

Nietzsche's Will to Power in Popular Music: A Linguistic and Literary Analysis Of G-Dragon's *Power*

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ABSTRACT: People often enjoy songs not only for their melodic attraction, but also for the meaning behind the lyrics. This study examines the philosophical and linguistic dimensions of G-Dragon's song "Power" by applying Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the will to power. Using an interdisciplinary approach that combines critical discourse analysis and literary theory, the study reveals how the lyrics function as a declaration of strength, resilience, and self-overcoming. The analysis focuses on the song's key linguistic features, such as the frequent use of personal pronouns, metaphors of conflict, and intertextual references, to show how they construct a discourse of empowerment and resistance against public criticism. The findings suggest that "Power" is not just a musical performance, but a contemporary adaptation of Nietzschean thought, where the artist's personal struggles are transformed into a form of philosophical expression. This demonstrates that popular music can be a powerful medium for exploring profound philosophical themes within the context of global celebrity culture.

KEYWORDS: Will to Power, Nietzschean Philosophy, Critical Discourse Analysis, Philosophy in Popular Culture, G-Dragon

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is not just a means of communication, but also a system shaped by structured components that carry meaning (Rabiah, 2018). Hence, it allows people to share ideas, emotions, and cultural values through spoken or written forms. According to Alsaawi (2019), spoken language is used more frequently than written language due to its spontaneity and natural flow. One of the most prominent spoken forms of language in everyday life is song.

Songs are not only artistic performances but also contain rich and meaningful texts. Rosita et al. (2019) describe songs as written literary works that express a person's thoughts and emotions through lyrical language. Although some people appreciate music for its tunes and beats, others are attracted to the messages and ideas expressed in the lyrics. In this way, songs become more than entertainment; they transform into platforms for personal expression, social critique, and even philosophical discourse.

Within the fields of linguistics and literature, song lyrics can be examined through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and literary theory. CDA, as proposed by Fairclough (1995), explores how language reflects and shapes power relations, ideologies, and identities in society. Scholars such as Van Dijk (1993), Wodak (2001), and Gee (2011) have contributed significantly to the development of CDA as a method for uncovering the social and political layers embedded in texts, including music lyrics. Literary theory complements this approach by allowing readers to interpret deeper meanings, symbols, and philosophical ideas conveyed through poetic language.

In today's global music landscape, many artists use their lyrics as a form of self-expression and social commentary. One such figure is G-Dragon—born Kwon Ji Yong, a prominent South Korean artist known for his remarkable influence in the K-pop industry. He began his music journey at the age of 8 as a trainee under SM Entertainment before joining YG Entertainment, where he later debuted in 2006 as the leader of the internationally renowned group BIGBANG. Over the years, BIGBANG has made an amazing mark both in South Korea and around the world, earning praise for their creative music and the way they have influenced culture. Beyond his group activities, G-Dragon has built a celebrated solo career. His first debut solo studio album, called *Heartbreaker*, was released in 2009. Three years after his debut album, he released his first extended play, *One of a Kind*, in 2012. As of the end of 2012, the album netted in over 200,000 copies, making it the best-selling album by a Korean soloist since the release of his first album *Heartbreaker* in 2009. His second album, *Coup d'Etat*, was released in September 2013. The album entered the Billboard 200, making G-Dragon the first Korean act to have multiple entries in the chart. The success of the *Coup d'Etat* led to G-Dragon winning Artist of the Year at the 2013 Mnet Asian Music Awards. After a four-year hiatus as a solo artist, G-Dragon released his second extended play *Kwon Ji Yong*, in 2017. In the United States, *Kwon Ji Yong* became his best-selling album and the first by a Korean soloist to spend multiple weeks atop the Billboard World Albums chart. After approximately eight years of hiatus, he returned with a new album titled *Übermensch*, featuring the track 'Power,' which was released first on October 21 2024, as a single track.

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This study focuses on the song "Power" from G-Dragon's *Übermensch* album. It aims to explore how the song reflects Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical concept of the "Will to power", using both a linguistic and literary approach. The decision to analyse G-Dragon is intentional, not only because of his legendary status in K-pop but also due to the lack of research that applies CDA to Eastern pop icons. Most existing studies tend to centre on Western artists, leaving a gap in understanding how Asian musicians engage with global philosophical ideas. By analysing G-Dragon's work, this paper contributes to a more inclusive discourse, showing how philosophical themes transcend cultural boundaries.

