, is collaborating with various artists for the production of songs, as well as music videos. In addition, the members of the band, apart from performers, they are also working on the production of their songs, that is, composing music and writing their own lyrics. Furthermore in the timeframe between 2013, which is the year the band debuted, and present day, there has been a list of different directors who offered their artistic expertise and visualized the songs of BTS. The final point which clarifies the identity of the author (even without providing one specific name) is the transmedial nature of the band's body of work; Taking into account that all music videos, alongside with the extra material produced under the brand name BTS (meaning,

Webtoon, and mobile games) are interconnected, and they all share one and the same invariant theme, as this research is aiming to prove, then all texts can be united under the same poetic world, belonging to one author.

Since already with their first steps in K-Pop industry, the band BTS, back-then unknown to the world, and the small, incalculable company Big Hit Entertainment, started building this PW with the ambition to spread their messages to the world, and given the participation and involvement of all the people who contributed in the implementation of this goal, not only on practical and technical level, but also by impacting the final result with their artistic signature, then it might well be argued that the author of this poetic world is the whole team of Big Hit Entertainment, BTS the band, and all the external collaborators.

The justification for the selection of PE as the main theoretical framework of the analysis, instead of, for example, poetics of cinema is one more topic to be addressed.

Notwithstanding some barriers, such as the aforementioned issue of authorship, that has been resolute, PE provide the necessary metalanguage that enables a thorough analysis of the object of this study, although it was initially designed to be applied to literary texts. By the same token, poetics of cinema is not specifically designed for the analysis of music videos, even though the final products bare more similarities. Having said that, the aim of the following analysis is to study the construction of the poetic world of BTS, thus PE proposes a more concrete and fitting theoretical framework. Additionally, as already stated in the chapter “Towards the Poetics of Expressiveness”, core elements of the PE, emerged from the study of Eisenstein, a world-known filmmaker; thus it can be said that PE is an implicitly transmedial method. Finally, the study of meaning and meaning-making mechanisms is essentially the object of semiotics; perhaps poetics of cinema would offer an easier approach towards surface elements that concern the tools associated with the medium, however, the deep structure and how the messages are constructed and communicated, undoubtedly requires a semiotic methodology.

Finally, it should be stated that this study concerns the structure and the way of how meaning is created, instead of assigning meaning to different elements. Of course, as stated, reader’s involvement plays a significant role in the communication channel; by its nature, text is a message expressed by the addresser with the intent to rich the addressee, who is the person that eventually decides the meaning of the text (yet, this does not imply

that any meaning assigned is justified and correct). There cannot be a complete elimination of the semantics of different elements; nonetheless, the aim of this research is not to decode the symbolic character of images and justify their interpretation, but to analyze their role as mechanisms of expressing the main message of the author. Accordingly, the last chapter that argues whether the emergence of a narrative is affecting the interpretation of individual pieces by the audience, is equally not in essence a study of what separate components of texts (that is, specific objects functioning as motifs) might mean. The phenomenon to be examined is how a specific structure that positions texts in a specific hierarchical order, might affect the process of interpretation of each text, reveal the hidden links between them, re-introduce them as one text, and ultimately impact the derivation of local and invariant themes. In other words, the emphasis is on the principles of making meaning, a descriptive analysis of function.

2. ANALYSIS OF MUSIC VIDEOS

In the analysis of this chapter the object of study as already mentioned is the totality of BTS music videos, with special focus on the visual modality (meaning that there will be no examination of the music or lyrics). To facilitate this endeavor however, the music videos are going to be grouped, based on the respective albums to which their track belongs. The music videos have been examined individually, but are going to be presented as a set of texts for efficiency (there are more than 100 individual videos); however the most characteristic and inclusive samples of each era, are going to be discussed in further detail.

In the discography of the band there are albums with a similar or identical title, which can be considered as trilogies. In these albums, as expected, there are the same local themes, something that is going to be investigated and highlighted in the following analysis. The ultimate goal, however, is to showcase the integral theme ($\theta_{int}(T) = \theta_{inv}(T) + \theta_{loc}(T)$) that pervades all the music videos. What was mentioned in the previous chapter as the main story line, concerns the collection of materials under the name “BTS Universe”, which by many fans is considered the entire fictional universe. Additionally, there is a list of content certified by Big Hit Entertainment as part of this franchise³. In the following analysis, this perception will be challenged, as through the application of PE, it appears that the integral theme of the oeuvre, along with invariant themes (θ_{inv}) and invariant motifs (M_{inv}) is emerging from the very beginning of the bands productions, with their debut in 2013, and it is still included in their work even in the present time, thus the BU is much bigger than the content included in the “BTS Universe” franchise (BUf).

Additionally, it should be noted that from the researcher’s point of view the data from the materials which are going to be analyzed in the subsequent chapters are already known, so they are taken into account in the analysis of the present chapter as well, indicated as extra-textual information. The emergence of local and invariant themes is not to be affected by this inclusion. The decision for this approach was made after taking into consideration the

³ <http://bucontentgui.de/#list-of-bu-content>

convenience of the reader who might not be familiar with the band and the totality of their work, which would cause trouble in following the analysis and general research.

2.1. THE MEMBERS

Before starting off the analysis of music videos and applying the theory of PE in order to discover the author's PW (as defined in the previous chapter), it is important to introduce again, in a more detailed way, the members of BTS. Their presence in the materials under analysis is the link, and a referencing point between all individual texts. As Zholkovsky and Shcheglov pointed out, "at the intersection of plot points are the characters, thus appearing as "bundles" of function" (Zholkovsky & Shcheglov 1967: 75-76). Hence, the characters of the PW of BTS, that is, the personas developed by artists, should be recognized as motif, as well as a point of intersection.

BTS, which debuted in 2013, consists of seven members, each one of them having one or more specific positions inside the group. An initial separation of the members could be made based on their year of birth, thus ending up with the hyung line, and maknae line; 'hyung' in Korean is a honorific, which literally means 'big brother', addressed by a male to a senior one, with whom they are close friends or relatives. The latter word, 'maknae' is a specific K-Pop term, referring to the youngest member of a band (Mackenzie 2019: 15; Besley 2018:217).

Hence based on this division there are four artists in hyung line, the older members:

- Kim Namjoon; his stage name is Rap Monster (RM) and his roles are leader of the group, and main rapper (Mackenzie 2019: 10).
- Kim Seokjin; his stage name is Jin, and his roles are vocalist and visual (Mackenzie 2019: 10). Visual is a position within the group assigned to the person who is considered to be the most fitting based on Korean standards of beauty (Mackenzie 2019: 7; Besley 2018: 217).
- Min Yoongi; his stage name is Suga, and his role in the group is the lead rapper (Mackenzie 2019: 10).

- Jung Hoseok; his stage name is J-hope and his roles in the band are main dancer, rapper, and sub vocalist (Mackenzie 2019: 10).

Correspondingly, in maknae line, there are the youngest members of the group, who are:

- Park Jimin; his stage name is Jimin, and he has the roles of main dancer, and lead vocalist in the band (Mackenzie 2019: 10).
- Kim Taehyung; his stage name is V and he is also a lead dancer and vocalist in the group (Mackenzie 2019: 10).
- Jeon Jungkook; his stage name is Jungkook and he is called “The Golden Maknae”, because even though he is the youngest member of the group, he is considered the most talented, proving his skills in many different fields (Mackenzie 2019: 17).

2.2. THE EMERGENCE OF INVARIANT & LOCAL THEMES

2.2.1. THE SCHOOL TRILOGY

In BTS discography the school trilogy starts with the release of the band’s first single album titled *2 COOL 4 SKOOL (Too Cool for School)* in 2013, followed by the EP (Extended Play)⁴ titled *O!RUL8,2? (Oh! Are You Late Too?)* on the same year, and finally their second EP, *SKOOL LUV AFFAIR (School Love Affair)*, in 2014. Out of them, five songs were accompanied by a music video (overall 12 videos)⁵, which along with the band’s debut trailer (2013), “O!RUL8,2?” comeback trailer (BHE 2013) and “Skool Luv Affair” comeback trailer (BHE 2014a) have been examined for the purpose of the analysis.

This trilogy, as seen from the titles, has the local theme of school; however, the school as *θloc* is subsumed in the more general invariant theme of BTS body of work that is the struggles of youth in today’s society. Education is one of the problematic aspects of

⁴ Further information on what is EP as a key concept of music industry and production see: Shuker 2005: 243-245

⁵ The songs: “No More Dream”, “Boy in Luv” and “Just one day” had respectively 3, 3, and 4 different music videos.

contemporary world that is evident in Korean society, where educational system is less concerned with learning and the transmission of knowledge, but it turns the focus on the social acquaintances and the creation of a status which will lead to social and class development (Sharif 2018; Sung et al. 2018; Pastreich 2019). At the same time the poverty of the lower classes is a huge obstacle in the education system, as many families, due to income, do not even have the opportunity for equal education (with all that entails) (ibid.). This leads to the perpetuation of the class gap.

In 2013, Big Hit Entertainment was still a small company, completely unaccountable in the market. The Korean music industry, from the beginning of the K-Pop, was dominated by the 'Big Three' record labels (SM Entertainment, JYP Entertainment, YG Entertainment) (Doré & Pugsley 2019, Kallen 2014). Thus, on the one hand, Big Hit Entertainment, was not part of the system, so there was no fear or rupture of interest to oppose it; on the other hand, due to their class and social position, the members of the company and the group were familiar with these social issues which they decided to raise and communicate through their music. They were representing the underdogs.

The invariant themes (θ_{inv}) which predominates BTS oeuvre, are the struggles of young people in society, the clash between old and new generations (adults seem to take always the role of the villain), and the unfairness of the world. Among the texts of the school trilogy the θ_{loc} (school) belongs to Class I, that is, themes referring to messages about life (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 27). The social issue regarding the education and the life of students compose the deep design (DD) of the school trilogy and it is evident in all the music videos (texts). The role of DD, as defined already in the previous chapters of PE theory, is to "mediate between the poles of θ_{loc} , merge θ_{loc} with θ_{inv} , and choose a certain "twist" of θ_{inv} " (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 268).

In deep structure (DS), and more specifically the code sphere, the technique of *playing another's role* is implemented (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 275); in the videos "No More Dream" (Hong 2013a, 2013b; Choi 2014a), "N.O" (Hong 2013c), "Boy in Luv" (Choi 2014b; Choi & Ko 2014a, 2014b), and "O!RUL8,2?" comeback trailer (BHE 2013), the band members who are students, are presented almost as outlaws, gang members, and marginalized group of people. As a matter of fact, at the end of the music video "No More Dream" (Hong 2013a), a police helicopter is hovering over the band members and their

friends, in an encounter before the battle scene. Additionally, at the beginning of the same music video, the artists are presented to the audience with individual shots, close-up frames turning into black and white, in similar way with the introductory scenes of criminals in action or detective movies. In the comeback trailer “O!RUL8,2?”, there is a dance battle between the band members and police officers circling them (CONCR). Thus, the BTS members, as students who fight an unjust system and struggle to maintain their dreams and hopes for the future, are presented in a way that society perceives them, and the ideas it imposes on them.

In surface structure, the various elements such as the school bus appearing in “No More Dream” (Hong 2013a, 2013b), the classrooms, boards and desks (Hong 2013a, 2013b, 2013c; Choi 2014a, 2014b; Choi & Ko 2014a, 2014b) are concretizing (CONCR) the band members as students. On the contrary, the clothing, either involving hip-hop influenced outfits with eccentric accessories, or twisted versions of school uniforms, are concretizing via COMB and CONTR the members as rebellious students. The choreography in combination with kinesiology and gestures are highlighting further the rebellious attitude via AUGM and CONTR, and intensifying the gap between the two poles: police versus rebellion, school versus students, and so on.

In the music video “We Are Bulletproof PT2” (Hong 2013d), the four levels of text are slightly different. Focusing solely on the visual modality, the music video includes significantly less features to analyze, but there are a few linking elements with the other videos of the trilogy, managing to maintain coherence. In DS, this music video is a *different point of view* (COMB+CONTR) (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 273), where the members are not portrayed as anti-heroes, but via AUGM they are getting under the spotlight, without any background or supporting characters around them to draw the attention of the viewer. By *metaphorical concretization* (CONCRmetaph) (ibid, 52) the check floor is recognized as a chess surface and the band members with their free movement on this surface state that they are not going to be pawns of the system. This is more like their visual manifesto of their opposition. Additionally, in SS, the linking elements are various accessories spotted in the previously mentioned video clips, and choreography movements.

In the music video “Just One Day” (Lumpens 2014a-d), the DS introduces a third point of view (COMB+CONTR). Here the other side of school life is being concretized via COMB. Duality is inherent in all aspects of life, thus school is not only the facet of a broken system, it is also a place where one makes friends, creates memories, and feels the first heartbeats; or at least it should be. In the SS, the status of band members is once again specified through school uniforms (CONCR), and their appearance this time is the one of a proper student. The kinesiology of band members is calm, and their attitude is smiley, playful and has a sense of romanticism and innocence contrasting the rest of the music videos of the trilogy. Interestingly, in the music video “Boy In Luv” (Choi & Ko 2014a) where the title refers to (school) romance, the DS of the video belongs to the point of view in which students opposed to the educational system and its practices, are being portrayed as hooligans, they vandalize school properties, and they are showing an extreme behavior; more specifically, during the encounter with a female student both characters, Suga and Jin, are being violent towards her, emphasizing even more the character of the “bad boy” (AUGM).

