

From Storm to Stillness: The Narrative Arc of Transformation Across Cup of Joe's Silakbo Album

¹Darryl Imperial^{ORCID}, ²James Odyssey C. Lim^{ORCID}, ³Gresshelle P. Balonga, ⁴Riann Joy Villarte, ⁵Lyka Fe D. Puno, ⁶Ryan V. Lopez, ⁷Miradel C. Cawayan, ⁸Janeth D. Ello, ⁹Rhea Jane C. Francisquete

St. John Paul II College of Davao

¹darrylimperial@sjp2cd.edu.ph, ²gresshelle_balonga@sjp2cd.edu.ph, ³miradel_cawayan@sjp2cd.edu.ph,
⁴janeth_ello@sjp2cd.edu.ph, ⁵rheajane_francisquete@sjp2cd.edu.ph, ⁶jamesodyssey_lim@sjp2cs.edu.ph,
⁷ryan_lopez@sjp2cd.edu.ph, ⁸lykafe_puno@sjp2cd.edu.ph, ⁹riannjoy_villarte@sjp2cd.edu.ph

Article Details:

Received: 3 May 2026
Revised: 13 May 2026
Accepted: 21 May 2026
Published: 31 May 2026
Corresponding Email:
darrylimperial@sjp2cd.edu.ph

Recommended Citation:

Imperial, D., Lim, J. O. C., Balonga, G. P., Villarte, R. J., Puno, L. F. D., Lopez, R. V., Cawayan, M. C., Ello, J. D., Francisquete, R. J. C. (2026) From Storm to Stillness: The Narrative Arc of Transformation Across Cup of Joe's Silakbo Album. *The International Review of Multidisciplinary Research*. 1 (6), 713-723.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20558096>

Index Terms:

grief, narratology, psychoanalysis, Original Pilipino Music, Kubler-Ross, Silakbo, Cup of Joe, emotional transformation, cyclical grief narrative

Abstract. This study focuses on Silakbo by Cup of Joe as an album-length story where there is a different approach towards the concept of grief from linear to cyclical and transformative. Based on the Five Stages of Grief and the theories of narratology and psychoanalysis, the study analyzes the album's ten songs – “Bagyo”, “Wine”, “Kanelang Mata”, “Bubog”, “Siping”, “Pahina”, “Multo”, “Di Maari”, “Hinga” and “Silakbo” – as a whole text of narration. The study analyzes the album using qualitative content analysis and narrative analysis to identify common markers of grief, emotional patterns, narrative strategies, and structural shifts throughout the album. The results show that instead of the grief process going through the stages sequentially, Silakbo reimagines grief as a non-linear process in which the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance can overlap, recur, and change in sequence. Focalization, repetition, and analepsis are the important narrative techniques that convert psychological fixation into the text and musical construction. The analysis also singles out Hinga as the point of changeability in the album, a shift from the melancholic attachment to the reflective agency of the persona. Loss is not treated as a finality; however, in the album, the focus is on reconfiguration, in which loss remains part of oneself but no longer dictates it. The study is also relevant to literary and music studies because it situates Original Pilipino Music as an important medium for narratological and psychological analysis. It also shows how an album can serve as a macro-narrative that conveys a complex emotional shift through sequence, repetition, and thematic continuity.

Introduction

Narrative has always been at the heart of literary analysis, and it has usually been associated with written works that develop as a series of events. Recent studies reveal that there is also a core “Arc of Narrative” in song lyrics that connects the scene setting and rising tension to the resolution, and that varies systematically by genre (Alberhasky & Durkee, 2024). In this way, albums, particularly concept albums, can also be seen as a single or multiple storylines in which music, lyrics, imagery, and other media work together to tell a story (Grosz et al., 2025; Merlini, 2021; Neto et al., 2025).

Although the study of narrativity in music has a long history, existing research has been more focused on the single-song level than on the album level. Popular songs and hip-hop texts have been examined regarding the role of story in a single song or staged work, its lyricism and mythic constructions (Vujan, 2023). Empirical research on sequencing reveals a general tendency for albums to feature arcs, such as a rising and falling tempo that follows an inverted U shape, and loudness and affect that also rise and fall, indicating a general track-order effect that facilitates larger emotional stories (Neto et al., 2025). However, there are still numerous analytical tools available that approach the song as a standalone entity, potentially missing out on the interplay of sequence, thematic continuity, and emotional development in the creation of the long-form musical narrative (Herrmann et al., 2024; Neto et al., 2025).