Several previous studies support the importance of using CDA to analyse music. For instance, Hasminur, Charlina, and Sinaga (2024) conducted a CDA on "Komang" by Indonesian singer Raim Laode. Their research revealed how the lyrics critique social injustice and convey messages of struggle and hope through the use of symbolic language. Another study by Paratama, Wibawa, and Puspitasari (2024) examined the moral messages in Maroon 5's song lyrics, categorising them into themes of personal reflection, social relationships, and spiritual connection. These studies demonstrate how music can serve as a medium for conveying profound moral, ideological, and philosophical content. Inspired by these works, the object of the present study endeavours to: 1) discover the linguistic features in G-Dragon's "Power" that express the discourse of resilience, identity, and agency; and 2) reveal how Nietzsche's concept of the "will to power" is manifested through the song's literary elements and rhetorical strategies.

To achieve this, the researcher adopts Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of CDA, which includes: textual analysis—examining vocabulary, grammar, metaphors, and cohesion in the lyrics; discursive practice—analysing how the lyrics are produced, distributed, and interpreted; and social practice—understanding how the lyrics relate to broader social ideologies and power relations. Thus, this paper offers readers a new perspective on how K-pop, through artists like G-Dragon, can serve as a powerful platform for philosophical and ideological expression. By examining "Power" through the lenses of Nietzschean thought and critical discourse, the study demonstrates how lyrics can transcend entertainment, providing insight into identity, transformation, and the human drive for meaning.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a multidisciplinary approach that studies language use beyond the sentence level, focusing on how meaning is constructed in specific contexts. It investigates the relationship between language, communication, and social interaction. Gee (2011) suggests that discourse goes beyond just words; it encompasses the ways people act, interact, and exist in the world. In a similar thought, Schiffrin (1994) highlights that discourse analysis considers not only the structures of language but also its social purposes, which helps researchers understand how texts communicate ideas, shape identities, and mirror cultural norms. In the context of song lyrics, discourse analysis is useful because lyrics often serve as narratives that embody personal, cultural, and ideological perspectives.

B. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) builds on traditional discourse analysis by examining how language connects to power, ideology, and social inequalities. Fairclough (1995) conceptualised CDA as a three-dimensional model consisting of: (1) textual analysis, (2) discursive practice, and (3) social practice. Van Dijk (1993) emphasises that CDA reveals the ways discourse maintains or challenges power relations, while Wodak (2001) highlights its role in uncovering hidden ideologies. In analysing song lyrics, CDA is particularly effective because music often functions as a site of resistance, self-expression, and social commentary. By applying CDA to G-Dragon's "Power," the study uncovers how linguistic features and discursive strategies convey resilience, empowerment, and identity within the cultural and social context of K-pop. Here is the explanation of each of the three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model proposed by Fairclough (1995).

1) Textual Analysis

Textual analysis focuses on the linguistic features of the text itself. This includes vocabulary choices, grammar, cohesion, metaphor, rhetorical devices, and stylistic elements. The aim is to examine how language constructs meaning, conveys emotions, or builds a particular image.

2) Discursive Practice

Discursive practice examines the processes of text production, distribution, and consumption. It considers who creates the text, for whom it is intended, and how audiences interpret it. This stage also involves intertextuality, showing how the text connects to or borrows from other texts and discourses.

3) Social Practice

Social practice situates the text within broader social, cultural, and ideological contexts. It explores how discourse mirrors, reinforces, or questions power structures, ideologies, and social inequalities. In short, Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis offers a thorough framework for analysing texts. Altogether, these three dimensions demonstrate that discourse is not only a matter of language but also a social action that influences and is influenced by culture, power, and society.

C. Nietzsche's Philosophy: The Will to Power

The philosophical framework of this study is grounded in Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the will to power. Nietzsche (1886/1968) proposed that life is fundamentally driven not by survival alone but by a creative force of self-overcoming and transformation, which he termed the will to power. This concept refers to the human drive to assert, expand, and enhance one's existence through struggle, creativity, and agency. Scholars such as Richardson (1996) and Leiter (2019) interpret the will to power as both a psychological force and a metaphysical principle that underpins human action and meaning-making. In the context of literature and art, the will to power can be seen in expressions of strength, defiance, and renewal. Examining G-Dragon's "Power" from this perspective shows how the lyrics reflect Nietzschean ideas of resilience, identity, and existential affirmation, indicating that popular music can act as a vehicle for deep philosophical expression.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design that focuses on textual analysis. The main objective is to explore how G-Dragon's song "Power", from his album *Übermensch*, embodies philosophical, ideological, and literary meanings. The approach integrates Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Nietzschean philosophy, particularly the will to power.