Finally, it is important to point out that in the video “Just One Day” (Lumpens 2014a) there is the first appearance of two Minv of BTS PW; the butterfly and the floating lotus blossom petals. At 01:07 minute of the video, a shadow of a non-existing butterfly, escaped from the hand of Jungkook’s shadow; additionally at 03:00 minute of the video, the shadow of Jin is seen blowing away some lotus blossom petals from his hand, which start flying away from him. Both elements are part of dictionary of reality, and they are present not only in music videos but also extra materials (Webtoon *Save me*).

The butterfly in BTS PW has multiple meanings; firstly “because of its light, airy flight, and its dramatic life cycle, the butterfly is nearly universally a symbol of the human SOUL and of immortality” (Werness 1999: 63). Secondly because of its insect life cycle, butterfly also symbolizes metamorphosis, and the different stages of a person’s journey in life. Finally, butterfly is also associated with chaos theory (the butterfly effect), utilized in pop culture in story plots that break the linearity of time; characters travel to the past, make changes and eventually alter their present and future (e.g. the movie *The Butterfly Effect* (Bress & Gruber 2004), the video game “Life is Strange” (Dontnod Entertainment & Deck Nine 2015)). In BTS PW and the transmedial universe, traveling back in time, as

well as the existence of parallel realities are part of the plots unraveling in the following videos and extra materials. The featuring of the butterfly is a PRESG and a symbolic embodiment of all three (soul, metamorphosis, going back in time); however in connection to the θ loc of school trilogy, the meaning evoked is the one of metamorphosis; growing up, facing the world and turning from a school kid to a rebellious figure that fights the system and any injustice.

Moreover, the flower petals, whose shadow appears in 03:00 minute of the video, and is a Minv of BTS PW, contrary to popular belief and most fans' interpretation, are lotus blossom petals (and not rose petals). Lotus was considered "sacred by the ancients in the Near and Far East, since the beginning of religious beliefs, [and] it has an uninterrupted symbolic history of over 5000 years" (E. Lehner & J. Lehner 1960: 34). It is a symbol of "immortality and eternal youth [and] it was also the symbol of resurrection" (ibid, 35). In this video clip, since the petals are shown as a shadow, viewer cannot differentiate the flower, however, as a Minv which appears in other music videos and extra material it is recognized as such. It is also important to note and highlight that the band member who is blowing the petals away is Jin, the protagonist of the plot which is expanded through the extra materials (the Webtoon *Save Me* and the mobile game "BTS Universe Story"). Jin is going back in time, trying to save the lives of his close ones; every time he is not succeeding, he is waking up again always at a specific day, and start the whole process from scratch. "[L]otus flower closed its petals at night, sinking to the bottom, only to rise above the surface of the water and to open again in the morning" (ibid. 35-37).

Additionally, in connection to θ loc, when Jin is blowing away the petals is a *metaphorical concretization* of wasting (blowing away) their best years (youth), in the unfair and hostile environment of school.

The appearance of the butterfly's shadow flying away from Jungkook's hand in this music video, an element that appears to be out of context in this particular clip, along with the floating lotus blossom petals, indicate that the PW which is being reconstructed in this analysis, and the idea behind BU, started indeed with the debut of the band.

2.2.2 DARK AND WILD

Dark and Wild is the first studio album of BTS, released in 2014. Out of the fourteen songs, two of them were accompanied by a music video, and one of them, the intro song of the album became a comeback trailer video, promoting the release of *Dark and Wild*. The song “Danger” has one official music video (Choi 2014c), a Japanese version⁶ (Ko 2014), and the music video of the song’s Mo-Blue-Mix featuring Thanh Bui (Pdogg 2014). The latter, is not part of the analysis and it does not contain any remarkable features; however the two remaining videos contribute significantly to the PW.

The two different versions of the song “Danger” (Choi 2014c; Ko 2014), and the video clip of the song “War of Hormones” (Hong 2014), which is the second track of the album that was visualized, form a thematic bridge, and a transitional stage between the aforementioned school trilogy, and the upcoming one titled *The Most Beautiful Moment in Life*. At the same time, the comeback trailer of the intro song “What I am to you?” (BHE 2014b) offers the viewer a visualized foreshadowing for what is to follow in the coming years inside the BU. The θ loc is transformation and it is a class I theme; the DD of this set of texts is facing the “real” world for the first time and try to adjust to it. It is the moment when band members are no longer school kids, but young adults; the contact with the world outside of school, seems even worse than any problems the educational system entails.

The music video “Danger” (Choi 2014c) starts with some individual shots of band members (AUGM), in an obviously negative mood, which is being manifested through different emotions (DIV) such as anger, despair, frustration, and inertia. The importance of this introduction is great, since it marks the beginning of the creation of *the poetic world of characters* (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 8) which deals with the invariant structure of the character-building. Thus, the shots at the beginning of “Danger” offer the first glimpse in the PWchar (PREP). Towards the end of the video, the character of V is shown to cut his hair, in a scene that foreshadows the transformation of his character (PREP), and while

⁶ After the success in Japanese market, the band started to record alternative versions of their songs, with Japanese lyrics and to produce new music videos that might be similar to the original, or completely different. In 2014, BTS released their first single in Japanese, titled *No More Dream*, including 3 translated songs of their existing discography; the first ‘Japanese version’ music video is “No More Dream” (Choi 2014).

band member behave in an increasingly violent manner throughout the duration of the song, Jin's character is the only one that doesn't (CONTR + PRESG).

Simultaneously, the Japanese version of the song (Ko 2014), bring under the spotlight V's character (AUGM + PRESG). He is seemingly the only member that does not have fun during the party the group attends; he is walking outside in an attempt to recollect his thoughts and feelings and then re-joins the group at the end of the video and seems to have fun with everyone else (PRESG). In SS there is also an element of foreshadowing: V's character is wearing the same clothes he will be wearing in later music videos, where his character attacks and kills his father (PRESG+REP). The repetition in SS, along with the first insight of PWchar in these two music videos is another argument in the controversy over the moment the BU was created.

"War of Hormones" (Hong 2014) in DS is utilizing again the combination of different points of view (COMB+CONTR). Here the band members seem to enjoy the beginning of a new life, where they are free to wonder around city, soften down their rebellious behavior and edgy attitude, and flirt with girls. It is what they might have hoped that life after school would be. In SS the colors of the video, in combination with the emphasis on choreography and kinesiology, communicate the opposite message from the one of life struggles that the viewer receives from the aforementioned videos, enhancing the element of duality. On a final note, V's leather jacket has written on the words: "moments like this never last", hinting the future of the band.

Finally, the comeback trailer of BTS album *Dark and Wild*, consists of a long zoom shot through many different invariant motifs of BTS PW. The initial blossoming garden at the beginning of the video, representing childhood (CONCR through the toy horses), is being replaced by an almost post-apocalyptic, dystopian environment, with naked trees, and broken TVs flashing the words 'hate', 'anger', 'love' (VAR). This visual metaphor highlights the emotional confusion a person is going through while struggling within an unfair and unjust world, losing hope, and eventually losing himself (a part of next trilogy's θ loc).

A new addition to the DR and the category of flowers is the red rose, which also holds a specific meaning. "Every mythological belief assigned the rose as the symbolic emblem of

beauty, youth and love” (E. Lehner & J. Lehner 1960: 78), however in BTS PW the aforementioned love does not mean a romantic feeling, or any kind of love towards another person, but first and foremost the love towards thyself (which is exactly the θ loc of their third trilogy). The red roses appear around the word ‘understand’, thus via CONCD the final message of the two elements is the necessity of understanding the importance of love (mainly love and accept yourself) as a coping and balancing mechanism in the battle against all the negative aspects of life.

Additional elements of the comeback trailer are glass shutters, which is one of the Minv of Jin’s PWchar and iron chains, that is a Minv of RM’s PWchar (REP).

2.2.3. FOR YOU

“For You” (Hong 2015) is a music video whose track belongs to the fourth Japanese single by BTS. The θ loc of the video is the adjusting to the new reality, the class of the theme is I, and the DD is the depiction of the first hints of the cruel world, as the band members are shown to work in their part-time jobs, getting tired, slightly mistreated, but maintain their smile in the end, and find the willingness and time to gather up and spend some time together.

This music video is a much softer version of all the dark social issues addressed in the following chapters.

2.2.4. BTS UNIVERSE FRANCHISE

This is the most studied era of the band. BTS Universe, according to the analysis of the contents via the theory of PE, it includes music videos, come back trailers and short films from:

- *The Most Beautiful Moment in Life Trilogy*

The second trilogy of BTS, includes the EP *The Most Beautiful Moment in Life PT.1*, the bands fourth EP titled *The Most Beautiful Moment in Life PT.2*, and the studio album *The Most Beautiful Moment in Life: Young Forever*. From these seven songs were visualized

(total number of videos 11)⁷; additionally in the same trilogy belong two comeback trailers, “The Most Beautiful Moment in Life” and “Never Mind”, as well as one on stage prologue, “The Most Beautiful Moment in Life”.

- *Wings*

Wings is the second studio album of BTS in Korean (forth in total), from which the song “Blood Sweat and Tear” was visualized, with two different clips; the original version music video (Lumpens 2016), and the Japanese version video (Choi 2017). In the same album belongs a comeback trailer accompanying the intro song “Boy Meets Evil”, and seven short films. Finally, the trailer video “BTS Live Trilogy Episode III: The Wings tour” (BHE 2016) was also examined.

- *You Never Walk Alone*

This album is a repackage of the studio album *Wings*, including only three new songs; from these, two were visualized: “Spring Day” (Lumpens 2017) and “Not Today” (Kim 2017a,b)

- *Love Yourself Trilogy*

The third trilogy of BTS includes the band’s fifth EP *Love Yourself: Her*, the third studio album in Korean (sixth overall) *Love Yourself: Tear*, and the compilation album *Love Yourself: Answer*. Six songs from these albums got their own music videos (total amount of videos (11 videos in total)⁸

- *Film Out*

It is the latest digital single by BTS, released on April of 2021. The song is accompanied by the same-titled music video (Choi 2021)

More specifically, the included videos from the aforementioned albums are: the comeback trailers “The Most Beautiful Moments in Life PT.1” (BHE 2015a) , “Never Mind” (BHE 2015b), and “Epiphany” (Choi 2018d), the on stage prologue “The Most Beautiful

⁷ The songs “I Need U”, “Run”, and “Fire” have 3, 2, and 2 videos respectively.

⁸ The songs “Mic Drop”, “Fake Love” and “Idol” have 3, 2, and 2 videos respectively; also the official teaser of “Fake Love”

Moments in Life” (BHE 2015c), the four short films “Love Yourself Highlight Reel” (Choi 2017a-d), and the music videos “I Need U” (Choi 2015; Lumpens 2015; Ko 2015), “Run” (Choi & Ko 2015; Lumpens 2015), Butterfly (SBS 2015), “Epilogue: Young Forever” (Kim 2016b), “Spring Day” (Lumpens 2017), “Euphoria” (Choi 2018c) and “Film Out” (Choi 2021).

The θ loc of this set of texts is the problematic behaviors in society and the theme belongs once again to class I. The DD is how an unfair and unjust world is absorbing the individuals into a dark void; these are the same people that tried to resist and fight the system, however, defeated now they are losing themselves and get wrapped up in it.

The DS includes the genre of plot, a concrete story that unravels through the music videos (and is expanded in the Webtoon *Save Me*, as well as mobile game “BTS Universe Story”). The story makes the characters of BU the protagonists of extreme examples of social problems, which via hyperbole combined with pure fiction (i.e. travelling back in time), highlight the issues occurring in Korean society and the rest of the world. Band members’ characters are dealing with depression, bullying & harassment (Kim et al. 2004; Bax 2017), drug and alcohol abuse (Cho 2016, Lee 2019; Kim & Oh 2020; OECD 2020: 66-103), and suicide (OECD 2011; Singh 2017; Liu 2020) in a story that aims to work as a parable, with many metaphorical elements. The character of Jin acquires the ability to turn back in time, and take on the responsibility of saving all his friends. Finally, the subtheme of spiritual death is expressed in the story as actual physical death (CONCRmetaphor).

An interesting principle implemented in the DS of this set of texts is the one of *twin characters* (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 149). The plot is following the “five acts of the drama” (ibid, 175) that develops as Peaceful life > Catastrophe > Inadequate Activity > Rescue Action > Peace Regained (ibid.). This plot construct is expressed via recoil (REC) and the role of the Anti-hero, stopping the hero (Jin) from achieving the ultimate goal is V. His character is presented as the rival of Jin (CONTR), and he is the embodiment of the obstacles in life, dragging the person behind and becoming absorbed in darkness (CONCRmetaph). Additionally, another principle used is the one of *mirror scenes* (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 149); that way through repetition, contrast and variation the theme of traveling back in time is being concretized. By the same token, in SS, the repetition and variation of actions, clothes, and gestures are aiding at the concretization. A

common element in music videos to show that the character is reliving the same day is the pile of clothes (CONCRmetaph) (e.g. “Spring Day” (Lumpens 2017) and “Love Yourself Highlight Reel (Choi 2017d). Additionally, the video clip “Film Out” (Choi 2021) is rich on objects that concretize the theme such as the depiction of clocks and hourglasses as time measurement tools, shown stuck or moving backwards, referring to the interruption of linearity of time; or the multiple doors standing on floating above the sky, representing the various parallel realities and the different loops (ibid.)

