

From Golden Maknae to Global Soloist: A Narrative Study on Jungkook's Artistic Journey

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Abstract

This article examines Jungkook's artistic journey in his solo album *Golden* through a qualitative descriptive approach with narrative and thematic analysis methods. The *Golden* album is viewed not just as a musical work, but as an emotional narrative that displays a spectrum of experiences of love, loss, longing, and self-acceptance framed in the representation of lyrics, music videos, and media. Each song is analyzed as a form of expression of Jungkook's identity that develops from the figure of BTS's "Golden Maknae" to an autonomous and reflective global soloist. The research findings reveal that *Golden*'s songs exhibit intertwined emotional and relational patterns, showcasing the psychological complexity and emotional maturity they offer to listeners. In addition, the audio-visual representation in the music video and Jungkook's appearance in various international media strengthen the public's interpretation of his new identity as a solo artist. This article highlights the importance of reading popular music works not only as entertainment products but also as narrative and emotional artifacts that mediate the relationship between artists and listeners in the context of global culture and the digital era.



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INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, BTS has become a global cultural phenomenon that transcends the boundaries of the music industry. They have not only influenced the mainstream of world pop music but have also managed to build a strong emotional network between artists and fans in various parts of the world. BTS's success is not only due to the quality of their musicality but also because of the personal narratives they present and their close relationship with their fandom, ARMY (Kim, 2023). In this context, BTS members are not only seen as K-pop idols, but also as a representation of a complex and dynamic generation in facing the digital and global world. One member who is interesting to explore further is Jeon Jungkook, who is known as the "Golden Maknae" because of his versatile abilities. The nickname was given by BTS's leader, Kim Namjoon as known as RM of BTS. "Maknae" in Korean usually represents the youngest member in a group. Jungkook is the youngest member of the BTS, so the phrase "Golden Maknae" is very appropriate for him. Along with BTS's collective hiatus due to military service, the members began launching solo projects as personal expressions, as well as part of a long-term existence strategy. During his solo journey, Jungkook has performed works such as "Still with You", "My You", "Seven", "Standing Next to You", and "Hate You", which not only emphasize the musical side but also contain strong emotional reflections and identity narratives. This artistic journey reflects a shift from the image of an innocent "maknae" to a mature and freely expressive global soloist (Lim, 2022; Kim & Hutt, 2021). Jungkook officially released his solo album *Golden* in November 2023. Since the release of *Seven* in 2023, Jungkook has achieved several milestones that have solidified his position as a global solo artist. The song was named *Billboard*'s No. 1 Global Song of the Summer, and also set a record as the fastest song in *Spotify* history to reach one billion streams, surpassing the previous record of just 108 days. This achievement not only marks commercial success but also confirms Jungkook's significant impact as a solo artist in the international music industry, while highlighting the changing dynamics of artistic identity in the current K-pop landscape (Billboard, 2023; Forbes, 2023; The Music Essentials, 2023). Furthermore, Jungkook has been active in solo activities and has received widespread attention from international media and critics since the release of the album *Golden*. This phenomenon shows the flexibility of the K-pop industry system, where an

artist can play a collective role as part of a group, while also appearing as an individual with their own characteristics and narrative.

In South Korean popular culture, solo projects are not a separation from group identity, but rather an expansion and strengthening of personal character within a broader framework (Proctor, 2021; Lee & Nguyen, 2020). The personal narrative built through song lyrics, stage performances, media interviews, and live broadcasts is an important part in shaping the public's perception of Jungkook as an artist and a person. Additionally, the active role of the ARMY in shaping and disseminating the narrative. BTS's fandom not only functions as passive consumers but as active participants who produce meaning through comments, translations, reviews, and social media content. Flinchum et al. (2024) showed that parasocial interactions in the YouTube comment section created a perception of emotional closeness between Jungkook and ARMY. This is reinforced by Chang and Park's (2019) study, which describes ARMY as a "digital tribe" that moves globally with a strong solidarity network. Furthermore, ARMY also acts as a social and cultural agent. Kim and Hutt (2021) illustrate that ARMY is often involved in advocacy, donations, and social movements driven by the values voiced by BTS. In Indonesia, this involvement can be seen from various volunteer activities and fandom-based communities that demonstrate emotional loyalty and active cultural participation (Utami & Winduwati, 2020). In this context, Jungkook's solo work is not only a personal artistic expression but also a space for negotiating meaning between the artist and his fans in a global cultural network.