A. Data Collection

The primary data source in this study is the official lyrics of the song "Power" by G-Dragon. The lyrics were obtained from reliable and verified sources, including G-Dragon's official music distribution platform and trusted lyric databases (e.g., Genius, Naver Music, or Melon). The data is collected in its English translation of Korean. Secondary data includes relevant scholarly works, previous studies on CDA and Nietzsche's philosophy, published interviews with G-Dragon, and online materials that provide context about the artist's intent, themes, and stylistic choices.

B. Data Analysis

The analysis of G-Dragon's *Power* was conducted in three stages, following an interdisciplinary framework that integrates linguistic, literary, and philosophical approaches.

1) Descriptive Linguistic Profiling

In the first stage, the lyrics were examined at the surface level to establish an objective baseline. Keyword frequencies, collocations, and repetitions were identified, focusing on terms such as power, rise, fight, strong, and personal pronouns like *I*, *you*, and *we*. Patterns of modality (e.g., must, will, can) were also counted to determine the intensity of obligation, determination, and possibility expressed in the text. This descriptive profiling provided a preliminary overview of the dominant linguistic features that frame the song's central message.

2) Critical Discourse Analysis

Building on the descriptive profiling, the lyrics were then analysed using Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis.

- At the textual level, attention was given to word choice, metaphors, modality, repetition, and grammatical structures that construct the theme of empowerment.
- At the level of discursive practice, the analysis considered the processes of production and interpretation, including how "Power" was released, promoted, and received in both media and fan discourses.
- At the social practice level, the study interpreted how the song reflects or challenges broader ideologies, cultural identities, and the dynamics of the K-pop industry as a global cultural field.

This stage allowed the lyrics to be situated not only as textual artefacts but also as part of a wider socio-cultural discourse.

3) Philosophical Synthesis: Nietzsche's Will to Power

The final stage involved a philosophical reading of the discourse findings through the lens of Nietzsche's concept of the will to power. Themes such as self-overcoming, creative agency, resistance, transformation, and existential strength were identified in key lyric lines and metaphors. By mapping the results of the CDA onto Nietzschean philosophy, the analysis demonstrated how the song articulates an existential declaration of strength and resilience. This synthesis emphasised the interdisciplinary nature of the study, showing how a popular music text can serve as a medium for philosophical expression.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1) DESCRIPTIVE LINGUISTIC PROFILING

The first stage of the analysis involved examining the linguistic surface features of the lyrics in G-Dragon's "Power." The profiling revealed several dominant lexical and grammatical patterns that frame the song's central discourse of empowerment and self-assertion.

Below is the table that shows each feature and example from the lyrics.

Table 1.1 Descriptive Linguistic Profiling in G-Dragon's "Power"

Features	Data from the Song Lyrics	Evidence
Main Keyword	<i>Power</i>	Repeated across chorus: "Now I got the power, the power, power-up power."
Another Related Terms	<i>Strong, Prove, Fight, Free, King, G.O.A.T, Army</i>	"Prove 'em all wrong"; "Born to be a one-man army."
Personal Pronouns	<i>I, you</i>	"I got the power"; "Do not waste your time, yeah, it's gotta be me"; "Who run the world? You."
Object Pronouns	<i>Me, them</i>	"Do not waste your time, yeah, it's gotta be me"; "Prove 'em all wrong."
Possessive Adjectives	<i>Your, my girl, my brothers</i>	"But my girl, y'all my brothers."
Possessive Pronouns	<i>yours</i>	"The world is yours."
Modality Markers	<i>gotta</i>	"Do not waste your time, yeah, it's gotta be me."
Collocations and Semantic Clusters	<i>"forcefully criticize," "shush all the comments," "prove 'em all wrong," and "beautiful just being myself"</i>	They are shown in the lyrics. It shows lexical clustering around empowerment, self-defense, and authenticity.
Interjections and Onomatopoeia	<i>Yep-yep, Yap-yap, Ho!, Bang</i>	"I'm free (Yap-yap)"; "I got the power... (Yep-yep)"; "Born to be a one-man army 'minefield' (Bang)."
Figurative Language and Metaphors	<i>One-man army, minefield, dragonfly, flying high</i>	"Born to be a one-man army 'minefield'"; "Like a Dragonfly, a spot to rest."
Geographical References	<i>Asia, Europe, Australia, Africa, America</i>	"News Asia, Europe to Australia, Africa to America."
Intertextual References	<i>Übermensch, G.O.A.T, Arirang, Started from the bottom</i>	"When G.D's in the house (Übermensch)"; "G to the D or G.O.A.T"; "Started from the bottom 'now, here.'"