In this set of texts, there is a plethora of motifs, as well as PWchar motifs which increase the DR. The appearance of the butterfly as an intertextual reference to the traveling in time is one of the most prominent ones, along with the presence of various flowers. Two important additions to the DR and the category of flowers are the white lilies (ready-made object) and the Smeraldo flower (composite construction). White lilies are a symbol of purity, innocence and resurrection (E. Lehner & J. Lehner 1960: 34), while Smeraldo is a fictional flower, created specifically for the BU, and it is symbolizing “the untold truth” (Martinez 2019). Communicating messages via flowers, and concretizing themes through their symbolic meaning is one constant technique of BTS PW. Additionally the collection of motifs associated with each member’s PWchar has been expanded. Suga’s motifs revolve around the element of fire, while Jimin’s around water (again, the principle of twin characters but not as prominent as the contrast of Jin and V).

On a final note, the music video “Fire” (Lumpens 2016b), whose song is included in the studio album *The Most Beautiful Moment in Life: Young Forever*, is acting like an analogy of irregularity of rhyming. Seeming out of context compared to the rest of the videos, its introductory shot with Suga’s character shaking the hand a faceless figure dressed in black and magically set him on fire, functions as a PRESG for what is to come. The DS of the music video is once again based on the different point of view, that is, how things should be in the life of the youth; partying and playing with friends, dancing carefree. The message is that the rage and anger of youth should be channeled in the right direction, and the fire inside them should not burn them, but set their fears and problems on fire. (Throughout the video the word ‘YOUTH’ is formed on a fence that after the climax of the song is shown on fire).

2.2.4.1. WINGS

According to the analysis of the music videos, it results that the visualized songs from the studio album *Wings* should be treated separately from the set of texts under the umbrella of “BTS Universe” franchise. The seven short films for the songs “Begin”, “Lie”, “Stigma”, “First Love”, “Reflection”, “Mama” and “Awake, directed by Choi YongSeok in 2016, as well as the comeback trailer “Boy Meets Evil” (Choi 2016) and the “2017 BTS Live Trilogy Episode III. The Wings Tour” trailer (BHE 2016), are a thematic bridge and a pivotal moment of the PW.

The theme’s class is III, which is intertextual reference, with all the videos alluding to *Demian* by Herman Hesse (1923[1919]). The DD is refers to how this constant battle with the unjust world, not only can lead the individual tired enough to find escape in the harmful activities mentioned in the previous chapter, but make him lose himself and be absorbed by the darkness. This is the reason the novel of Hesse was used as an intertextual reference, since it talks about the path of Emil Sinclair to maturity, and how tempted by Demian he started questioning his values to the extend he lost the ability to differentiate between good and evil, moral and immoral. Similarly, the characters of BU, want to fight against a society full of problems, and their rage as young people facing those issues, sometimes leads to wrong paths.

The θ loc is becoming absorbed in darkness and caving to temptation, and the videos of *Wings* are putting forward the psychological world of the characters, augmenting their fears and painful memories, as well as the prevalence of darkness over the character of V, giving an explanation, why his role works as the embodiment of obstacles in the path towards peace. In DS, the atemporal and abstract locations are concretizing the theme (via AUGM and RED), and the viewer is observing the mental words of characters expressed via RED. In SS, there are plenty of motifs working are intertextual references to *Demian*, and the concept of immortality, with many religious symbolisms. The appearance of the apple, the forbidden fruit, symbolizing sin and temptation, as well as the black wings growing out of V’s back, representing the fallen angel, are concretizations of the theme.

2.2.4.2. *Love Yourself Highlight Reel & Fake Love*

The short movies, *Love Yourself Highlight Reel* (Choi 2017a-d), are tightly connected to the short video teaser of the music video “Fake Love” (BHE 2018); the short movies provide a different realm, where the rules of this fictional world exist, and Jin still holds the power of going back in time. Every member interacts with a girl, a potential romantic interest, and there are specific items representing each relationship.

All the items are shown in the trailer of the music video “Fake Love” (BHE 2018). The trailer starts with a text saying “‘*Magic Shop*’ is a psychodramatic technique that exchanges fear for a positive attitude”. Chimera and Baim (2001:1) have defined psychodrama as a form of group psychotherapy:

Psychodrama is a holistic, strengths-based method of psychotherapy in which people are helped to enact and explore situations from their own life - past, present and future. The scenes enacted may be based on specific events in a person’s life, their current or past relationships, unresolved situations, desired roles or inner thoughts and conflicts. The method is typically used in group settings, with group members taking on the various roles in the drama as needed. Witnessing and participating in each others’ personal stories can generate feelings of deep understanding and trust amongst group members.(Chimera & Baim 2010:1)

In the trailer the members are shown to exchange items representing their fears and painful memories from the *Wings* short films (Choi 2016a-g) and some items appearing in *Love Yourself Highlight Reel* (Choi 2017a-d) in flashback shots (i.e. the Sneakers bar, from J-hope’s backstory). All representing items are part of PWchars’ DR and they function as motifs concretizing the theme of the set of texts in *Love Yourself Highlight Reel* (Choi 2017a-d) and “Fake Love” (Choi 2018e-f), while the trailer (BHE 2018) functions as a thematic bridge.

The plot of *Love Yourself Highlight Reel* (Choi 2017a-d), results in the realization that even in this realm of reality, where the characters decided to separately search for their peace, focusing on positive things like love, instead of fighting the rigged system and unfair world of the adults, they still fail to achieve happiness. The death of characters, concretized by the pile of clothes in Jin’s chair (CONCRmetaph), is once again symbolizing spiritual death. In continuation, the video “Fake Love” (Choi 2018e-f), is an

AUGM of their psyche, in a similar DS as the set of texts from *Wings*, a mental representation via RED.

The θ loc is the pain from love and the fruitless struggle to be happy with someone, if you have not achieved happiness and peace within you. The DD is highlighting the interpersonal relationships as another problem of the social being, and another issue the young people are facing, trying to balance their inner struggles, find their place in the world, and become part of a relationship. The class of this theme is a combination of I and III, since it evolves around life issues, however, the reference to psychoanalytics is obvious (psychodrama as a method developed by Jacob Levy Moreno (Chimera & Baim 2010))

On a final observation, the reference to psychodrama has a dual significance. Firstly, it is shedding some light on the logic behind the characters are put through this test, and they are reliving different loops, until they understand their mistakes and achieve peace. Secondly, the psychodrama has an effect on the audience as well; thus the reference of this method of group psychotherapy is concretizing the moral of all the stories included in the BU, and the messages the creators want to communicate, helping the viewer reach some short of catharsis. This remark contributes to the better understanding of BTS PW.

2.2.5. MAP OF THE SOUL

This set of texts includes the duology *Map of the Soul*, consisting from the EP *Map of the Soul: Persona* and the fourth studio album of BTS, *Map of the Soul: 7*. From these, four songs were visualized, and three more were released as comeback trailers. The song's "Boy with Luv" (Choi 2019a,b) "ON" (Choi 2020a,b), and "Make it Right" (Guzza 2019a,b) are going to be excluded and analyzed afterwards, as part of a different set of texts.

The θ loc of the videos included is the discovering of thyself and understanding of the inherent dark side, while the class is a mixture of I and III, since the theme is heavily influenced by the psychoanalytics of Carl Jung (Persona, Ego, Shadow), as well it includes an intertextual reference to the movie *Black Swan* (Aronofsky 2011). The DD, is the

realization that only by making peace with thyself, one can be prepared to fight for any cause, without losing himself in the process, and only by that way happiness can be achieved. The DS of the music videos included is PREP of the “path” towards peace and happiness, and it is expressed in a symbolic way, portraying an insight of characters’ journey towards realization of who they are (mental representation via RED).

In SS the the concretization of the theme is happening via REP and CONTR, with flashbacks of previous music videos (previous stages in character’s life), as in the comeback trailer “Ego” (Ko 2020), or the appearance of previous motifs, as the black wings growing out of Jimins back in “Black Swan” (Choi 2020c). Here the wings are not combined with sinister looks, and they don’t seem to grow out the character’s skin making him bleed. Thus the unfolding of wings in “Black Swan” (Choi 2020c) represents the embrace and understanding of the inherent dark side, as well as the control over it. Additionally, via AUGM, the concept of persona is being CONCR. Finally there is the REP of the faceless figures in black in the comeback trailer “Interlude: Shadow” (Kim 2020), an element that worked as a PRESG in “Fire” (Lumpens 2016b), that are functioning as a CONCRmetaph of the shadow, the evil side of self, along with the fears and the pain.

2.2.6. MESSAGE OF EMPOWERMENT

The music video under this set, might originate from different albums, however, they share the same θ loc. In a continuation of the rebellious spirit shown to the beginning of their body of work, BTS are shown to step away from the dark-themed franchise, and present some videos that will empower the viewers (“Not Today” (Kim 2017a), “MIC Drop (Kim 2017c-e)” and “ON” (Choi 2020a,b))and thank them for being part of their journey (“Boy with Luv (Choi 2019a,b)” and “Make it right (Guzza 2019a,b’’)).

More specifically, the θ loc of the videos “Not Today” (Kim 2017a), “MIC Drop (Kim 2017c-e)” and “ON” (Choi 2020a,b) is the empowerment to keep fighting, and the reminder that no one is alone, it is a class I theme and its DD is that no matter the difficulties we face we can break the system and rise, and BTS are posing here out of

character to stand as the example. The DS is concretized via REP and CONTR. In the SS, the theme is concretized via AUGM, while in the music video “ON” (Choi 2020a), there is an interesting CONCRmetaph, when Jungkook is diving his tied hands inside the river, and at the climax of the song he is pulling them out, but now they are free and he is holding a shell, meaning, the yabs of war will be heard, and the fight is ON.

The θ loc of the other videos is a ‘thank you’ towards the fans, the people who stood behind the band and helped them towards success. The DD is that the world is still cruel, but we should have each other. The DS is simple and it is based on REP of older moments, while the SS is including intertextuality with appearances of objects and motifs from previous videos.

2.3. OVERVIEW

The poetic world of BTS consists of a variety of θ locs, addressing different social aspects and trying to communicate messages of empowerment to their audience. There is a specific DR with special focus on the use of flowers as symbolic entities, and with the highlight of the fictional flower Smeraldo, unique to this PW. The most used ED is the ones of contrast, and in DS there was observed the intense use of different points of view, as well as the depiction of mental path through reduction. The θ inv that result from the analysis are: the struggles of young adults while trying to adjust in a world full of problems, unfairness and cruelty; the fear of being absorbed in the darkness and the importance of understanding thyself as the only way towards happiness. The θ int of the PW, combining all the different local themes and invariant themes, is coming of age; an umbrella that entails all the hard and beautiful moments, every failure and every struggle, every fear and every hope that the dreams will come true and the world will be a better place for all.

According to the above analysis, it became clear that the borders of BTS Universe franchise, do not depict the real dimensions of what is named in the present research BTS Universe (or BU). The coherence in the messages communicated the meticulous additions of intertextual elements, the invariance of the themes, and the presented journey to

spiritual development, result in a much more expanded sphere and revealed a very rich and worthy ground for analysis.

3. TRANSLATION

3.1. TEXT IN INTERSEMIOTIC SPACE

As stated in the first chapter, ‘text’ is considered as something that can be examined and analyzed, assuming its message has been coded a minimum of twice (Lotman 1988 [1981]: 53), and which is interpreted by the addressee based on socio-cultural conventions (Eco 1979: 5). However, text can also be considered as a space where material and structure of the text are being located, and the language (or languages) of the text exist (Torop 2004: 59). Finally, text, at the same time, is part of an ‘intersemiotic space’, not in a static form, but almost as a living organism, as a process (Torop 2004: 62). Juri Lotman, in his work *Universe of the Mind* (1990) also described an abstract space, called ‘semiosphere’, which is simultaneously the byproduct of culture, but also the pre-requirement for any culture to function;

[T]he entire space of the semiosphere is transected by boundaries of different levels, boundaries of different languages and even of texts, and the internal space of each of these sub-semiospheres has its own semiotic “I” which is realized as the relationship of any language, group of texts, separate text to a metastructural space which describes them, always bearing in mind that languages and texts are hierarchically disposed on different levels. (Lotman 1990: 138)

Recognizing the multiple roles of text offers the opportunity of different ways of analysis. According to Torop there can be two types of analysis; the first one refers to the unit of text, and deals with its structure, while the second one is about the text inside the intersemiotic space and examines the text’s transformability (Torop 2013:243).

Beginning with the establishment of a proto-text, the analyst can look further into its transformation in different ‘meta-texts’ in the intersemiotic space. In 1975, Anton Popovič

in his work *Teória Umeleckého Prekladu [Theory of Artistic Translation]* provided the term *proto-text* as an alternative of *source text*, and accordingly, *meta-text* that can be used instead of *target text*. The first part of the term, prefix *proto-*, comes from Greek ‘πρώτος’, which means ‘first’, assigning to the entity spatial, as well, as temporal priority. Proto-text is defined as a foundation with “deep structural properties, that are invariant”, upon which secondary texts can be shaped “intertextually” (Popovič 1975: 286). Thus, if someone was to visualize the intersemiotic space where this proto-text is located, then it would acquire a central position, while all the secondary texts deriving from it would orbit around it, forming concentric circles.