Although there have been many studies discussing BTS from the perspective of culture, fandom, or digital communication, studies that specifically examine the narrative structure and emotional themes in BTS members' solo works are still very limited. Jungkook's artistic journey as a soloist holds extensive analytical potential, especially in seeing how he represents identity, feelings, and social relations in the contemporary popular culture landscape. Through narrative analysis of songs, music videos, social media, and interviews, this study aims to explore how Jungkook constructs and conveys his personal identity, what emotional themes are dominant in his works, and how these narratives are received and interpreted by his fans. Thus, this article aims not only to present a descriptive artistic portrait of Jungkook but also to contribute to the interdisciplinary academic discourse on Korean popular culture, self-representation, and the dynamics of digital fandom in the era of globalization.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with narrative analysis and thematic analysis methods to deeply explore Jungkook's artistic journey as a soloist through his debut album, *Golden*. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand personal narratives, emotions, and representations of identity built in the musical works and media surrounding Jungkook. The data includes lyrics from the *Golden* album, music videos, and live performances officially released on the HYBE LABELS and BANGTANTV YouTube channels, and some interviews, both local, such as *Suchwita* by SUGA of BTS, and KOREANOW, and international media such as Apple Music, BBC radio 1, Good Morning America, The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon and Rolling Stone are used to strengthen the interpretation of public reception and media narratives about Jungkook as a global solo artist. Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation by collecting, recording, and classifying relevant materials in the form of text, audio-visual, and online media. Furthermore, data analysis techniques were carried out through two complementary approaches. First, narrative analysis, referring to Riessman's concept (2008), was used to dissect the story structure, conflict, and emotional expression in each song, to trace Jungkook's narrative hidden in his musical works. Second, thematic analysis was used to identify patterns of meaning and major themes that emerged from the entire song and media documentation, such as the themes of longing, ambivalence of love, emotional independence, and expression of sensuality. Through the combination of these two analysis techniques, this study is expected to be able to provide a complete and in-depth picture of how Jungkook builds his new artistic identity on his journey from BTS's "Golden Maknae" to a global soloist.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Narratives and Themes in the Songs of the *Golden* Album

The *Golden* album has 11 track lists in it, including the previously released Global smash "Seven (feat. Latto)" in both clean and explicit versions. Then, followed by "3D (feat. Jack Harlow)", "Standing Next to You", "Yes or No", "Please Don't Change (feat. DJ Snake)", "Hate You", "Somebody", "Too Sad to Dance", "Shot Glass of Tears", and "Closer to You (feat. Major Lazer)" which will be discussed in the following discussion.

Seven (feat. Latto)

“Seven” officially marks Jungkook’s solo debut from BTS, and is a refreshing reintroduction to his vocal prowess. The catchy summer track features a collaboration with rapper Latto and was released on July 14 after previously being introduced through a highly-received teaser. The song is available in two versions, a clean version and an explicit version. Through the light and fun music, Jungkook conveys his affection for his partner, promising to love and be by her side with all his heart, both emotionally and physically in seven days a week. In “Seven,” Jungkook presents a narrative of an intense and dedicated romantic relationship, beginning with a tender atmosphere as he comforts his exhausted lover (lyric: “Weight of the world on your shoulders”), an emotional orientation that positions the narrator as a supporting figure. The conflict presented is not a misunderstanding, but rather a heightened emotional intensity and passion, voiced through a relentless promise: “I’ll be fuckin’ you right, seven days a week.” This becomes a climax that emphasizes total emotional and physical commitment. The phrase “You make Mondays feel like weekends” emphasizes that this relationship goes beyond conventional time limits, depicting an internal conflict of beautiful sacrifice in love life. The song closes with a repeated chorus, emphasizing the narrative that love continues without pause. This narrative is in line with the findings of Adhiesta Nurwidya (2024), who showed that the romantic narrative structure in music lyrics is used to create emotional closeness with listeners through strong verbal and relational processes.