The linguistic profiling of G-Dragon's "Power" highlights the dominance of the keyword "power" and related terms, such as "prove," "fight," and "free," which emphasise strength and self-assertion. Frequent use of personal pronouns ("I," "you") and possessive forms ("my girl," "my brothers") reinforces identity and solidarity, while object pronouns ("me," "them") mark opposition to critics. Modality markers like "gotta" signal determination, and collocations such as "forcefully criticise" and "prove 'em all wrong" express resistance and affirmation. Interjections ("Yep-yep," "Yap-yap") and metaphors ("one-man army," "flying high") enhance rhythm and symbolically frame resilience. Global references and intertextual allusions ("Übermensch," "G.O.A.T") situate the persona within both popular culture and philosophical discourse, projecting empowerment and authenticity.

2) Critical Discourse Analysis

The lyrics of "Power" can be read as more than just entertainment; it is a performance of identity and resistance. Through repetition of "I got the power," the artist, who is G-Dragon, positions himself as an empowered subject who is in control of his narrative. This self-assertion directly counters the "comments," "memes," and "blah-blah" that symbolise public criticism and online noise. By dismissing these external voices, the lyrics frame critics as irrelevant and portray the self as resilient and untouchable.

At the same time, the song outlines both individuality and inclusivity. The strong focus on the pronoun "I" emphasises personal authority, yet phrases like "my brothers" and "the world is yours" extend empowerment outward to listeners. This dual positioning allows the persona to embody both the lone fighter and the collective leader, reinforcing his legitimacy in the eyes of the audience or the listener.

The language of competition and strength, through metaphors like "one-man army" or "minefield", situates the self in a battlefield of culture, media, and reputation. Hence, power is not abstract; it is performed as survival and triumph in a noisy, critical environment. Even references to geographical references ("Asia to America") expand this battle onto a worldwide stage, suggesting that the artist's self-struggle and empowerment resonate beyond local boundaries.

Underlying the discourse is a subtle critique of power itself. Lines mentioning "power abuse" and "questioned tolerance" acknowledge the darker sides of authority, yet these issues are quickly overshadowed by the artist's personal strength. This reveals a tension: while systemic power problems are named, they are not explored; instead, the focus shifts back to self-mastery and proof of personal legitimacy ("I've got all the receipts").

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In this way, the lyrics construct a discourse that both resists public judgment and reproduces a competitive, individualist view of success. The message portrays the artist as someone who has endured criticism and emerged stronger, while also reinforcing the idea that true freedom comes from embracing one's authentic self despite the opinion of others.

3) Philosophical Synthesis: Nietzsche's Will to Power

This discourse of resilience and authenticity draws deeper philosophical ideas. The opening reference to "Übermensch" signals an alignment with Nietzsche's concept of self-overcoming and creative power. Reading the lyrics through Nietzsche's will to power allows us to see how the song transforms individual struggle into a broader philosophy of strength and superiority.

Nietzsche's concept of the will to power describes a fundamental drive in human beings to expand, create, and affirm life. In "Power," this is embodied in the repeated declarations of self-mastery ("I got the power") and transformation ("Prove 'em all wrong," "Started from the bottom, now here"). The song illustrates self-overcoming: the artist reshapes negative comments into fuel for empowerment, which rejects the herd mentality of critics and affirms his own values.

The lyrics also echo Nietzsche's idea of value creation. Lines such as "I'm beautiful just being myself" redefine beauty as authenticity, rather than meeting others' expectations. This imaginative approach embodies the idea of the "Übermensch," who creates their own values instead of simply following traditional norms.

However, there are also tensions. Nietzsche's will to power is about creative becoming, not mere recognition. In contrast, the song's reliance on proof ("I've got all the receipts") and geographical references ("Asia to America") suggests a shift toward will to recognition within a celebrity-driven, media-saturated world. Systemic issues like "power abuse" are briefly noted but not interrogated, revealing how commercial discourse often prioritises personal branding over radical critique.