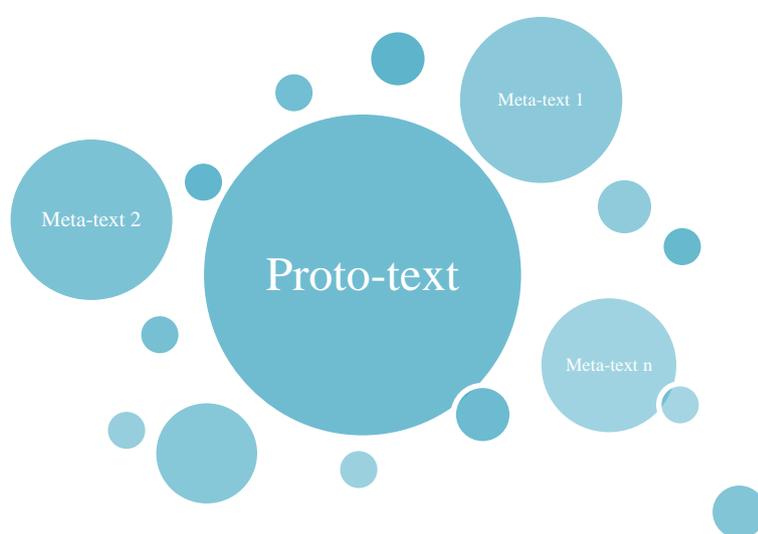


Figure 2 the Visualization of Intersemiotic Space

According to Peeter Torop (2013), there are certain parameters that the analyst should take into consideration while examining a text in the intersemiotic space. These are the text’s material and the text’s composition as internal parameters, while in addition, Torop proposes the concept of *chronotopes* (as introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin) as the external defining one (Torop 2013: 243-245). Based on these criteria, there can be a deep examination of the text and its elements, while in extension, and based on the new visualization of this intersemiotic space, with meta-texts around the main source, it is possible to observe all the recurring signs on different levels of the same text in the internal space, as well as, of the proto- and meta-texts in the external one.

Having said that, there is an issue that needs to be considered when examining a text along with its aforementioned ‘transformability’, and the presented parameters; this is the nature of the subject. When the text under study is a work of art, the ‘languages’ and ‘materials’ used, create a heterogeneous poly-system, with no given hierarchy. For instance, “film as a text may be divided to word, sound and picture vertically, and to frames, episodes and montage fragments horizontally” (Torop 2000: 81). Analyzing the structure of a multimodal text (Elleström 2010: 36; Leeuwen 2005: 281) as such can be challenging, since all components are intertwined; however, the ‘transformability’ of the product, can be proven to be even more complicated.

3.1.1. INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION AND RESEMIOTIZATION

“The popularity of the idea that everything is translation is no doubt a contemporary reflection of an ancient tradition of thought – in fact, an ancient tradition of thought about thought” (Bellos 2011: 90). Indeed, we understand and interpret the world around us through a process of ‘translation’, we ‘decode’ the messages addressed to us, and we make ideas (great or small) come to life, almost every day. The re-construction of BTS PW of the previous chapter, presented through the prism of PE, was a translation, using the appropriate metalanguage, while the music videos themselves are a translation of a creative idea, into materialized products.

This transposition of meaning from abstract ideas, verbal agreements and conceptual thoughts into “increasingly durable kinds of meaning-making” (Iedema 2001:23-24), is what Rick Iedema defines as *resemiotization*. Fundamentally, resemiotization is a process of translation from temporal un-materialized meanings, throughout all the stages until their final concretization, explicitness and materialization, as well as, a transposition from one medium or mode to others. The main difference of resemiotization from other processes of translation, is that in Iedema’s the transmutation starts from an intangible thought, an inspiration, which gradually comes to life, while this process ends when there is the real materialized and tangible version of the author’s imagination in existence. On the contrast, translation is the transmutation from one existing, ready-made entity into another; this

entity does not need to be modified in order to become more concrete or tangible, on the contrast, it is in a final form and it should ideally be translated in its totality.

Medium functions as a vessel; it can be described as “specific semiotic configuration supported by a technology of communication” (Gaudreault & Marion 2002: 15) with certain specificity and affordances, in which the message is being articulated based on a specific code. Modality on the other hand has to do with different aspects of the medium, such as, its material, the way it is perceived (by which senses), how it is structured inside a spatiotemporal framework, and how it being conceived and interpreted (Elleström 2010: 36).

In regard to the different materials and modalities a message is taking the form of, it was crucial for Iedema to note and clarify that this transposition is also implying a change of languages, or in other words, sign systems. Thus, his concept of resemiotization is based on Jakobson’s three types of translation, especially intersemiotic translation. In the article “On Linguistic Aspect of Translation” (1971 [1959]) Roman Jakobson introduced his classification of different kinds of translation: intralingual translation, which he defined as “*rewording*” or rephrasing, using the same natural language; interlingual translation, which he named “*translation proper*”, describing the interpretation and transfer of meaning from one natural language to another; and intersemiotic translation, or “*transmutation*”, which indicates the change of sign systems (Jakobson 1971 [1959]: 233). Of course, every translation from one sign system to another, which should concord to the constraints and affordances of different media, might create some loss, or divergence, however, resemiotization is not generating copies of exact likeness; it should be consider as a process in which the message is evolving and developing through various channels and different paths.

A further step in developing Jakobson’s concept of intersemiotic translation was presented by Klaus Kaindl; he suggested that there should be a greater division, proposing mode, medium and genre as criteria for this advanced classification of translation. Regarding the category of mode, there is the possibility of intra- or intermodal translation (Kaindl 2020: 60); for instance, the intersemiotic translation of a photograph into a painting would be intramodal, while the transmutation of a poem into an instrumental piece of music, intermodal translation. Accordingly, the media level and genre level are being further split

into intra- and intermedial translation, intra- and intergeneric translation (ibid, 60). This concept enables the researcher to make a deeper examination, and elaborate more on the structure and principles of the transmutation, while it provides the necessary metalanguage for his descriptive analysis.

3.1.2. CONTEXTUAL TRANSLATION

Moving to a contextual level, it is significant to address the issue of polysemy. A text can have a variety of interpretations, even ‘symptomatic’ (Bordwell 1991) or ‘parasitic interpretations’ (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 70), based on the prism through which the reader is ‘looking at’ it. This prism is the code applied on the text, a code that is shaped through sociopolitical and cultural factors, determining the reader’s point of view (ibid, 26).

From the semiotic point of view it is natural to regard a single “text proper” with a multiplicity of admissible interpretations as a set of different “texts as a whole” whose expression plane coincide. The signed formed by the pair “theme – text proper” we will call a *reading* (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 26).

One method that the author can implement in the construction of his work, that is, the resemiotization of his initial prototype idea, into the material form of his text, as proposed by Shcheglov and Zholkovsky, is the “diversity of concretizations”:

‘Diversity’ of CONCRs also helps neutralize “parasitic” themes [...] ‘diversity’ performs the opposite function of camouflaging the theme, preventing its obtrusiveness, which could inadvertently result from ‘multiplicity’. This camouflaging of the theme is tantamount to its “defamiliarization”, enhancing the reader’s response, which hinges largely on his quest for unity and cohesion. In pursuit of cohesion, the reader follows basically the same route as the critic, although more intuitively and less consistently. By correlating various fragments and aspects of the text, he tries to transcend the differences and reach an invariant which would shed some integrating light on the sometimes bewildering diversity of surface facts (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 70).

In translation “seriation is one of [its] ontological characteristics [...] it means that the same source text may underlie multiple various translations” (Torop 2000: 72); thus similarly to diversity of concretization, which is a key device for PE, in intersemiotic translation, one of the most essential components is repetition. As mentioned already, the

transmutation of the message is not a carbon copy of the source, thus the meta-texts are linked on the basis of recurrence, which has a “mnemonic function” but also works as “device of creative expansion” (Ojamaa & Torop 2015: 63). Hence, in order to proceed in this process of transmutation as a translator, or evaluate its success as analyst (or even as reader), the focus should be on the invariant themes and motifs of the proto-text, which should be present and recognized in all meta-texts. On the other hand the potential variations and oppositions, is what distinguishes and differentiates the meta-texts from the original source, while at the same time, contribute in the “meaningful growth of the textual whole” (Saldre & Torop 2012: 32)

Of central concern, therefore, to translators is to utilize a theoretical framework which will enable them to understand the different layers of text, and successfully transfer its meaning to target text, preserving the links to the original source, even when moving from one sign system to the other. Notwithstanding the contributions of the aforementioned concepts, a combination of two more theoretical frameworks will be presented in this research. James Holmes’ levels of translation are going to be paralleled with the levels of iconography, as presented by Erwin Panofsky. Although Holmes’ work focused on literary text and Panofsky’s on visual texts, their fusion might provide a very fruitful and useful method of approaching an intersemiotic translation of multimodal products, either from the side of the translator, or from the reader’s point of view, who can implement the same process in reverse to acquire a better understanding of the texts (both proto- and meta-)

According to James Holmes (1988), there are three layers of translation, as stated above; firstly, there is the *linguistic context* (Holmes 1988: 47). Along the same line with what was described in the previous chapter as the ‘dictionary of reality’ (DR), the author is communicating his ideas based on fixed components of the specific language he is using, while the reader can interpret these ideas only within that framework. These contextual information and textual components, which function as meaning-carriers, should be translated into the target text with loyalty and respect to the original source, in order to avoid any distortions of the proto-text.

Of course, in the process of intersemiotic translation, the attempt of equating the components of two utterly different sign systems would most probably be futile; that is why the ideas of proto-text should be “linked to the [meta-]text not by an ‘equals’ sign but

by an inference arrow” (Zholkovsky & Shcheglov 1976: 208-209). Additionally, intersemiotic translation, as source-oriented and as a process of transmutation, instead of a byproduct, enables the translator to choose his target language. While preserving the tight affinity with the proto-text, he can select between different medium and modalities, materials and genres, not being restricted by the limitations of natural languages (Campbell & Vidal 2019: 2-3). Hence, in intersemiotic translation, the level of linguistic context is characterized by fluidity, as well as greater potential of creativity, without implying, however, that this process is working at the expense of the original messages.

The second level of translation regards the issue of intertext; “a poem is written in interaction with a whole body of poetry, existing within a given literary tradition” (Holmes 1988: 47). While in the first level, the focus is more in the transfer of components that carry the meaning of the text, in this level, the emphasis is in the preservation of the meaning itself, or in PE terms, the theme, as well as the structure of the original source, its articulation principles that determine the genre and its topoi (ibid, 47). As stated earlier, the further division of an intersemiotic translation into mode, medium and genre, suggests that there is a potential of intergeneric translation, without implying the distortion of the message. The partitioning and layering of translation as a process, highlights the possible ways in which the translator can maneuver during the intersemiotic process, modifying some parameters or components, while keeping the message of the original source intact.

The final stage, as presented by Holmes, refers to the “situational information at the level of socio-cultural artefact” (Holmes 1988: 84-85 – quoted via Torop 2000: 73). This level essentially refers to the already mentioned topic of code. Each historical period has a specifically shaped perception, based on socio-political and cultural stimuli, which simultaneously affect the individual and communal levels within society. In Foucault’s terms there is an *episteme* (1970 [1966]), which determines in a “subterranean” and unconscious way, the fundamental principles, the pillars for the establishment of society, the evolution of knowledge and the confrontation of reality.

Even if the author of a text is aiming at a global audience, he is still a member of a specific social ensemble, thus, his character and temperament on a personal and literal (or generally artistic) level have been influence by the society he is living in, and from the environment he is drawing images and ideas from, while interacting with the other members. On the

same token, each reader, each critic, and each researcher has the same influences by his surroundings, with the only difference that on professional level the last two ought to look beyond their personal codes. Translator should manage to transmit the message of the original text using the appropriate code to address his target audience, needless to say, after interpreting the ‘situational information level’ of the proto-text.

Additionally, it is important to note, that the creation and construction of the DR, is certainly impacted by these sociopolitical and cultural factors. As a “dictionary [...] common to the author and the readers” (Shcheglov & Zholkovsky 1987: 25); the collection of ready-made components of language are common either because the addresser and addressees are members of the same socio-cultural group, or because the addressees became familiar with the code of the addresser after following his work for a period of time. The evolution of technology and new media played an important factor in the last case, since by participatory culture and virtual communities, people can take part in discussion groups, exchanging ideas and discovering meanings (more on that on the third chapter).

On the other hand, code, as a principle of articulation, and a key component in the successful transmission of any message, plays an important factor in structure and functioning of different mediums. The medium specificity includes particular language and code (which the reader is familiar with), and at the same time they are the distinguishable feature of each medium, or genre. Audiences not only perceive a text through a given medium and recognize its genre based on its language and code, but are also socially educated to anticipate and expect these features in the text. Consequently, we can say that the third layer of translation, impacts both the linguistic context and intertext. In a simplistic way, it could be stated that the first level is about surface elements, and focuses on the proper transposition of them from source to target text, second level is about structure, and how it becomes (or not) an intertextual part of the target text, while the last part has to do with the interpretation and meaning based on code; a level that has an underlying presence in the other two.