3D (feat. Jack Harlow)

3D is an R&B pop song by South Korean singer Jungkook. The song features a minimalist yet impressive musical composition, combined with a distinctive percussion rhythm to create a nostalgic feel. 3D is Jungkook’s second mainstream solo release after Seven, which was previously released in July 2023. In this song, Jungkook expresses his strong feelings for someone he cannot physically reach. With a touch of clever lyrics, he conveys that because he cannot be there in person, he chooses to see the figure in “3D”. The song also marks his first collaboration with American rapper Jack Harlow. In the song “3D”, Jungkook conveys a narrative about longing for physical presence in a relationship that is hindered by distance and virtual dimensions. From the beginning of the song, the narrator emphasizes emotional and spatial separation through lines such as “I can’t touch you through the phone” and “Or kiss you through the universe”. The main conflict is not a conflict between characters, but is present in the form of a hidden desire to touch, see, and feel their partner in real terms. The 3D metaphor is used as a symbol of the expected dimension of reality: a physical presence that can be fully touched and experienced. The emotional tension develops progressively until it reaches its peak in the repetition of the chorus and the verse section with Jack Harlow, which strengthens the meaning of a romantic relationship through sensual desire and explicit fantasy. There is no complete resolution in the story that is built, but rather an affirmation that desire remains hanging and becomes a kind of emotional longing. This finding is in line with the thoughts of Liebers and Straub (2020), who explain that fantasy in parasocial relationships plays an important role in strengthening emotional attachment to media characters, even when there is no direct interaction. In this context, “3D” represents an intense romantic fantasy through the medium of music, showing how the virtual dimension can create an emotional connection that feels real and fills a void that cannot be reached physically. The song, with its suggestive and repetitive storytelling style, forms a modern narrative of long-distance love in a digital age that is highly connected yet separate.

Standing Next to You

“Standing Next to You” shows Jungkook’s strong and romantic emotional side, embracing the “us against the world” vibe that is typical of many classic pop songs from the 2000s. With jazz-funk and disco-pop arrangements, the song presents a dramatic yet elegant retro feel, perfectly in line with the emotional message it wants to convey. Through its lyrics, Jungkook describes how deep feelings of love can grow just from being together physically, standing side by side with the person you love. Behind the main narrative, the song also inserts several subtle references that seem to refer to Jungkook’s previous solo works, as well as memories with BTS. This makes “Standing Next to You” not just a love song but also a reflection of his musical and emotional journey, both personally and professionally. Furthermore, the conflict in the song does not come from within the relationship, but rather from external pressures, as shown in the lyrics “They can’t deny our love” and “They can’t divide us”. However, this challenge is faced with full confidence and a strong emotional bond, as expressed in the metaphor “It’s deeper than DNA”, which signifies a love that is deeply and naturally attached. The repetition of the phrase “Standing next to you” at the end of the song serves as a reaffirmation of commitment and love that never fades. Interestingly, the lyrics of the song also insert subtle references to

Jungkook's previous solo work and journey with BTS, making this song not only a declaration of love but also a reflection of his personal and artistic journey. This kind of narrative is in line with the findings of Hanlon & Taruffi (2025), who revealed that most popular songs today depict an insecure romantic attachment style, characterized by a longing for physical closeness and emotional security. Thus, "Standing Next to You" represents a modern narrative form of love that remains strong despite being tested by external pressures, and strengthens the emotional bond between the singer and his listeners.

Yes or No

The song "Yes or No" presents a light-hearted narrative that depicts the familiar emotional dynamics of the early stages of a romantic relationship. Jungkook, as the narrator, questions his lover's feelings through an explicit question, such as "Are you feeling the rush?", "Are you thinking 'bout us?" and "Are we falling in love?", which contain both doubt and hope. The story structure of the song begins with a description of a questionable situation, where the narrator tries to read his partner's signals and expressions, but remains unclear. The emotional tension is not conveyed dramatically, but through the relaxed musical tone and intimate conversational nuances, reflecting a typical youthful romantic approach. Additionally, "Yes or No" shows how doubt and the desire for certainty can be part of a larger love narrative, while also showing Jungkook's gentle, honest, and curious side in expressing his emotions. While it doesn't offer a definitive resolution, the song does reflect the emotional dynamics common in modern relationships, especially during the emotionally tense initial courtship period. This finding is in line with the results of a study by Alaei et al. (2022), which revealed that a person's favorite song lyrics often reflect their attachment style. Individuals with an anxious attachment style tend to like lyrics that convey relationship anxiety and a need for emotional reassurance. Thus, "Yes or No" is not only a reflection of Jungkook's feelings as an artist, but also represents the collective narrative of a young generation who are cautiously seeking love and longing for validation.