In research on Original Pilipino Music (OPM), this gap is felt especially. Previous OPM studies mostly focus on the lyrical level or on individual songs and tracks, and they emphasize themes, cultural values, and syntax alongside mood, family, and identity (national character, resilience, cultural continuity) (Barahan et al, 2025; Sumbad, 2025; Sebio, 2023; Abisado et al, 2021). Discourse analysis, cultural mythmaking, and mood classification of music, both in audio and text, are the areas of focus in analyses of Filipino music, with few focusing on album-length narrative coherence or emotional arcs (Barahan et al., 2025; Sebio, 2023; Abisado et al., 2021). So, it's hard to find much work that reads OPM albums as "story" books.

In this context, Silakbo by Cup of Joe may be considered a significant example of album-scale narrativity. Theoretical studies of popular music reveal that albums can either organize several media into coherent or connected stories (Merlini, 2021), while studies of music cognition and structure point out that non-verbal elements of music, such as the tension/release and energy component, can influence listeners' sense of story and progression (Grosz et al., 2025; Neto et al., 2025). Grief is not a linear process, but a series of feelings, isolation and transformation (Kübler-Ross, 1972) which have been the focus of research and study.

The present study builds upon the concepts of narratology, psychoanalysis, and Kübler-Ross, and argues that Silakbo's recurring emotional motifs create grief as a nonlinear, cyclical narrative system. The analysis will seek to demonstrate how Silakbo's album level coherence is achieved through repetition, overlapping and evolution of grief-related content in music and lyrical texts, as well as situate the content within the framework of narrativity in music, and lyrical texts (Alberhasky & Durkee, 2024; Grosz et al., 2025; Vujin, 2023; Merlini, 2021; Neto et al., 2025), in order to show the evolution of the experience of grief as a transformative instead of terminal process (Kübler-Ross, 1972).

Research Questions

1. In what ways does the order of the album rearrange the stages of grief outlined by Kubler-Ross?
2. Which narrative elements can bring together the album into a single story?
3. What is the way that the album develops grief as a transforming process?

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a qualitative research design that relied on the content analysis and narrative analysis approaches to analyse the meanings being produced in the Silakbo album by Cup of Joe with respect to its lyrical, structural and emotional aspects. This type of design was suited to the study as it enabled the researchers to consider this album as a text as a whole, as a narrative telling of grief, longing and transformation, and as a collection of music.

Corpus

The songs used in this study were the ten songs which are included in the Silakbo album including Bagyo, Wine, Kanelang Mata, Bubog, Siping, Pahina, Multo, Di Maari, Hinga and Silakbo. The songs were analyzed together as a single narrative corpus to find recurring themes, feelings and plot developments that help to make the album a representation of grief as a cyclical and changing process.

Data Collection

Data collection was carried out by repeatedly playback of the songs in the Spotify application and retrieval of the lyrics from reliable sources on the internet for authenticity in the lyrics. The significance of the data from both the auditory and lyrical sections was underscored because the emotional tone, sequencing, and how the music is delivered, helped to interpret the narrative structure and psychological progression within the album.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis was done in three stages of coding, namely open coding, axial coding and selective coding. In open coding, the researchers were able to extract emotional expressions, marks of grief, symbolic imagery, and repeated motifs from the song lyrics. These categories were then organized through the process of axial coding into the stages of Kubler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief, the concepts of narration, and the psychoanalytical interpretations of the album./selective coding was then used to compile the above-mentioned patterns into a coherent explanation of the cyclical telling of a story and the transformation of grief in the album.

Trustworthiness

Theoretical triangulation was used by incorporating psychological, literary and narrative approaches to ensure the study was credible and had interpretive validity. By applying Kubler-Ross's grief theory, narratology, and the psychoanalytic theory, the researchers were able to look at the album through several different angles which enhanced the depth, consistency and reliability of the analysis.

Results and Discussion

Reconfiguring Grief as Non-Linear Narrative System

This analysis concludes that Silakbo does not simply reflect the Five Stages of Grief suggested by Kubler-Ross but reforms it into a non-linear narrative system, in which the emotional states overlap, repeat, and change throughout the album. Although these five stages can be identified, the stages are not listed in a sequence. They are instead interrelated and examinable emotional states, questioning the idea of a progression of stages. The results of this finding are in line with the current criticisms that view grief as fluid, recursive, and non-linear (Avis et al., 2021; Guldin & Leget, 2024). To make the concept of this structural reconfiguration clear, the study postulates a cyclical narrative-grief paradigm (see Figure 1), which visualizes how the emotional phases become overlapping narrative movements as opposed to discrete phases.