Nevertheless, the lyrics present a popular-culture adaptation of Nietzschean thought: empowerment framed as freedom from external judgment and affirmation of one's own strength. While less radical than Nietzsche's vision, it offers listeners a human and relatable form of philosophical empowerment, which turns struggle into affirmation and criticism into creative self-definition.

From the analysis above, G-Dragon's "Power" emerges as a work rich in repetition, metaphors, and intertextual references that emphasise identity, resilience, and self-assertion. Critical discourse analysis shows how these elements navigate authority and resistance within a global cultural context, while also reflecting an individualistic notion of success. Viewed through the lens of Nietzsche's concept of the will to power, the song can be interpreted as a popular reinterpretation of philosophical self-overcoming, which encourages listeners to embrace authenticity despite criticism, even within the constraints of celebrity culture.

V. CONCLUSION

The analysis of G-Dragon's song "Power" reveals it's more than just a pop song, it is a deliberate act of self-assertion and a commentary on power and identity in the modern world. The lyrics consistently use language of strength, resistance, and self-empowerment, positioning the artist as someone who has overcome public criticism to find personal freedom.

While the song briefly touches on "power abuse" and "questioned tolerance," it does not deeply explore these issues. Instead, it quickly redirects the focus back to the artist's personal resilience and triumph. This individualistic perspective on success aligns with Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the "Will to Power," where the drive for self-overcoming and transformation is key.

Ultimately, the paper argues that "Power" serves as a real-world example of Nietzschean philosophy adapted for popular culture. It shows how artists can use their music to turn personal struggles and criticism into a message of empowerment, offering listeners a relatable way to embrace their own authenticity and strength.

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APPENDIX

A Full Lyrics of G-Dragon's "Power"

[Intro]

When G.D's in the house (Übermensch)
When G.D's in the house
Guess who's back (It's your boy G.D; Yeah, yeah)

[Chorus]

Now I got the power
The power, power-up power, power
The power-up power, power (Yet-yet)
Forcefully criticize, spread a meme, talk blah-blah, shout out
Pump up the power, I'm free (Yap-yap)
Do not waste your time, yeah, it's gotta be me
Prove 'em all wrong, I've got all the receipts
I got the power, the power, power-up power
I'm beautiful just being myself (Yep-yep)

[Verse 1]

Others said to me it's e-easy
Shush all the Comments, ripples, attention-seekers
A limited edition of the second generation, a masterpiece of the century
Like a Dragonfly, a spot to rest, a global luxury
Hi, hey, how you doin'? My-my name is (Called)
G to the D or 'G.O.A.T' the livin' legend (Ho!)
King is still poppin' (Star) 'K'- again
I heard you've got the straight flush, hah (Whatever)
"He's 4ever royal"

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[Pre-Chorus]

I don't give a sh- laughing end, 'money' donating 'millions' grin
Power abuse, questioned tolerance, natural disasters, unavoidable circumstances
Way too strong, I've got that

[Chorus]

Now I got the power
The power, power-up power, power
The power-up power, power (Yet-yet)
Forcefully criticize, spread a meme, talk blah-blah, shout out
Pump up the power, I'm free (Yap-yap)
Do not waste your time, yeah, it's gotta be me
Prove 'em all wrong, I've got all the receipts
I got the power, the power, power-up power
I'm beautiful just being myself (Yep-yep)

[Verse 2]

Born to be a one-man army 'minefield' (Born to be) 'BANG'
Nothin' you ain't know, but a 'G' thang
But my girl, y'all my brothers (Who run the world?)
The world is yours
News Asia (Mir) Europe to Australia (Narsha)
Africa to America (Welcome)
Started from the bottom 'now, here' (Arirang)

[Pre-Chorus]

I don't give a sh- laughing end, 'money' donating 'millions' grin
Power abuse, questioned tolerance, natural disasters, unavoidable circumstances
Way too strong, I've got that

[Chorus]

Now I got the power
The power, power-up power, power
The power-up power, power (Yet-yet)
Forcefully criticize, spread a meme, talk blah-blah, shout out
Pump up the power, I'm free (Yap-yap)
Do not waste your time, yeah, it's gotta be me
Prove 'em all wrong, I've got all the receipts
I got the power, the power, power-up power
I'm beautiful just being myself (Yep-yep)

[Outro]

I got the power the power power, "flying high"



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