Please Don't Change (feat. DJ Snake)

The song "Please Don't Change" is one of the tracks on the Golden album that highlights Jungkook's soft and reflective side. This song is a collaboration with DJ Snake, presenting a blend of electronic and atmospheric pop nuances that support the song's emotional theme. In the lyrics, Jungkook conveys the hope that the person he loves will remain themselves and not change, even amidst the pressure or uncertainty of the relationship. This message emphasizes the importance of acceptance and authenticity in love, while also showing the narrator's sincerity in loving unconditionally. With a warm melody and a not-too-intense beat, this song balances out the other tracks on the Golden album and shows Jungkook's development as a soloist who is able to express vulnerability musically. In "Please Don't Change," Jungkook presents a sincere and comforting love story amidst the pressures and spotlight of the entertainment world, characterized by lyrics such as "Lights on camera" and "Fast-life stamina." The narrator makes a simple yet meaningful request: for the partner to remain themselves, always "Please don't change." This shows a form of unconditional love, where authenticity and consistency of character are more important than popularity or social expectations. Emotional conflict arises from the fear that the pressures of career and fame can change the person they love, symbolized by phrases such as "light years away." The resolution in this song is not a guarantee, but a commitment to continue to accept the partner as they are, even under the public spotlight. The closing lyrics reaffirm that love will endure unconditionally: even though distance and time separate, authenticity will always be maintained. This narrative is reinforced by the findings of Kurtin et al. (2019), who explained that authenticity when musicians present their 'real' emotional selves encourages the formation of stronger parasocial relationships between artists and listeners. When Jungkook openly shares these vulnerable feelings, he not only strengthens the emotional bond with fans but also creates an atmosphere of closeness similar to a direct interpersonal relationship. The song is thus not just a form of artistic expression, but also a narrative strategy that maintains trust and closeness between Jungkook and ARMY, even amidst the hustle and bustle of music fame.

Hate You

Jungkook's "Hate You" is a deeply emotional and touching song, depicting the inner conflict of someone who still loves someone even though their relationship has ended. With a calm ballad feel and simple yet powerful lyrics, the song reflects the narrator's attempts to convince himself that he hates his ex when all he feels is hurt and longing. The lyrics such as "Hating you is the only way it doesn't hurt" convey a complex emotional ambivalence, making the song a reflection of a love that is not yet completely over. Jungkook conveys these feelings with soft yet meaningful vocals, making "Hate You" one of the most honest and

vulnerable songs on Golden album. In the song "Hate You", Jungkook weaves a narrative about a dramatic and deep inner conflict after the end of a relationship. The song begins with the narrator's absurd hope that his ex "betrayed" or was guilty, even though in reality he didn't show how great the pain is and the need to create reasons so that the wound doesn't get deeper, such as in the lyric "Maybe hating you is the only way it doesn't hurt". This internal conflict develops when he consciously creates an "enemy" figure in his imagination accusing his ex of things that never happened as a means to ease the feeling of loss. This form of pseudo-resolution is reflected in the act of hating as a coping mechanism. However, in the last part, the narrator admits that this hatred is not the truth or the real solution ("It's not the truth" and "It's not the cure"), but the only way for him to avoid greater inner pain. This raw narrative is in line with the results of a study by Chowdary et al. (2024), which explains that lyrics with the theme of ambivalence, a combination of love and hate, are often chosen by listeners who experience a series of complex emotions and try emotional recovery mechanisms through musical expression.