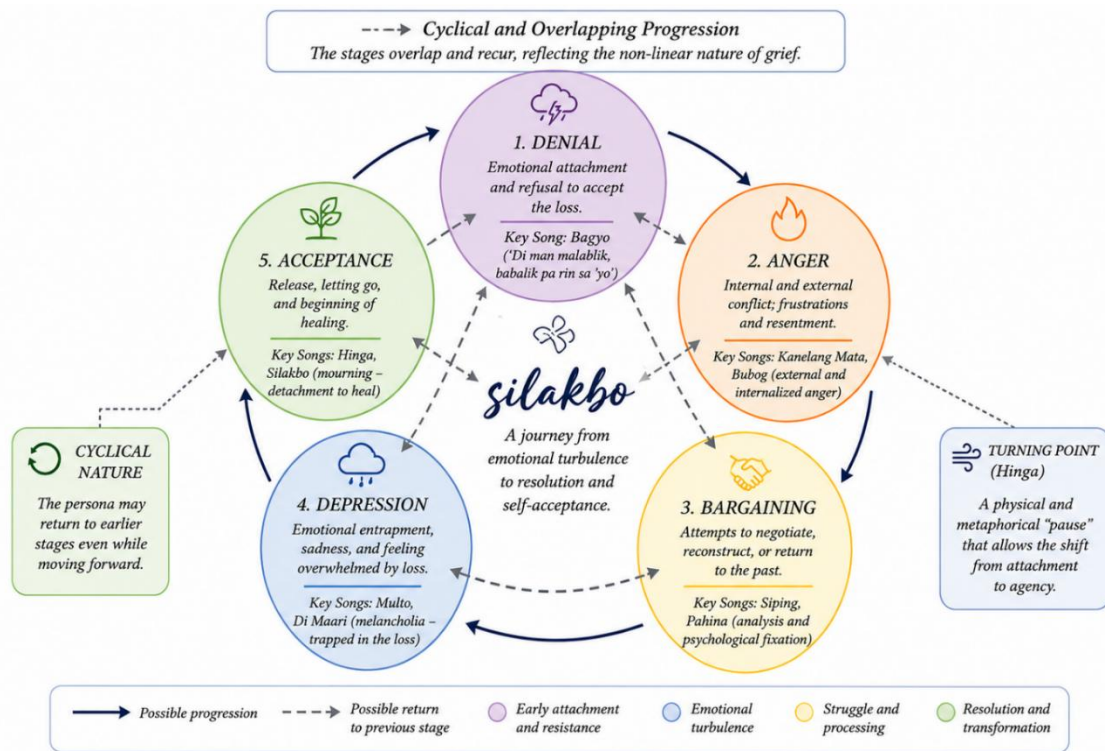


Figure 1. Cyclical Nature of Grief in the Silakbo Album

Conceptualizing grief as a recursive, dynamic system, the album conceptualizes the stages of grief through the use of overlapping and repeated returns instead of linear progressions (see Figure 1). The model shows that the denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance are interrelated and the persona can always regress to the previous states even as the persona progresses towards transformation. The way Hinga is placed as a turning point is a point of disruption in this cycle, thus allowing an emotional fixation to change to reflective agency. This graphic supports the thesis that the process of grief in Silakbo is about oscillation and reconfiguration, as opposed to sequential resolution.

This cyclical alignment also indicates modern revisions of the Kubler-Ross model, which emphasize that the grieving process is a non-sequential and overlapping process (Avis et al., 2021; Guldin & Leget, 2024). In the album, denial is firstly

foregrounded in Bagyo with the continuity of emotional attachment even with cognitive recognition of loss. But instead of dissolving into successive phases, this denial is re-introduced in the later songs as longing and emotional rebound, signifying its constant re-embarkation into the recording in the later tracks.

Bagyo

*"Di man maibalik, babalik parin sa'yo"
"Mahirap pigilan ang pusong ikaw bumuo"*

*"Even if it can't be returned, I will still come back to you"
"It's hard to stop the heart that you created"*

Wine

*"Bumubulong na ko'y sa'yo pa rin"
"Ang aking unan na 'di pa makalimot"*

*"The whisper, I'm still yours"
"My pillow that haven't forgotten yet"*

In the line, "Di man maibalik, babalik pa rin sa'yo", the speaker already recognizes that the relationship cannot be restored, yet still expresses the intention to return. However, this is immediately contrasted by the insistence on returning, showing a refusal to emotionally detach. This contradiction highlights denial, where it understands the reality but continues to act against it emotionally. This reflects denial through persistent emotional attachment despite awareness of loss.