It is important however, not to assume the applicability of (only) these three levels of translation in all cases. More specifically, for studies such as this very research, which is focusing on the visual modalities of multimodal texts, there is a need of some additional

theoretical framework that is going to aid in the right approach and analysis of pictorial aspects. For these reasons, the following theory was chosen to be presented to supplement the required methodology for approaching the object of research. Panofsky's *Studies in Iconology* (1972) is not only a study that, even today, influences the academic world, but also presents a particularly interesting similarity when paralleled with Holmes' theory, inasmuch the reading stages of an image are almost identical to the translation levels.

According to Panofsky, "[i]conography is that branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form" (Panofsky 1972: 3). In his book, he proposes three different levels of interpretation, as well as, three principles of interpretation along with the needed equipment for this process to happen (ibid, 14-15). Beginning with *primary or natural subject matter*, which is divided into *factual* and *expressional* meaning, the viewer starts to recognize the form of the visual elements; based on his familiarity with these objects or events depicted, he can proceed to a *pre-iconographical description* (ibid, 5) . For instance, if one would see a picture of Santa Claus, in this level, and in regard to the factual meaning, he should describe all the present elements and recognize a male figure, of an elder man, in red costume. In addition, based on the person's familiarity in identifying facial expressions, he could characterize the gaze of the male figure depicted as kind, sweet, cheerful, and so on; this would be the expressional meaning of the picture.

The second level of interpretation is called *secondary or conventional subject matter*, and in order for the viewer to interpret an image in this level, he should be familiar with themes and concepts (Panofsky 1972: 6). Going back to the example of Santa Claus, the viewer is now moving to an *iconographical analysis*, where the male figure is identified as Santa, and the red costume is understood as a motif, which if the viewer encounters in any other image, worn by any person, it would be recognized as a Santa Claus' costume.

Motifs thus recognized as carriers of *secondary or conventional* meaning may be called *images*, and combinations of images are what the ancient theorists of art called '*invenzioni*'; we are wont to call them *stories* and *allegories*. The identification of such *images*, *stories* and *allegories* is the domain of iconography in the narrower sense of the world (Panofsky 1972: 6)

In the last level, the one of 'intrinsic meaning or content', the viewer is proceeding to an *iconographical interpretation in a deep sense*. What is required for this interpretation is

familiarity with codes and their socio-political and cultural impact through different historical conditions. In addition this level can provide information about the artistic tendencies of the author, as well as, the artistic period in which he created his work and trends of that era (Panofsky 1972: 7-8). Returning to Santa Claus example, in this level the viewer can talk about the *symbolic values* of the painting; how it is interpreted by different audiences based on their socio-cultural influences; or, for instance, how the image of Santa was transformed over the years, from a presence of religious character associated with childhood and innocence, love for fellow humans and generosity, into a widely overused figure of commercial exploitability, under the seal of major global companies. An even more in-depth study of this level can also highlight the techniques of the artist on the materialization of the picture and the symbolisms of his synthesis based on his ideology and psychology. A great example would be *Napalm (Can't Beat That Feeling)* by the famous street artist Banksy (2004). The artist used the famous photograph of the young girl running away from U.S bombarding during the Vietnam War (Ut 1972), isolating the child's figure, and then placing it in-between Mickey Mouse, and McDonald's mascot, lined up in a similar way with the protagonists of *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming 1939). After the initial recognition of pure forms, pointing out a human child, screaming in agony, and two more complicated figures, the viewer is proceeding (if familiar with the objects and events) to the identification of the figures as Mickey Mouse, girl from Napalm, and McDonald's mascot, to reach eventually the iconographical interpretation, where he can deduct the meaning behind the synthesis, and discover the meaning of the image; as well as take away significant clues about the artist.

3.1.3. DISCUSSION

It is important to note that there is not only one type of translation that the following analysis will attempt to highlight and evaluate. As in PE there are four different levels, namely SS, DS, DD and θ , corresponding layers can be met in translation. Apart from the expected recognition of the objects, motifs and characters that the viewer perceives at the surface level, there should also be a transposition of the Minv and θ_{inv} of the PW. Potentially, there can be a meta-text of which the surface structure and/or intermediate

layers present dissimilarities and exclusions from the original source, however, the θ is intact, thus making it part of the PW.

Combining the two theories of translation and iconographical interpretation, the result is an inclusive method of approaching the case study, evaluating the translation of proto-text, (which include the (re)constructed PW of the previous chapter) into the aforementioned meta-texts, identify the repetitive motifs, and examine the diverse or opposing meanings contained in these texts.

3.2. ANALYSIS OF EXTRA MATERIALS

The first contact of viewers with the BTS Universe was the one with the band's music videos; for this reason the set of these clips are used as the proto-text from which the extra materials presented above emerge as meta-texts. The study of this system (proto- and meta-texts) within the intersemiotic space is twofold. The first part focuses on the material and the composition of the texts (their media, modalities, genre, etc. as well as the individual structures), while the second part goes beyond the closed borders of text, and oversees the structure of the system in its totality via the concept of cronotope. This makes the organization of meta-texts and their mental distribution in the intersemiotic space possible. The contribution of cronotope is particularly important due to the constant swapping of time and place of the events occurring, not only in the texts listed as part of the BU, but also within what was defined as BU. It offers the possibility of a hierarchy of time and space, based on which the examination of recurring motifs is being feasible. "Without this spatio-temporal expression even the most abstract thinking is not possible. Consequently, an entrance into the world of meanings is possible only through the gates of chronotope" (Bakhtin 1975: 406). Thus, in order to juxtapose the texts, and analyze the transfer of proto-text's messages to the meta-texts, a mapping of their place in the chronotope of BU is crucial.

3.2.1. PRESENTATION OF MATERIAL

3.2.1.1. SAVE ME WEBTOON

In January of 2019, the Webtoon⁹ “花樣年華⁰ Save Me”¹⁰ was released, produced by Big Hit Entertainment in collaboration with Naver’s subsidiary companies, Naver Webtoon and LICO. The plot expands the story unraveling in the videos “I Need U” (Choi 2015; Lumpens 2015), “Run” (Choi & Ko 2015) and the on stage prologue “The Most Beautiful Moment in Life” (2015), providing details on how the journey back in time began, and elaborating more on the life of characters and their struggles.

The character of Jin returns to Korea after spending some years in America, to discover the dramatic developments that took place in the lives of his old dear friends during his absence; some ended up in prison, others were missing and no one had any information about them, and others were dead. Desperate and shocked from the revelations, and while trying to comprehend everything, Jin runs to the beach where they were going as kids. A small white dog appeared, rubbed his leg and a voice heard from the beyond asked him: “If you could turn back time, do you believe you can straighten out the errors and mistakes, and save everyone?”. That was the beginning of Jin’s adventures; his character was responsible to rescue all of his friends. Whenever he would fail to save his friends, time would reset, and Jin would wake up again on 11th of April, his starting point day.

During the 15 episodes, Jin made great efforts to gather information and organize various plans to prevent all mishaps. Near the end of the season, he achieved to forestall every incident that occurred during his previous attempts, and the days kept passing, making him believe that he had won; but suddenly V got arrested by the police for killing his father. Time reset once more, Jin eagerly waited for the day of the murder, and when the time was right he rushed towards V’s home, and invaded the room in which the two men were fighting. At this moment, V, frightened and blurred by the tension kills Jin. Time resets

⁹ Digitalized manhwa, that is, comics and cartoons originated in South Korea.

¹⁰ Japanese characters translate into “The most beautiful moment in life”, the same title as the second album trilogy of BTS.

one last time for the season finale, Jin is shown looking a photo of him and his friends on the beach, when seven lotus petals fall from above.

3.2.1.2. BTS WORLD

In June 2019, the mobile video game “BTS World” was released by the company Netmarble, in collaboration with Big Hit Entertainment. Regarding the gameplay, “BTS World” is a *collectible card game* (CCG), which means the player should gather different cards, upgrade them and strategically use them in the correct combinations in order to advance in the storyline of the game. Content wise, “BTS World” is divided into two different stories, “BTS Story” and “Another Story”.

The first one is considered the main game; it starts with a short video intro, showing a figure representing the player skateboarding around the city, where BTS billboards and posters promoting their upcoming live concert magically change, and the band members disappear from them. A compilation video of BTS starts playing, with their most iconic moments showed in reversed chronological order, and after some individual shots of members, the year 2012 appears on the screen. The player has traveled back in time and is responsible to regroup the members, help them debut and reach successfully once again the year of 2019. “BTS Story” is based on real events, and the choice of creators to place its starting point in 2012, i.e. one year before the BTS debut, provided them the opportunity to present the difficulties the group faces in their first steps.

“Another Story” consists of two seasons. The first season, includes seven different sub-stories, one for each band member. The player is interacting separately with each member, and the goal is to help them achieve their individual goals. RM’s plot is involving his interaction with a young girl, growing up with a father that she hardly sees, since due to the family’s financial struggles he is working hours, even days away from home. The girl is abducted and RM works with the police to rescue the girl. Jin’s story involves his interaction with a different girl, this time from a very wealthy family, owners of the luxury hotel he is working in. Jin is taking the responsibility to be the girl’s personal battler, and he manages to see beyond her spoiled behavior, recognize her loneliness and the pressure everyone is putting on her. Suga is a timid student pianist that has to conquer his stage

fright after years of bullying and mockery, and manage to overcome the obstacles created by his less talented competitor, who is using his network to win a much wanted music scholarship. Jungkook's plot revolves around similar concepts; he also is dealing with bullying, and he is trying to overcome his fear of failing, during his attempt to start Taekwondo training again, after a long pause due to an injury. Jimin is trying to balance between his dancing career and the work in his family business rice cake store, run by his grandmother. Jimin and his grandmother are struggling to keep their shop open, despite their financial problems. V has to leave the big city and go back to the countryside to take care of his family farm. By readjusting and reconnecting with his roots he is discovering a state of mind completely lost in the urban environment. Finally, J-hope's plot is involving his hesitation to operate on animals as a student vet, and try to find alternative ways of curing them without inflicting any pain. He is meeting an animal behaviorist and by becoming his mentee he develops his understanding of animal's feelings and psychology.

The themes of Jimin and J-hope, as reflection of (Korean) social problems are being introduced here for the first time, in contrast to other storylines that entail issues addressed also in music videos. For Jimin the social aspect is poverty among elderly (Lee 2014; Weon 2020), while for J-hope it is the problem of animal abuse, and animal rights (Indacochea 2020; Joo et al. 2020), presented in a more discreet and indirect way, considering the limitations of the medium

The second season of "Another Story" is the most recent addition to "BTS World". Here, the individual stories of band members merge, and the magic shop from "Fake Love" official trailer (2018) appears. The story begins with RM, who by now has become a successful writer, wondering around the city trying to overcome his writer's block once again. He gets lost in the alleys of the city, and suddenly notices a store which seems out of place; the magic shop. He enters and wishes that the protagonist of his stories could appear in real life and help him out. The next morning V knocks on RM's door and introduces himself as the detective Shadow. Their first mission is to solve the case of the pianist gone missing (Suga).

3.2.1.3. BTS UNIVERSE STORY

In September of 2020, the mobile video game “BTS Universe Story” was released by Netmarble company, in collaboration with Big Hit Entertainment. The game essentially belongs to the genre of *sandbox games*, meaning that it provides the player with ready templates and a great variety of features, which he can use in a free and creative way to materialize his own inspirations. More specifically, “BTS Universe Story”, is offering 3D models of the band members, and different sets of animated gestures and facial expressions, styling and clothing options, backgrounds and props that the player can use to create animated sequences, edit dialogues, and create his own stories.

In this sandbox game, among users’ authentic plots, there is the story “The Most Beautiful Moment in Life: I’m Fine” (for short “I’m Fine”) created by the producers and developers of the game. This is an even greater expansion of the *Most Beautiful Moment in Life* trilogy’s story; it includes interactive dialogues between band members, where the player has to choose between two different actions, a selection that is affecting the evolution of storyline. Thus according to the choices the player made during the episodes, he can experience multiple different endings, and develop a different affiliation with the members.

Context wise, the eight sub-stories and fifty one episodes of “I’m Fine”, enrich the story known to the fans from music videos, and the Webtoon *Save Me*, narrating incidents from different points of view (not only Jin), offering more information on each character’s life and struggles, and finally presenting an epilogue.¹¹

¹¹ The finale has been ambiguous enough, and has led fans to believe that it is not actually the last part of “Most Beautiful Moment in Life” story, but maybe a season finale. Additionally, based on the recent publication of *Most Beautiful Moments in Life: Notes 2* (Big Hit Entertainment 2020), probably there is going to be another season of the series.

3.2.2. INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION OR RESEMIOTIZATION?

Starting with the internal analysis of texts in the intersemiotic space, and based on the updated Jakobsonian theory of intersemiotic translation by Kaindl (2020), all three meta-texts appear as a result of an intermodal, intermedial and intragenre translation. Regarding the aspect of intermodality it is important to note that even though this research is focusing on the visual modality, music videos are multimodal productions, including music and lyrics (natural language), thus the *material* and *sensorial modality* (Elleström 2010: 36) changes. Additionally, the genre of plot remains in all translations, thus the translation is characterized intragenre.