Somebody

Jungkook's "Somebody" presents a calmer yet meaningful emotional reflection compared to the other songs on the Golden album. Wrapped in a soft melody and a contemplative atmosphere, the song raises the theme of letting go of someone who is no longer on the same page, while accepting the fact that love doesn't always have to be owned to be understood. With a melancholic and honest narrative style, "Somebody" describes the process of realizing that loving also means giving space to leave. This song is a portrait of Jungkook's emotional maturity as a solo singer in expressing loss without anger. In "Somebody," Jungkook presents a melancholic narrative about letting go of a relationship that has lost its meaning, even though there is still some affection left. The song begins with a depiction of a lonely road and changing seasons as symbols of the narrator's emotional state, his mood changes, and he begins to accept reality ("Same back roads", "Winter's cold", and "Summer's strange"). Emotional conflict arises when he hopes his ex finds a more suitable "somebody," while realizing that he can no longer be that person ("I hope you know that somebody ain't me"). This indicates a resolution process where he chooses to let go so that both of them can move on. The ending of the song reaffirms acceptance and forgiveness, even though it is full of sadness. This narrative is in line with the findings of Levy et al. (2024), which showed that listeners often choose "coping" songs to process emotions related to loss and relationship changes. Therefore, a song like "Somebody" can provide a sense of validation for the listener's emotional experience and support emotional regulation through reflective lyrical expression.

Too Sad to Dance

"Too Sad to Dance" is one of the most touching tracks on Jungkook's Golden album, with its emotional nuances that feel deep. The song expresses the feelings of loss, regret, and emptiness that arise after a breakup, told from the perspective of someone who can no longer enjoy life to the fullest, even to dance. With a soft melody and reflective lyrics, Jungkook conveys a human personal experience in struggling to forget something, yet is still trapped in memories. This song is not only a form of expression of sadness, but also a sign of his emotional maturity as a soloist who can articulate wounds in the form of poetic music. In "Too Sad to Dance," Jungkook conveys a heartbreak so deep that he feels he can no longer dance, a metaphor for the inability to feel happiness. Starting with an atmosphere of loneliness and emotional collapse through bottled messages and embarrassing club scenes ("Had a couple too many threw up" and "Now, everybody's laughing at me"), the narrator opens up a heavy internal conflict. It culminates when he realizes that his ex will not come back, until, like waiting for a phone call without an answer, he realizes he has to let go of hope. At the end, a father figure appears and advises him to learn to move and speak for himself, indicating a process of reorientation towards acceptance, albeit slowly. This finding is in line with the findings of Chong et al. (2024), who stated that sad music is often used as an emotional coping strategy, helping listeners reflect on their experiences, reduce the intensity of emotions, and build emotional maturity. Songs like "Too Sad to Dance" are not only an expression of sadness but also a means of emotional healing through resonant narratives and melodies.

Shot Glass of Tears

The song "Shot Glass of Tears" presents a thick, melancholic atmosphere, becoming one of Jungkook's works that shows the fragile and reflective side of himself as a soloist. With the metaphor of a small glass filled with tears, this song implies deep emotional wounds and an attempt to hold back feelings of pain silently. Different from the energetic nuances of several other songs on the Golden album, this song appears as a

contemplative ballad that touches on themes of loss, regret, and personal resilience. The song "Shot Glass of Tears" describes the emotional state of an individual who tries to relieve the deep pain of loss or disappointment by escaping into alcohol and painful memories. The song's narrative tells of someone who keeps their sadness deep inside, like holding tears in a small glass while trying to "drink" the sadness so as not to look fragile. The narrative structure shows how unbearable pain makes the character lose control and experience deep emotional distortion. This is in line with the findings of Larwood & Dingle (2022), who stated that individuals with high levels of rumination tend to listen to sad music that is in line with their mood as a form of emotional escape. However, this strategy often prolongs negative feelings and strengthens the cycle of sadness. In this context, the song Shot Glass of Tears is not just an outpouring of wounds, but also a psychological portrait of a coping mechanism that is prone to reinforcing feelings of hopelessness, especially if not accompanied by social support or healthy emotional reflection.

Closer to You (feat. Major Lazer)