In the line "Mahirap pigilan ang pusong ikaw bumuo", emphasizes that the feelings are still strong and difficult to control, showing that the connection continues despite separation. These lines show that it is still actively holding on, demonstrating that denial in Bagyo is expressed through intentional and persistent attachment despite the recognition of loss.

In Wine, "Bumubulong na 'ko'y sa 'yo pa rin", it reveals that, even without direct intention, their emotions still return to the same person. In contrast to Bagyo, this does not show a deliberate attempt to return, but rather a lingering emotional pull, suggesting that the attachment continues even without active intention. Whereas, "Ang aking unan na 'di pa makalimot", the inability to forget is linked to moments of solitude, suggesting that memories and feelings resurface naturally. Denial is no longer expressed through resistance, but through lingering emotional attachment that reappears as longing, demonstrating an emotional rebound rather than direct refusal to accept the loss.

Both shows that denial is not a fixed stage but a continuing and evolving emotional response across the songs. This shows that denial does not simply disappear, rather, it transforms from conscious resistance into quiet longing and emotional rebound, emphasizing that grief is non-linear, with emotional persisting and reappearing in different forms over time. The same trend is followed in the expression of anger. In Kanelang Mata anger is directed outward, towards destruction, but in Bubog, it becomes inward, and the self is directed towards self-destruction.

Kanelang Mata

"Kung paano ko sinunog ang mundong ating binuo"

"Di ka na makahinga sa usok"

"Kinakagat na lang aking dila"

"Hahabulin ang pait na nadama"

"How I burned the world we built"

"The smoke is choking me:

"I'm just biting my tongue"

"I'll chase the bitterness I felt"

Bubog

"Laging gumuguhit sa brasong namamanhid"

"Tuluyang inuukit sa isip"

"Puro sugat at hiwa'ng aking paningin"

"Aking damdamin ay puro bubog parin"

"Always drawing on a numb arm"

"Continuously engraved in the mind"

*"My vision is full of wounds and cuts"
"My feelings are shattered glass"*

In Kanelang Mata, anger is expressed outwardly through destruction and emotional intensity. The line "Kung paano ko sinunog ang mundong ating binuo" symbolizes the persona's desire to destroy the relationship and everything connected to it because of overwhelming pain. The image of "usok" in "Di ka na makahinga sa usok" further emphasizes the damaging consequences of this emotional explosion, suggesting that anger affects not only the persona but also the other person involved. Meanwhile, "Kinakagat na lang aking dila" reflects suppressed frustration, while "Hahabulin ang pait na nadama" shows how bitterness continues to dominate the persona's emotions. In the song, anger becomes externalized through destruction, resentment, and emotional aggression.

In contrast, Bubog presents anger as inward and self-destructive. Instead of directing pain toward the outside world, the persona turns the suffering toward the self. The line "Laging gumuguhit sa brasong namamanhid" suggests self-inflicted pain as a way of coping with emotional exhaustion, while "Tuluyang inuukit sa isip" shows how the hurt becomes permanently embedded in the persona's mind. Furthermore, "Puro sugat at hiwa'ng aking paningin" and "Aking damdamin ay puro bubog pa rin" portray emotional fragmentation and self-perception shaped by pain and brokenness. Unlike Kanelang Mata, where anger erupts outwardly, Bubog internalizes anger until it transforms into self-destruction and emotional isolation.

Both songs portray anger as part of grief, but they differ in direction and manifestation. Kanelang Mata expresses anger through destruction directed outward toward the relationship and its memories, while Bubog redirects anger inward, resulting in self-inflicted suffering and emotional fragmentation. This comparison reveals that anger in Silakbo is not stable or singular; rather, it evolves from explosive external resentment into internal psychological damage. Through these contrasting portrayals, the album reinforces the idea that grief is cyclical and transformative, where emotions shift in intensity and direction throughout the healing process.

This change shows that emotional states are not definite types but dynamic conditions that vary in form and intensity throughout the progression of the album. Moreover, bargaining, outlined in Siping and Pahina, is revealed in the form of regression in time, where the persona is in negotiations with the past via memory and imagined return.