More specifically, and by utilizing the paralleled theories of Holmes and Panofsky, the Webtoon *Save Me* (2019), on the first layer of analysis and despite the limitations and affordances of the medium, presents identical similarities with the proto-text. The characters and Minv described during the analysis of the music videos appear in the pages of *Save Me*, and through repetition, coherence is achieved. In a more detailed iconographical analysis, it could be stated that the characters depicted in the Webtoon, bear all the necessary appearance traits, and mannerisms of their music video version, thus they become distinguishable. Intertext wise, the Webtoon maintains the genre of plot, as the one existing in the DS of music videos the story is based on, and the illustration is staying loyal not only to the proto-text, but also to the traditions and stylistic expressions of a digital manhwa (i.e. Webtoon). Finally, both proto- and meta-text on the third level of analysis, regarding their socio-cultural code and iconographical interpretation are identical. The themes reflecting real social issues are being expressed through the plot, the expressive devises, and the stylistic choices of both materials.

“BTS World” (2019) presents slightly different results. On the first level of analysis, and considering the band members did various photoshoots and video recordings that appear within the game, bear no differences with the characters of music videos. However, focusing more on the depictions of “Another Story” and the individual stories of members, the differences are obvious, since there was no repetition of already introduced characters, neither of Minv and objects from DR of BTS PW. Thus, in the part of iconographical analysis it could be said that band members are identified as themselves, but nothing in the

stories can be recognized as a known element. Intertext wise, the game is following the affordances of its genre; however when it comes to the genre of plot, it may be existing in the mobile game, but it is not a transmutation of any existing story, thus there can be no comparison on that level. Finally, reaching the stage of socio-cultural code and iconographical analysis, all stories of “BTS World” have maintained the θ_{inv} and θ_{int} of BTS PW. It includes stories that are focusing on social issues, even if they are presented in a completely different way from any music video. Thus despite the fact that there is a transposition of themes from proto-text to meta-text, it can be seen from the analysis of the other layers, that there is no identification to the original source in any other level.

Lastly in “BTS Universe Story” (2020), and specifically the series of episodes “I’m Fine”, band members are portrayed as their characters in *The Most Beautiful Moments in Life* trilogy. All characters, as well as their Minv (from PWchar) are depicted by 3D models, identical to the ones shown in music videos. Interestingly, in the series, there are exact translations of scenes from Webtoon *Save Me*, thus the source of translation once more is not strictly the proto-text of the totality of music videos. Intertext wise, the series, as a digital interactive novel within the frame of a mobile game, includes the genre of plot, following the trilogy, however, the structure is identical to the Webtoon *Save Me*. Finally, the socio-cultural code, and iconographical analysis reveals once more the θ_{inv} and θ_{int} , as they emerged from the analysis of PW of BTW examining their music video.

The results of the research lead to a remarkable conclusion. The set of music videos, which was defined as proto-text of the subsequent intersemiotic translations and the creation of all meta-texts, is not in fact the original source. The common elements in meta-texts are the θ_{inv} and θ_{int} , which are observed even in texts that do not seem related in the music videos in the first and second layers of analysis. Based on this observation, it could be stated that the original source of the meta-texts are the themes of BTS PW, so instead of proto-text, the term *proto-theme* or *proto-structure* should be used.

Continuing to elaborate on the findings of the analysis, another conclusion to be reached is that the creation of meta-texts is not the product of an intersemiotic translation, but of a resemiotization process. As stated in the theoretical framework, translation, even the intersemiotic kind, refers to the transposition of a message that does not require any modification to become more concrete, but it is already in its final state and should be

transferred in its entirety. However, in resemiotization (Iedema 2001), the source is an intangible, abstract idea, such as the θ int of BTS PW, which progressively gets materialized, reaching its final state when the author's imagination has come to life. Thus, meta-texts, including the music videos analyzed in the first chapter are all products of the resemiotization of the invariant themes of BTS PW, which can be defined as a proto-theme or proto-structure.

Despite the fact that originally the conception of resemiotization by Iedema is described as a linear process, starting with an idea, and going through all the necessary until its realization, in this case of the materialization of a theme there is the opportunity of a non-linear process. Because of the nature of the theme and its ability to be concretized by a variety of ways, the process of resemiotization can be re-imagined as a non-linear one, which produces different products orbiting around this central idea. Thus this model would be a combination of resemiotization with the structure of the intersemiotic space. This process of resemiotization is inextricably intertwined with the transmedial nature of BU.

4. TRANSMEDIALITY

4.1. TRANSMEDIAL WORLD

According to Lotman, “being spatially limited, a work of art is a model of an infinite universe” (Lotman 1977 [1970]: 210). This quote is harmonious with the imaginary depiction of the intersemiotic space presented in the previous chapter. The inherent ability of the proto-text (or proto-theme) to be transmuted into new texts (taking shape and form in new modes, mediums and genres), creates the required conditions, not only for the creation of an intersemiotic space, but also for a transmedial expansion of its content. As noted by Klasttrup and Tosca:

Transmedial worlds are abstract content systems from which a repertoire of fictional stories and characters can be actualized or derived across a variety of media forms. What characterizes a transmedial world is that the audience and designers share a mental image of the “worldness” (a number of distinguishing features of its universe). The idea of a specific world’s worldness mostly originates from the first version of the world presented, but can be elaborated and changed over time (Klasttrup & Tosca 2004: 409)

Differing from the focus on constancy and repetition that were foregrounded in the analysis of translation, along with the preservation of the original text’s invariant themes, the focus of the research examining the transmediality is on variation; “variation of a text in culture constitutes the path of meaningful growth of the textual whole” (Saldre & Torop 2012: 32). The changes and alterations of the original source, should not create just different versions of the information already provided to the reader; this would stay in the realms of translation, and in case of this process occurring in many different platforms, it would be target-oriented reproduction, or in other words, a process of cross-mediality (Ojamaa & Torop 2015: 71). In order to have a transmedial expansion, the new texts should include a sufficient amount of recurring elements (motifs), in order to have a recognizable part of the whole (Jenkins 2006: 113) and to preserve the invariant themes of

the original (proto-theme); however, there should also be variations providing new information, which add-up to the whole. Needless to say, this process should take place across different media platforms.

The rapid evolution of technology during the last decades has contributed to the change of the cultural environment, to the formation and production of content, but also to the habits of the consumers, by altering their expectations, experiences and participation (Jenkins 2010; Torop 2004: 61). Transmediality is not a static state of a text, but rather a flow of information that by their movement creates conduits between the various texts. It is the process of production and consumption, indicating at the same time the way and reasons behind the formation of a transmedial whole, as well as the way of comprehending, interpreting and analyzing on behalf of the reader.

These conduits among the texts, and the continuously expanding circuit created, establish a transmedial world, an imaginary space that it does not necessarily have to involve a story or a plot; however, usually this world unravels itself in the form of a transmedial storytelling, with a specific narrative structure based on the architecture of the world (Klastrup & Tosca 2004: 409-410).

Narrative is not limited or dependent on specific media (Klastrup & Tosca 2004: 410), and in case of transmedial storytelling, the sequence of events, along with the separation of the story and distribution in different platforms, is a predetermined, intentional and coordinated story. This story in its early stages is an abstract script which lacks many of the subsequently added enrichment details. The intangible inspiration, or in other words the proto-theme is gradually beginning to take shape, perhaps in some sketches of the plot's skeleton, storyboards, or visual maps that can be paralleled with the blueprints of a building under construction. Next, the authors have to break the story into pieces and choose to distribute them on specific media platforms.

In 2007, Jeff Gomez as a speaker and moderator of the PGA NMC (Producers Guild of America New Media Council) event, *Creating Blockbuster Worlds: Trans-Media Development & Production*, presented the “eight defining characteristics of a trans-media production”. According to Gomez:

- Content is originated by one or a very few visionaries

- Cross-media rollout is planned early in the life of the franchise
- Content is distributed to three or more media platforms
- Content is unique, adheres to platform-specific strengths, and is not repurposed from one platform to the next
- Content is based on a single vision for the story world
- Concerted efforts is made to avoid fractures and schisms
- Effort is vertical across company, third parties and licensees
- Rollout features audience participatory elements, including:
 - Web portal
 - Social networking
 - Story-guided user-generated content¹²

Each of these characteristics make an important contribution in the overall understanding of how transmedial worlds are structured and function; however there are some important notes to be made and it is crucial to further elaborate on some features. Firstly, the role of ‘cross-media rollout’ should be distinguished from the transmedial world and its architecture, and be recognized as an external factor, which exist to serve purely marketing and promotional purposes.

Crossmediality [...] implies a target-oriented process whereby diverse media sources are collaboratively converged into a whole, and transmedia on the other hand implies a source-oriented process whereby a prototext is diverged into different individual metatexts in cultural space. (Ojamaa 2015: 9)

Thus the planning for a target-oriented strategy is a parallel process, different from the transmedial architecture which implies the synergetic function of individual parts, which add something more to the already acquired knowledge. However, the decision of whether the creators are using one of the two, or both of them, should be taken into account at the very beginning of the materialization.

Following, the fifth and sixth features are of high interest, as, on the one hand they refer with greater absolute to the trait of the transmedial world to be based on a single idea; “Storyworld thereby becomes a topological invariant of all the subtexts of the transmedial whole” (Saldre & Torop 2012: 27). These characteristics concern the need for constant efforts to maintain the homogeneity and concord with the source, avoiding any cracks and

¹² The list of the eight defining characteristics of a trans-media production as presented by Jeff Gomez at the PGA NMC event *Creating Blockbuster Worlds: Trans-Media Development & Production*, can be found in the archive blog of the organization : http://pganmc.blogspot.com/2007_10_02_archive.html

crevices in the composition of the world. Clearly, conflicting information and contradictory stories can potentially confuse the reader, who can no longer ‘absorb’ the plot, ‘trust’ the text, and become part of this universe. In other words, the discontinuity has a negative impact on the “relational tuning” of the reader with the “direct and indirect world” as well as the “subject of discourse” (Eugeni 2011: 9).

Finally, the last characteristic of ‘participatory elements’; in essence the imaginary space in which the transmedial products exist is located in the minds of creators and readers. The way a transmedial product keeps ‘living’ and expanding is through the constant interaction of the audience with the text whole, this includes their active participation, the mapping of the fictional universe and the connections of all its different elements (in the case of BTS), the storage of information in their memories (Saldre & Torop 2012: 33), and finally, in some cases the generated content by the readers’ community (‘story-guided user-generated content’ as seen above).

In her book, *Hamlet on Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (2016 [1997]), Janet Murray talks about the ‘encyclopedic capacity’ of computers, which not only imply the suitability of digital media for storytelling, but also suggests that this trait influences authors to invent similar techniques in order to model their products, in order to help the reader navigate through the many different paths (Murray 2016: 236); however this is also a very popular method among readers’ communities that through blogs, wiki-pages, and videos on YouTube, also try to model their favorite world, discover the hidden clues planted by the authors, and spread in different platforms, provide their own interpretations, and provide guidelines and maps (in some cases in a literal way) to the new members. This idea is in harmony with what Pierre Lévy is describing in his book *Collective Intelligence: Mankind’s Emerging World in Cyberspace* (1997) as “collective intelligence” or “knowledge communities”. Lévy suggests that the merging of the roles of authors and readers is the key element in the constitution of the collective knowledge, and the main factor which sustains the existence of the text whole. In short:

To fully experience any fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels, comparing notes with each other via online discussion groups, and collaborating to ensure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience. (Jenkins 2006: 21)

Transmedial storytelling is a concept introduced by Henry Jenkins in 2003 (Scolari 2009: 586-587), and it involves the unraveling of a fictional world through different media platforms, where its elements work in synergy, meaning that “the whole is worth more than the sum of the parts” (Jenkins 2006: 102). The distributed components provide a coordinated and cohesive experience, while each one of them is adding up a new element to the story. Transmedial storytelling is one of the most popular methods in film industry the last decades, while evidence for in support of this position, can be found in the existence of many transmedial universes, such as *The Matrix*, including a cinematic trilogy, but also video games, comic strips, and so on (Jenkins 2006). As suggested by Jeff Gomez in the aforementioned PGA NMC event, other examples of transmedial universes are: *Pokemon*, *Magic: The Gathering*, many Walt Disney projects, among them *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and others (Weinstein 2007). This method has been proven successful, because “[t]he world is bigger that the film, bigger than the franchise – since fan speculations and elaborations also expand the world in a variety of directions” (Jenkins 2006: 114), thus it offers a fertile ground for an ever expanded plot that is not limited in one event-story, not even in the adventures of a single character, but it utilizes all the components of the fictional universe (ibid.).

Behind the creation of a transmedial storytelling, there are mainly economic reasons (Jenkins 2006: 104); the desire and effort of every company that is able to carry out such a large-scale venture, is to increase its profits and defeat the competition. Nevertheless, the result is a total experience for the audience, which, especially nowadays, is more and more demanding. New generations are familiar and accustomed in a digital environment, from a very early stage of their lives, which offers instant access to information, interactivity, and multimodality. These apperceptions, therefore, have formulated their expectations, or in other words, their consumer profile, which the respective companies are called to figure out and satisfy. Having said that, it would be unfair to state that transmedial storytelling is ‘a sign of the times’. In addition to being a lucrative method, and an effort on the behalf of producers to carefully listen to the demands of the audience, it is also a creative exploitation of the opportunities offered to creators by the evolution of technology.