"Closer to You" is one of the tracks from Jungkook's Golden album featuring a collaboration with the famous EDM group, Major Lazer. This song features intense yet melancholic electronic nuances, creating an introspective atmosphere about a deep desire to get closer to someone who feels far away, both physically and emotionally. The lyrics convey longing and obsession, as if depicting a battle between distance and feeling. With an arrangement that combines a typical tropical dancehall beat and Jungkook's soft yet emotional vocals, Closer to You offers an expression of vulnerability wrapped in a modern and dynamic music production. This song is one representation of how Jungkook expresses the complexity of relationships in a more experimental but still touching format. The song "Closer to You" forms a strong emotional narrative about the desire for closeness in a relationship that is hindered by distance, both physical and emotional. In terms of narrative structure, the song depicts the process of searching for a more intimate connection through body language and the repetition of the phrase "Closer to You," which is the emotional core of the song. Jungkook expresses the longing and need for the presence of a loved one, while the sonic atmosphere of Major Lazer reinforces the feeling of emptiness wrapped in deep longing. Furthermore, from a theoretical perspective, the expression of emotion in this song can be understood as a form of sadness regulation that is in line with the concept of response-dependent regulation outlined by Kahn et al. (2022). They state that listening to music that evokes or amplifies certain emotional experiences, such as sadness or longing, can help listeners process and regulate these emotions more deeply. In this context, the song "Closer to You" becomes a reflective vessel for listeners to identify, understand, and even embrace their vulnerabilities in personal relationships. This song is not only a means of emotional escape but also a safe space that offers validation for feelings of alienation, longing, and the desire to be cared for.

Collective Emotional and Relational Patterns

Through a thematic analysis of all ten songs on Jungkook's Golden album, emotional and relational patterns are found that are interconnected and form a larger narrative about the journey of love, loss, and the search for intimacy. The theme of total and devoted love is strongly seen in songs such as "Seven (feat. Latto)" and "Standing Next to You," where the narrator shows intense emotional and physical commitment. On the other hand, the longing for the physical presence of a partner is reflected in "3D (feat. Jack Harlow)" and "Closer to You (feat. Major Lazer)," which emphasize how distance, both physical and emotional, can create romantic fantasies and a strong urge for closeness. Songs such as "Yes or No" and "Please Don't Change (feat. DJ Snake)" depict the early stages of a relationship and the desire for certainty and unconditional acceptance. Meanwhile, the dark side of love and loss is shown in "Hate You," "Somebody," "Too Sad to Dance," and "Shot Glass of Tears." These four songs highlight emotional coping mechanisms, whether in the form of pseudo-hate, acceptance of the breakup, deep sadness, or escape into alcohol and solitude. These songs not only reflect Jungkook's emotional range but also offer a reflective space for listeners to identify their own emotional experiences. This finding is in line with Alaei et al. (2022) which shows that the lyrics of an individual's favorite songs often reflect their emotional attachment style, as well as a study by Larwood & Dingle (2022) which links the tendency to listen to sad music with coping strategies in individuals who experience high emotional rumination. Thus, Golden is not just a music album, but also a collective emotional narrative that bridges the parasocial relationship between Jungkook and his listeners, allowing for a musical experience that is both personal and universal.

Audio-Visual Narratives: Exploring Jungkook's Official Music Videos

This chapter explores how the emotional narrative in the Golden album is translated into audio-visual form through Jungkook's official music videos. These visualizations enrich the understanding of the lyrics and themes of the songs by presenting symbolic expressions, performative gestures, and cinematic elements that strengthen the emotional message of each track. Based on official sources from the HYBE LABELS YouTube channel, there are only four official music videos released for the songs on the Golden album, namely "Seven" (feat. Latto), "3D" (feat. Jack Harlow), "Standing Next to You", and "Hate You". These four MVs become the main visual media that frame Jungkook's narrative journey as a soloist, while expanding the meaning of the songs through an intense and emotional aesthetic approach.

Seven (feat. Latto): Representation of Love and Romantic Intensity



Figure 1. 정국 (Jung Kook) 'Seven (feat. Latto)' Official MV

The official music video for "Seven" features two key characters: Korean actress Han So-hee, who plays the main love interest, and rapper Latto, who co-stars in both versions of the music video (clean & explicit) as a figure who portrays an alternative emotional chemistry. The visuals for the music video are set in a minimalist aesthetic full of white light, with bright lighting and soft contrasts, creating an atmosphere that is both clean and intimate. Han So-hee is the central figure in the clean version of the music video: she and Jungkook engage in passionate physical interactions hand touches, intense gazes, even intimate yet elegant choreography. Their sensual gestures bring the song's lyrics, promising love "seven days a week," to life, showing an almost unbroken emotional closeness. Scenes such as Jungkook walking towards Han So-hee in an empty white room underscore the metaphor of constant physical presence. In the explicit version of the music video, Latto adds a new visual and emotional dimension. The American rapper's involvement reinforces the themes of sensuality and fantasy, showing a more explicit intensity to the relationship. His presence expands the narrative by emphasizing the verbal and visual boldness of the song's passion, in line with the verses. In short, the "Seven" MV combines sensual choreography, spatial symbolism, and cross-cultural collaboration to convey a sense of intense and ongoing romantic love. This visual exploration enriches the interpretation of the lyrics, providing listeners with an audiovisual experience that reinforces the themes of commitment and passion, affirming that "Seven" is not just a summer pop hymn but also a cinematic work full of emotional depth.