Siping

*"Na kahit isa lang na saglit, kahit hindi na maulit"
"Hindi pa rin susuko sa'king mga pangako sa'yo"*

*"Even if it's just for a moment, even if it never happens again"
"I still won't give up on my promises to you"*

Pahina

*"Ang yugtong paulit-ulit kong binabalikan"
"Pwede bang isipin mo kung bakit tayo nagsimula"*

*"The stage I keep coming back to"
"Can you think about why we started"*

In Siping, bargaining is shown through the persona's strong desire to experience the relationship once again, even if it is only temporary. The line "kahit isa lang na saglit, kahit hindi na maulit" shows that the persona already knows the relationship cannot fully return yet still wishes for one more moment with the person they lost. This reflects bargaining, because the persona tries to emotionally negotiate with the situation instead of completely accepting the separation. On the other hand, "Hindi pa rin susuko sa'king mga pangako sa'yo" emphasizes how the persona continues to hold on to promises and feelings despite the pain. Instead of letting go, the persona keeps hoping that the connection can still remain, showing an emotional struggle to move on.

In Pahina, bargaining is expressed in a more reflective and nostalgic way. The line "Ang yugtong paulit-ulit kong babalik-balikan" shows how the persona keeps returning to memories of the relationship, replaying the past over and over again. This suggests that the persona is still trying to find comfort or answers from what already ended. Meanwhile, "Pwede bang isipin mo kung bakit tayo nagsimula" reveals the persona's attempt to remind the other person about the beginning of their relationship, hoping that remembering the past might restore what was lost. The song presents bargaining through revisiting memories and questioning the reasons behind the separation, showing how the persona remains emotionally attached to the past.

Both songs show bargaining as a form of holding on despite the reality of loss. The persona continues to revisit memories, emotions, and possibilities instead of fully accepting the ending of the relationship. Through this, Silakbo presents grief as a non-linear and cyclical, where emotions repeatedly return in different forms throughout the healing process. Depression, most apparent in *Multo* and *Di Maari*, is not a denial of the previous steps, but a continuation of the previous steps.

Multo

"Minumulto na'ko ng damdamin ko"
"Hindi na makalaya, dinadalaw mo'ko bawat gabi"

"I'm haunted by my feelings"
"I can't escape, you linger every night"

Di Maari

"Nagsisisi, ako'y nagkamali,
"Mayakap kang muli, 'di maari"
"Kahit pa ilang hiling di mababawi"

"I'm sorry, I made a mistake,
I cannot hold you again"
"Even if I make a few wishes, I can't take them back"

In *Multo*, depression is shown through emotional entrapment and persistence of pain. The persona is not denying the loss instead, they are overwhelmed by it. The line "minumulto na 'ko ng damdamin ko" suggests that the pain has become internal and inescapable, while "Hindi na makalaya, dinadalaw mo'ko bawat gabi" reflects a state of helplessness. This means that the earlier stage of grief continues and keeps piling up, turning into a depressive state where the persona feels trapped by emotions that were never fully resolved.

In *Di Maari*, depression manifests as deep regret and acceptance of irreversible loss. The persona recognizes that the situation cannot be undone, as seen in "di maari" and "di mababawi". Although there is acknowledgement of responsibility through "nagsisisi, ako'y nagkamali", this realization deepens emotional heaviness. Unlike *Multo*, where pain is chaotic and intrusive, *Di Maari* presents a quieter but more reflective form of depression rooted in acceptance and consequence.

Both *Multo* and *Di Maari* present depression as a continuation of earlier grief stages, but they differ in emotional expression and intensity. In *Multo*, depression is disturbing and intrusive, as the persona is still haunted by memories and unable to escape emotional suffering. In contrast, *Di Maari* presents depression as reflective and resigned, where the persona already accepts the finality of loss but is burdened by regret. This comparison shows that depression in grief is not a fixed emotional state. Instead, it shifts from emotional chaos and haunting to quiet acceptance and painful realization, demonstrating the complex and non-linear nature of emotional healing.