Having considered the advantages of the transmedial storytelling, and in addition to the aforementioned characteristics of transmedial productions by Jeff Gomez, Henry Jenkins

also suggested¹³ a list of principles, or in other words, core concepts of transmedial storytelling, presented in his personal website. Under the title *The Revenge of the Origami Unicorn* (as a continuation of the chapter *Searching for the Origami Unicorn: The Matrix and Transmedia Storytelling* (Jenkins 2006)), he introduces these seven features:

- Spreadability vs. Drillability
- Continuity vs. Multiplicity
- Immersion vs. Extractability
- Worldbuilding
- Seriality
- Subjectivity
- Performance¹⁴

However, some of these principles need a further examination. Starting with ‘spreadability and drillability’ it should be noted that both characteristics have to do with audience’s participation. The reason why these two features are in contrast (written with the abbreviation of the word ‘versus’ among them) is based on the decision of authors and producers to give more weight to the creation of a storytelling aiming at the enrichment of the stimuli received by the audience, in order to share and spread the content, or the enrichment of the content itself in order to give the reader plenty of information and motivation to search for more meanings, hidden elements, and a second reading of the text. Jason Mittell coined the term ‘drillability’ as a response to spreadable material (Mittell 2015), distinguish the two as different cultures with different type of audiences and evidently diverse engagement and value (similar to Fiske’s ‘broadcast’ and ‘narrowcast codes’)

Additionally, it can be seen that the feature of continuity is in harmony with the (sixth) principle presented by Gomez, referring to the effort to avoid fractures in the transmedial whole (Weinstein 2007). However, the multiplicity is another approach, providing a creative freedom to the creators of the transmedial storytelling

¹³ Chronologically Jenkins suggested this list earlier than Gomez.

¹⁴ The seven principles of transmedial storytelling, as presented by Henry Jenkins in the two separate entries at his official web-page titled: *The Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Seven Principles of Transmedial Storytelling (Well, Two Actually. Five More on Friday)*, retrieved from: http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2009/12/the_revenge_of_the_origami_uni.html and *Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: The Remaining Four Principles of Transmedia Storytelling*, retrieved from: http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2009/12/revenge_of_the_origami_unicorn.html

4.2. TRANSMEDIAL EXPANSION

According to Carlos A. Scolari (2009), a main plot can be regarded as a “macrostory”(Scolari 2009: 597), and there are four strategies for expanding it; firstly, there is the “creation of interstitial microstories” (ibid, 598), an example of which would be the filler episodes in anime seasons, that is, the side stories which do not affect the actual plot line but they serve the purpose of prolonging the season, and building the suspense of the audience.

Following, there is the “creation of parallel stories”, and the “creation of peripheral stories” (Scolari 2009: 598); in first case, and accordingly to the name of this strategy, there are stories involving events that occur simultaneously with the macrostory, either by happening temporally and locally in parallel with the main plot, or by being presented in such a way to shock the audience with a plot-twist at the climax of the story. In the case of ‘peripheral stories’, the new texts are not so strictly connected to the main plot; they might be, for instance, stories involving the same protagonists in an alternative universe, where they look the same, or even have the same name, traits and personality, but everything else is different. Both strategies according to Scolari can evolve into spin-offs (ibid, 598). Lastly, he proposes the “creation of user generated content” (ibid, 598). This last strategy is in concord with both Gomez and Jenkins. Although it has been stated already that participation and co-creation is a byproduct of the transmedial productions, it can be also recognized as a strategy when the audience is being encouraged or given the opportunity to do so.

4.3. TRANSMEDIALITY AND COHERENCE

Having considered the general features of transmedial productions, and storytelling, it is also reasonable to look at the narrative structure, and some contextual principles. In storytelling, before the materialization of the ‘macrostory’ (Scolari 2009: 597), there was the initial conception of the creator(s), what was defined as proto-structure or proto-theme; In a deep analysis of the transmedial space of any given storyworld, we can distinguish between a “macrotime” and “microtime” (Torop 2004: 62), which are concepts usually

applied in literature, however, can be proven extremely useful in the examination of transmedial storytelling narrative structure. ‘Macrotime’ regards the time sequence in which the whole was created, starting from the moment of the initial conception of the idea to the materialization of the individual elements; ‘microtime’ on the other hand, refers to the individual production of separate components, and the sequence in which the individual unit eventually got its final form, becoming a complete entity. It is of high importance that all components are self-contained, in a way that they can exist and be experienced without requiring from the audience necessarily a familiarity with the whole; the interconnections create a more complete entertainment experience for the people that invest more time on gathering clues and discovering these links (Jenkins 2006: 21), but they should not work as a discouraging factor, excluding people for consuming the individual products; as a matter of fact, “any given product is a point of entry into the franchise” (Jenkins 2006: 96), and “any given piece of narrative or storyline serves as a ‘window’/’door’/’gate’/’access point’ for entering the whole” (Saldre & Torop 2012: 26)

However, the theory of macro- and microtime (Torop 2004: 62), additionally states that the linking mechanism between the parts of the whole is not concrete time, rather than a “psychosemantic principle, i.e. in accordance with a vision of the given creative process” is being arranged. (ibid, 62). Thus, in cases where two components were created at the same time (year of production), there is no tight connection between them appertaining to this real-life chronological order; on the contrary, the connection, and what was earlier described in the imaginary visualization of transmedial space as conduit, is based on the repetition of the invariant themes and motives, emerging from the proto-structure (or proto-theme), and the PW of the author. Thus the link, once again, is proven to be repetition.

Following, another important contribution in the realization of chronological hierarchy comes from Bakhtin and his theory of “chronotope”, already presented in the previous chapter as the external parameter of intersemiotic’s space analysis. Chronotope is a combined word, from the greek ‘χρόνος’, meaning time, and ‘τόπος’, meaning space; it is a necessary requirement for any idea, even the most abstract thought, to be conceived and understood (Bahktin 1975: 406). However, a chronotopical analysis can be applied on the time and space of the storyworld; Bakhtin proposes the following variations of chronotope:

“the chronotope of the depicted events, the chronotope of the narrator, and the chronotope of the author” (Bakhtin 1979: 338). The first one refers to what Torop alternatively renamed as topographical chronotope (Torop 2000: 84), that is, the sequence of the events occurring in the story, as experienced by the protagonists in the specific time period that the story is unraveling. In this category, there is also the possibility to talk about stories that disrupt the normal flow of time, and the stability of place, confusing the audience, something that Rosolowski termed as “horror chronotope” (1996: 109). The topographical chronotope and its disruptions, offer the necessary metalanguage for the analysis of transmedial worlds including parallel and peripheral stories, as seen above.

The next variation, the chronotope of the narrator (Bakhtin 1979: 338), or in Torop’s words “psychological chronotope” (Torop 2000: 84) regards the interpretation of the events, and their impact on the protagonist (usually also the narrator of the story). Here, the focus is how the actor is filtering the information and stimuli happening in his spatiotemporal environment, and how he is responding in this realm. Finally, the chronotope of the author (Bakhtin 1979: 338), or “metaphysical chronotope” (Torop 2000: 84) is the connecting link between the fictional world and reality, since it refers to the conception of the story by the author in his own spatiotemporal environment, and the ideas that he wants to communicate to the audience (invariant themes in PE terms), through the chronotope of the fictional world. Thus this is the bridge of two different realms of “realities”, justifying the name ‘metaphysical’. Interestingly, all the three-layered theoretical frameworks presented in this research, conclude with a level that regards the sociopolitical and cultural environment of the author, his chronotope, and his personality or psychology. The third layer concord with what was defined as Poetic World, and the deep structure of the text revealed through these analyses, also brings light to the psychological profile of the author.

Finally, there is one more important short list of transmedial worlds’ features, referring to the context, presented by Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca (2004). According to their article *Transmedial Worlds – Rethinking Cyberworld Design*, focusing mainly on the connectivity of video games and transmedial world making, there are three basic features of transmedial world, namely: ‘mythos’, ‘topos’, and ‘ethos’ (Klastrup & Tosca 2004: 412). Mythos, from the greek ‘μύθος’, meaning mythology or legend, contains the

necessary information that creators must keep in mind when constructing and expanding the transmedial world. Based on this feature, the illusion of the fictional world's history is created, and the authors are given the opportunity to visit an outlined past, placed before the beginning of the plot, in case they would like to develop back-stories which will enrich the profile of the main characters.

Topos is the second feature (Klastrup & Tosca 2004: 412), from the greek 'τόπος', meaning place; This feature coincides with the topographical chronotope; it is an overview of the historical period, in combination with the sociopolitical situation of the location the audience observes through the story line, its explicit geography, and technology of the world. Thus there can be a futuristic, dystopian, utopian, western, Victorian or completely fantastic and fictional setting as the background environment of the story (ibid, 412).

Ethos is the last feature presented (ibid, 412); coming from the greek word 'ἦθος', meaning righteousness, ethics and attitudes, is the element that determines the behavior of the protagonists and classifies their choices and (re)actions as moral or dishonest, good or bad, right or wrong. Based on this feature which outlines the axiological system of the world, along with its cultures and ideologies, the reader can gather the prerequisite information to evaluate the characters, their personalities as they evolve through the story, and stand out the hero from the villain (ibid, 412); of course this evaluation is not only in accordance with the 'ethos' of the storyworld, but in alliance with the psychological profile of the reader and his personal ethics.

4.4. ANALYSIS OF TRANSMEDIAL STORYTELLING

4.4.1. WHY BTS UNIVERSE FRANCHISE DOES NOT INCLUDE THE WHOLE BTS UNIVERSE

After the analysis of the music videos through the prism of PE, the PW of BTS was revealed, and all the themes and motifs that are invariant throughout their whole body of work were highlighted. During the examination of the translation into meta-texts, based on what was initially assumed as the proto-text, it became obvious that the meta-texts that agreed on all levels of translation were the ones listed in the BU franchise, while the video game "BTS World" shared the invariant themes of the PW, and it was therefore considered

a result of a resemiotization. Here after the last part of the analysis, it becomes clear why the franchise is unable to hold the totality of BU, as the latter was defined based on the PW of the body of work of the band.

Starting with Gomez, and his eight defining characteristics of a trans-media production, one of the most important elements was the fifth feature, that is that the content should be based in only one vision of the story world. In the reconstruction of BTS PW, it was obvious that even though there was cohesion in the θ_{inv} and the θ_{int} , and they would appear in all different texts (even the meta-texts analyzed in the second chapter), the point of view was not always the same. As a matter of fact, the different point of views is one of the most used principles in the PW of BTS. Also the angle from which the social issues of the world were approached was changing, as the spiritual journey towards development was transitioning. However, this would be problematic for a transmedial production that aims to the cohesion and synergy.

In a similar way, the concepts of mythos, topos, and ethos, as presented by Klastrup and Tosca (2004), could not remain the same; in the contents enlisted in the BU franchise, there are specific rules governing the world in which the story unravels. The fictionality prevailing in this world, where Jin travels in time, and every time a friend is making a fatal mistake the loop starts again from the same day, is a very specific framework, and creates an interesting and appealing parable, which however exists only within the limits of this storyline. Even when the topos becomes more abstract, and the time turns atemporal, as in the case of videos from the set *Wings*, and the intertextual references to *Demian*, the mythos and ethos remain the same, as the two antagonists Jin and V, remain rivals. This is exactly the same reason why even though the nature of the plot leaves room for the creation of many peripheral stories, connected to the macrostory and presented as another version of reality created by the broken linearity of time, the ethos and mythos of the plot should remain the same.

The issue of topos, may seem blurry in the BU franchise, as well as the chromos, can be organized via the concepts of chronotope. Despite the peculiarity of the element of time travelling, and the mental representations of the inner world of protagonists as in *Wings* set of texts, the horror chronotope, is aiding at the chronological order of all the events happening inside the franchise. The psychological chronotope, that refers to the time and

place the character is experiencing the events and interacting with them, for BU franchise is 2022, and all the other stories are treated as prequels, characters' backstories, or even mental representation of their psychological status, based on the establishment of the psychological chronotope in 2022. Finally, the chronotope of the author, proven by the analysis of PW, is the present time, and the messages that are communicated with the audience are contemporary problems of our today's society.

Additionally, on the issue of time and the perception of a coherent whole within the frame of the BU franchise, the psychosemantic principle, as presented by Torop (2004: 62), is the basis on which the viewer is making the connections and finds the links between the contents, even if the production and release of the individual pieces are months or even years apart, with many other material being produced in the meantime.

A connection of the mobile game "BTS World" to the franchise based on these parameters seems impossible. However, after the season two of the section "Another Story" and the implementation of the element of *Magic Shop*, the game is automatically linked to the rest of content, and as the story develops perhaps more connections are going to tie it to the franchise.

Having said that, the most important reason that the BU franchise includes only part of the much greater BU, is to avoid excluding the audience unfamiliar to the whole. Expanding the universe would not only cause problems in mapping all the events and follow the many different peripheral stories, but it would also lead to a tight connection of all elements to one narrative, reducing their polysemy and openness to interpretation. Also, by making the content highly self-referential with intertextual allusions to other components of the whole, might be exciting for the existing fandom and increase drillability, but it would discourage other people from joining. Thus the participation and spreadability will be reduced leading to a dramatic drop of the company's income.