3D (feat. Jack Harlow): Distance Imagery, Fantasy, and Futuristic Pop Visuals



Figure 2. 정국 (Jung Kook) '3D (feat. Jack Harlow)' Official MV

The song “3D” gets a visual representation through a 3-minute 51-second music video directed by Drew Kirsch. The choreography and cinematography in the MV highlight the contrast between public spaces and intimate moments, conveying a strong narrative of physical longing. One scene shows Jungkook singing inside a telephone booth, which symbolizes the limitations of physical interaction in the digital age, in line with the lyrics “I can’t touch you through the phone” and “Or kiss you through the universe.” The visuals then transition to a dynamic scene where Jungkook dances with backup dancers, then shifts to a streetside cafe, where he plays chess with Jack Harlow. This chess game serves as a metaphor for emotional strategy in a long-distance relationship. Harlow’s presence in the MV reflects the duality of perspectives in the song between Jungkook’s sensual longing and Harlow’s playful tone. Overall, the MV reinforces the nuances of tropical R&B with a touch of the early 2000s and combines romantic sentiments and contemporary visual aesthetics. The visual setting also depicts the transition from personal longing to social interaction, showing how technology and physical space can simultaneously create distance and build emotional closeness.

Standing Next to You: Retro Aesthetics and Everlasting Love



Figure 3. 정국 (Jung Kook) 'Standing Next to You' Official MV

The official music video for “Standing Next to You” features Jungkook in a dramatic visual narrative, directed by Tanu Muino and set in Budapest. The music video shows Jungkook chasing a mysterious woman through an emotional choreography sequence, reinforcing the theme of deep connection and commitment as woven into the song’s lyrics. Set against a backdrop of classic architecture and contrasting lighting, the music video creates a retro-funk vibe that aligns with the style of the music. The dynamic and elegant dance moves reflect the spirit of “standing in the fire next to you,” which is loyalty and courage in the face of obstacles with the person you love. The combination of visual elements and choreography emphasizes the message of love that endures beyond time and space.

Hate You: Visual Interpretation of Emotional Wounds



Figure 4. 정국 (Jung Kook) 'Hate You' Official Visualizer

The official music video for “Hate You” features Jungkook in a dark and intense visual palette, fitting the song’s theme of emotional turmoil. The music video opens with Jungkook’s blank, wounded face, highlighted by low-key lighting with sharp shadows, representing the ambivalence between love and hate. Throughout the music video, Jungkook is seen walking alone in empty hallways and quiet rooms, holding a photo or a symbolic object that represents a relationship that has ended. Close-ups emphasize his emotional expression, while the use of mirrors and shadow cuts depict inner conflict and duality of feelings. This visual narrative reinforces the song’s narrative concept: hating to ease deep feelings of love (in lyrics: “Paint you like

the villain that you never were"). With its dark visuals and body movements that tend to be static or slow, the "Hate You" music video reinforces the complex feelings of sadness, regret, and release from a relationship that is not truly over.

Media Interpretation of the Golden Album Narrative

In various international and local media, the emotional narrative of Jungkook's Golden album has been strengthened and expanded through the artist's direct interpretation. In two episodes of Suchwita (Episodes 15 and 21) hosted by SUGA and aired on the BANGTANTV YouTube channel, Jungkook shared an in-depth reflection on the creative process behind the album. He stated that Golden is a collection of special moments in his life where he felt he was in his golden age. He also acknowledged the immense pressure of being a solo artist coming from a group as big as BTS, but emphasized that this experience spurred him to grow and prove his abilities independently. Jungkook also explained that each song on Golden represents different sides of himself, from tenderness to the courage to love. In addition, during his appearance on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon, Jungkook showed off the choreography of the song "Standing Next to You" and created a dynamic interaction with the US audience. This moment showed Jungkook's image as a global artist with strong performative appeal. In an exclusive Q&A released through KOREANOW, Jungkook stated that he wanted Golden to be an album that fully represents him, not just as a singer, but also as a human being with vulnerabilities and hopes in relationships. Meanwhile, in his interview with Good Morning America, Jungkook specifically discussed the song "Seven," highlighting his collaboration with Latto and how it was a pivotal starting point for his solo career. He mentioned that the song's success reflects music's ability to reach emotions across cultures. This finding is in line with the study of Kahn et al. (2022), which explains that music can be a tool for regulating emotions, both responsive to context and independent of immediate emotional reactions.

The positive reception of Jungkook's work was also seen when he received the Top Global K-Pop Song award from the Billboard Music Awards, a recognition of the power of the narrative that is musically packaged in "Seven." His vocal performance on BBC Radio 1 Live Lounge of "Let There Be Love" showed a more emotional and artistic side of Jungkook, reinforcing the understanding that he is able to explore different genres and create emotional depth in live performances. Additionally, in an interview with Zane Lowe for Apple Music, Jungkook reaffirmed that Golden is a representation of his journey as an individual and an artist, as well as a form of emotional communication that he builds with ARMY. Furthermore, the culmination of this artistic expression was seen in a surprise performance at the TSX Stage in Times Square, New York City, on November 9, 2023. In the event, which was broadcast live on BTS and BANGTANTV official channels, Jungkook performed all five of Golden's title tracks, creating a powerful audio-visual experience and an intimate emotional atmosphere amidst the bustling city. The large crowd of fans that filled Times Square demonstrated the strong connection between Jungkook and his audience (Billboard, 2023; Mier, 2023). Media outlets such as Billboard considered this performance as real proof of Jungkook's transformation into a global soloist who is able to reach cross-cultural audiences with authentic and emotional performances (Trust, 2023). The performance was not only part of the album's promotional strategy but also a symbol of Jungkook's mature and strong emotional presence in framing his personal experiences into universal works that can be felt collectively by listeners around the world. Therefore, it can be concluded that Jungkook's presence in various media, both local, such as Suchwita, BANGTANTV, KOREANOW, and international, such as Jimmy Fallon, GMA (Good Morning America), Billboard Music Awards, BBC Radio 1, Apple Music, and Rolling Stone contributed to strengthening the public's interpretation of the Golden album (Apple Music, 2023; BANGTANTV, 2023a; BANGTANTV, 2023b; Good Morning America, 2023; The Music Essentials, 2023; The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon, 2023; BBC Radio 1, 2023). These broadcasts not only expanded the album's promotional reach but also formed a collective narrative about Jungkook's vulnerability, courage, and emotional maturity in framing his personal experiences into a universal work.

CONCLUSION

This study shows how the album Golden represents Jungkook's artistic and personal transition from the "Golden Maknae" figure in BTS to an autonomous, reflective, and global soloist entity. Through a narrative and thematic analysis approach to the song repertoire, visual representation, and its appearance on various media platforms, it is seen that Golden is not just a musical project, but an aesthetically structured emotional archive. Each song presents fragments of experiences that depict the spectrum of human emotions from love and longing to separation, alienation, and self-acceptance, which are constructed intimately and universally.

Furthermore, the deep meaning of the lyrics and visuals in the music video, complemented by Jungkook's performances and interviews in various international media, strengthens the impression that Golden is a form of complex identity articulation. Rather than presenting a celebrity persona formed by the industry, this album instead confirms Jungkook's presence as a vulnerable yet empowered subject, someone who chooses to convey his psychological depths through a subtle and expressive pop aesthetic. This not only shows his emotional maturity as an artist but also strengthens the parasocial relationship with the listener, especially in the context of digital culture that emphasizes emotional connection and intimacy. Thus, Golden can be understood as a work that goes beyond the function of entertainment; it becomes a narrative space that mediates identity, facilitates emotional regulation, and affirms the role of music as a powerful medium of interpersonal communication in the contemporary popular cultural landscape. This article underlines the importance of reading musical works not only as cultural products but also as emotional artifacts that are able to shape and reflect the psychosocial dynamics of their listeners at a global level.

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