Hence, based on the analysis, it could be stated that Big Hit Entertainment has certified specific content as part of the franchise, and tries to expand more on the storyline, without highlighting the deeper connection of all individual components. Simultaneously, with the release of "BTS Universe Story" it increased the active participation of the audience, offering a space that fans can create their own content, and providing them the freedom to

expand the BU beyond the franchise. The difference between the content created by fans and the one presented by the creators, is that the version of the latter seems official, and it dictates what should be the “right” interpretation.

For the time being, the company has produced content that maintains cohesion on the level of invariant themes, which leads to a specific poetic identity, and simultaneously, it is maintaining the openness to interpretation, while promotes the different readings of the material.

4.4.2. SPRING DAY

A great example to demonstrate the above, and highlight the importance of not overloading and specifying the narrative of the transmedial storytelling is the music video “Spring Day” (Lumpens 2017).

According to the analysis of the first chapter, the video includes many concretizations, literal and metaphorical, of the time-traveling concept. Jin and V are putting under the spotlight via AUGM, and they are doing the same movements, following once more the principle of twin characters and mirror scenes. There is the contrast between the moments the group spends together and the individual shots in which they seem lonely, reminiscing the past. Additionally, during the video, the band members open doors which magically lead them to a different time and space (PRESG). The pile of clothes on which Suga is singing is once again recognized as an element of CONCRmetaph, hinting the travelling in time and constantly experiencing the same day. Final concretization of time travelling and different dimension of reality is the moment when Jungkook is watching himself as a passenger of a passing-by train. Both characters that look like Jungkook seemed in shock. Towards the end of the song, all band members are sitting on the pile of clothes, that has risen up above the level of clouds, when flower petals are shown floating around them, a typical reference to the DR of BTS PW and the meanings they communicate with flowers.

The same music video has been studied by many fans, it has been featured in various blogs, and it has been analyzed in many YouTube videos. This led people outside of the BTS community to wonder what is making the music video so unique. Most of the analyses of “Spring Day” result that the music video is a tribute to the students who lost

their lives in the 2014 ferry accident in Sewol. On 16th of April, 250 students died, when the ferry which was taking them for a school trip in Jeju capsized (Shin 2021)¹⁵. Based on that interpretation, all elements are read under the scope of the accident, while many of the arguments are well-supported and convincing. Thus, maintaining the video outside the certified contents of BU franchise, it preserved its openness, which did not just lead to fans' active participation, but attracted new viewers. "Spring Day" functioned as a portal, or an entry point into the BTS Universe.

¹⁵ Additional articles linking the accident to BTS song "Spring Day":
http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/942009.html
<https://k-popped.com/2017/04/bts-spring-days-and-the-sewol-ho-tragedy-a-pure-magical-coincidence/>

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to re-construct the poetic world of BTS, and examine the hypothesis that the BTS Universe is much more than their franchise. The connections between the music videos by the constant appearances of specific objects (motifs) and the similar techniques in the structure of the clips (at the level of their deep structure) were the initial observations that sparked the question about what are the real dimensions of BTS Universe.

In continuation, the object of examination was the translation of the content initially recognized as proto-text, to its meta-texts. The results of the analysis pointed out how the materials inside the franchise are following the process of intersemiotic translation, while the video game which steps out of the borders of the franchise preserved only the invariant themes of the proto-text. This led to a conceptualization of resemiotization in the intersemiotic space, a combination of the two theories, as the source of the video game's translation. An additional term created for the needs of the analysis was the one of proto-theme or proto-structure, indicating that the original source of a translation is an abstract theme, or the idea of a structure.

Finally, after examining the materials based on the selected theories of transmediality and transmedial storytelling, the question about the dimensions of BTS Universe was answered. The nature of transmedial production could not hold the totality of BTS Universe, as presented through the PW of the band; not only it is something hard to be achieved considering the parameters of *mythos*, *topos*, *chronos* (i.e. time), and *ethos*, which provide coherence to the transmedial product, but also because by connecting all material under the same universe, it would impact the participation of audience and it would discourage new readers from entering the BTS Universe. Of course, even the components that are certified as parts of the franchise can be individually appreciated and enjoyed by viewers unfamiliar with the Universe; having said that, in case these readers become immersed into the transmedial products, they would have to revisit the texts which they have already interpreted and perceive them afresh. This process can be potentially very limiting and entrap the readers imagination, thus reduce his motivation willingness to be part of the transmedial whole.

The realization of the reasons behind the selection of certain components as part of the BTS Universe franchise, does not cancel out the interesting discoveries during the analysis of the band's poetic world. The coherence found in their materials, both in structure and usage of expressive devices, and in the themes (local, invariant, and integral), create a concrete artistic identity.

The results came to light by this research additionally provided an insight of the meaning-making mechanisms, and the meaningful structure of the transmedial production of contemporary K-Pop industry, exemplified by BTS. Since the structure of the franchise, along with its transmedial nature was not taken for granted, but challenged, examined and questioned, the results offer a better understanding about of how and why those choices were made on behalf of the creators, and what would be the impact on the audience in any other scenario.

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SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN (Kokkuvõte)

K-Popi Semiootiline Analüüs: BTS-I Universumi Loomine.

K-pop ehk (Lõuna-)Korea popmuusika on fenomen, mis on saanud viimastel kümnenditel globaalse tähelepanu osaliseks. Osalt on K-popi edu tulenenud transmeedialise loojutustamise tehnikatest, mis on kasutusele võetud rahvusvahelise publiku ootuste täitmiseks, ning loomaailmade ja alternatiivsete universumite loomisest, mis on strateegia, mida võib kohata sagedamini filmitööstuses.

Käesolevas töös uuriti tähendusloomemehhanisme transmeedialises loojutustamises Korea postebändi BTS näitel. BTS, mis debüteeris 2013. aastal plaadifirma Big Hit Entertainmenti all, on oma põlvkonna edukaim ansambel, olles pälvinud rohkeid auhindu ja tunnustusi ning jõudnud rahvusvahelistes muusikaedetabelites ja muusikaturul kõrgemale ja kaugemale kui ükski teine K-popi bänd.

BTS-i audiovisuaalse loomingu uurimise kaudu selgitab käesolev töö kaasaegses Korea muusikatööstuses kasutatavaid tähendusloomelisi strateegiad, nagu sidusa kunstilise identiteedi konstrueerimine, sõnumite kommunikeerimine läbi muusikavideote jne. Täpsemalt uuritakse töös BTS-i loomingu transmeedialist aspekti, viisi, kuidas bändi loomesaadustes transmeedialisust kasutatakse.

Üheks küsimuseks, millele töö vastust otsib, on BTS-i Universumi ulatus. Bändi loomesaaduseks on ka BTS-i Universumi frantsiis, mille hulka kuuluvad muusikavideod, lühifilmid, mobiilimängud, koomiksid ja raamatud. Käesoleva uurimistöö üheks motivaatoriks oli tähelepanek, et bändi loomingu korraldus on korduvad motiivid ja seosed muuhulgas ka teoste vahel, mis ei ole Big Hit Entertainmenti esitletud ametliku BTS-i Universumi frantsiisi osaks. Seega oli üheks eesmärgiks ka uurida, miks osa teoseid, mis sisaldavad samu teemasid ja motiive kui ametlik universum, on viimasest siiski välja jäetud. Uurimistöö empiirilises osas analüüsin üle saja muusikavideo, *webtoon* "Save Me"

ja kahte mobiilimängu – “BTS World” ja “BTS Universe Story”, mis on loodud Big Hit Entertainmenti ja Netmarble koostöös.

Nende eesmärkide saavutamiseks analüüsisin töö esimeses osas Aleksander Zholkovski ja Juri Shcheglovi väljenduslikkuse poetika teooriale toetudes BTS-i muusikavideosid, mis on loodud nende debüüdist kuni tänaseni, keskendudes seejuures visuaalsele modaalsusele. Väljenduslikkuse poetika on teooria, mis algupäraselt loodi ilukirjanduslike ja luuletekstide analüüsimiseks ning käesoleva töö üheks uuenduseks on selle teooria rakendamine muusikavideote analüüsimisel. Väljenduslikkuse poetika, mis muuhulgas toetub strukturalismile, semiootikale ja Einsteini filmiloome uurimisele, võimaldas muusikavideode süvaanalüüsi kaudu tuvastada BTS-i loomingu invariantseid ja integraalseid teemasid ning korduvad motiivid ning rekonstrueerida bändi poeetilise maailma. Analüüsi tulemusena ilmnis BTS-i poeetilise maailma põhiteemadena suureks sirgumine, noorte raskused ebaõiglase maailmaga silmitsi seismisel ning sõnum enda väärtustamise ja hindamise olulisusest.

Töö teises osas uuritakse seda, kuidas on muusikavideod tõlgitud teistesse meediumitesse, eelmainitud *webtooniks* “Save Me” ning mobiilimängudeks “BTS World” ja “BTS Universe Story”. Peamiste teoreetiliste allikatena kasutasin Anton Popoviči, Roman Jakobsoni, Mihhail Bahtini, Peeter Toropi, Klaus Kaindli, Rick Iedema, James Holmesi ja Erwin Panofski lähenemisi. Käsitledes muusikavideoid kui prototekste (Popoviči terminoloogias), uurisin nendes sisalduvate visuaalsete elementide ja motiivide transmutatsiooni teistes meediasaadustes, mida saab vaadelda metatekstidena, tuues välja nendevahelised sarnasused ja erinevused. Holmesi kolmetasandilise tõlketooria ning Panofski kolmetasandilise ikonograafilise teooria rakendamisel ilmnis, et elementideks, mis olid edukalt tõlgitud ühest meediumist teise, olid just BTS-i poeetilise maailma invariantseid ja integraalseid teemasid, mis tuvastati muusikavideote analüüsimisel. Selle avastuse põhjal pakkusin välja termini prototeema. Prototeema on abstraktne idee, mis on antud juhul algallikaks, mida teistesse meediumitesse tõlgitakse ning sellisena ka eri meediaplatvormidel avaldatud tekste ühendavaks lüliks. Prototeemade tõlkimine on intersemiootilises ruumis toimuv resemiotiseerimise protsess. See uuel alusel määratletud tõlkeprotsess on tihedalt seotud BTS-i loometerviku transmeedialisusega (ja selle laiendusega muude transmeedialiste süsteemidega).

Töö viimase, kolmanda osa eesmärgiks oli selgitada BTS-i Universumi frantsiisi ülesehituse ehk Big Hit Entertainmenti ametliku transmeedialise loojutustamise strateegia tagamaid, eelkõige seda, miks mõned individuaalsed teosed, mis on sama prototeema tõlgeteks, on sellest universumist välja jäetud. Analüüsimisel kasutasin Henry Jenkinsi, Jeff Gomezi, Carlos Scolari, Lisbeth Klastrupi ja Susana Tosca ja teiste uurijate transmeedialise loojutustamise teooriaid, mille tulemusel ilmnes, et BTS-i Universum, mis pidevalt laieneb, ei sisalda kõiki bändi poolt loodud teoseid, kuna narratiiv, mis sellisest tervikust tekiks, avaldaks olulist mõju kõikide individuaalsete osiste tõlgendusele. Ent transmeedialised teosed peavad järgima teatavaid reegleid, säilitamaks süsteemi elujõulisuse ja kasumlikkuse. Ühelt poolt oleks publikul üleliia keerukat võrgustikku keeruline jälgida, teisalt oleks kõikide tekstide allutamine ühele narratiivile vastuvõtjaid piirav, kuna pärsiks individuaalsete osiste avatust uutele või erinevatele tõlgendustele, ning oleks raskestimõistetavad neile, kellel puuduvad ekstratekstilised teadmised narratiivi jälgimiseks.

Siiski on poetilise maailma sidus ja struktureeritud loominguline identiteet transmeedialisuse eeltingimuseks ning fännidel, kes on huvitatud ja motiveeritud sügavamaid tähendusi ja varjatud elemente otsima, on võimalus leida seoseid bändi loometerviku raames. Seega frantsiisi struktuur rahuldab uue meedia ajastu publiku vajadusi, võimaldab sisu levitatavust ning soodustab fännide loomingulisust ja individuaalseid tõlgendusi, seda, mida Mittell nimetas drillitavuseks.

Uurimistöös läbi viidud analüüs ja selle tulemused võimaldasid mõista paremini K-popis kasutatavaid tähendusloomelisi strateegiaid ning BTS-i frantsiisi loomise tagamaid. Siiski ei ole uurimustöö kasulik üksnes BTS-i loomingu mõistmiseks, kuivõrd nende strateegiaid järgivad ka paljud teised Korea bändid, mistõttu on need strateegiad nüüdseks iseloomulikud sealsele muusikatööstusele laiemalt. Samuti on see viljakas valdkond edasiseks uurimiseks. Käesolev töö on kasutatav ka lähtekohana muusikavideode poeetika loomisel ja uurimisel, pakkudes teoreetilise raamistiku selle rikkaliku semiootilise valdkonna edasiseks uurimiseks ning heites valgust viisidele, kuidas luuakse ja kommunikeeritakse tähendusi ja sõnumeid audiovisuaalses loomingus.

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