The acceptance that arises in *Hinga* is further developed in *Silakbo* but it does not mean that the grief is complete. Rather, it is a redefining of the persona with regard to loss where there is still attachment but has become more manageable

Hinga

"Huminto, subukang huminga"
"harapin, buksan ang 'yong mata"
"Walang bituin na makikita, pag di matanggap ang kadiliman"

"Stop, try to breathe"
"Face it, open your eyes"
"No stars will be seen, if you don't accept the darkness"

Silakbo

"Dahan-dahang kumawala na, sa kapit na dinadala"
"Di na mag papaakit pa, sa kapit ng iyong mata"
"Ako'y babangon na muli"

"Slowly let go from the grip that is holding me"
"I will no longer be attracted, from the grip of your eyes"

"I will rise again"

In *Hinga*, acceptance is shown through the act of facing reality. The line "*harapin buksan ang 'yong mata*" suggests that the persona is beginning to confront the truth instead of avoiding it. Other excerpts, "*di matanggap ang kadaliman*" implies that one must accept pain to see light or healing. At this stage, the persona is not yet fully healed but is already acknowledging their situation and slowly learning how to cope with it.

In *Silakbo*, acceptance is deeper and more complete. The persona is no longer just recognizing the pain but is already letting go of the emotional attachment. The line "*kumawala sa kapit*" shows a conscious decision to break free, while "*babangon na muli*" reflects the ability to move forward with awareness and strength. The persona is no longer controlled by the past and is now choosing to continue life.

Both *Hinga* and *Silakbo* portray acceptance, but they differ in depth and progression. In *Hinga*, acceptance is still in its early stage, where the persona begins to confront reality and acknowledge the pain. The act of "*breathing*" and "*opening one's eyes*" symbolizes a slow process of awareness and emotional adjustment, showing that the persona is still learning how to deal with the loss. In contrast, *Silakbo* presents a more developed form of acceptance, where the persona actively lets go of emotional attachment and chooses to move forward. The lyrics emphasize release, freedom, and renewal, indicating a stronger sense of control and personal agency. While *Hinga* reflects internal struggle and realization, *Silakbo* demonstrates action and transformation. This comparison highlights that acceptance in the album is not immediate or final, but rather a gradual and evolving process, reinforcing the idea that grief is non-linear and continuously changing.

The fact that *Hinga* is a turning point breaks the cyclical repetition of the preceding stages, and it marks a shift between melancholia and mourning (Gibbons, 2024). However, there is still some evidence of the previous emotional states, and this supports the notion that acceptance is not complete but partial and continuous.

Hinga

*"Huminto, subukang huminga"
"Harapin, buksan ang 'yong mata."
"Nakikita ang sarili sa dulo ng kawalan,
"Ngunit pipiliing muling lumaban"*

*"Stop, try to breathe"
"Face it, open your eyes."
"Seeing yourself at the edge of nothingness,
"But choosing to fight again"*

In *Hinga*, it focuses on the necessity of pausing to confront one's internal shadows. It depicts a persona who finds themselves at the edge of a void, struggling with the bitterness of the past and a sense of exhaustion. The lyrics emphasize that growth requires a moment of stillness, as seen in the line, "*Huminto subukang huminga / Harapin buksan ang 'yong mata,*" which encourages the individual to stop and open their eyes to their reality. A central theme of this track is the acceptance of hardship as a prerequisite for clarity, specifically stated through the metaphor that there are no stars without darkness. By the end of the song, the persona recognizes their own reflection and finds the courage to let go of the hand that once guided them, signifying a move toward independence.

In contrast, *Silakbo* serves as the active liberation resulting from that initial breath. This song encourages the heart to finally scream after being imprisoned, urging the individual to listen to their own heartbeat and stop turning away from the weight of the storm. While *Hinga* was about the stillness of the night, *Silakbo* celebrates the coming of the morning, where the pain is touched by sunlight and the persona rises with their eyes wide open. The lyrics describe a gradual breaking away from a suffocating grip and a refusal to be tempted or trapped by others' influence any longer. Ultimately, the song portrays the home of one's emotions as a place that will no longer be shaken by darkness, calling for the liberation of the "screams on the walls".

The relationship between *Hinga* and *Silakbo* is one of preparation and execution. *Hinga* is the internal phase of "*Pahinga*", where the persona acknowledges the "*nakakahingal na kadaliman*" or breathless darkness and realizes that stars cannot be seen if one does not accept the night. *Silakbo* is the external phase of "*Siklabo*", where the realization leads to action, transforming the bitterness identified in the first song into something that eventually turns sweet. While *Hinga* asks the individual to "*Huminto*", *Hinga* commands them to "*Sumabay na sa awitin*" and "*Palayain*" their voice. Together, they represent a journey from surviving the dark to thriving in the light, where breathing is the foundation and the outburst is the cure.

The album, as visualized in Figure 1, creates grief as a moving narrative system, in which movement is by oscillation, rather than by progression. The persona constantly goes back and forth through the different stages of emotional life even as he moves on to self-awareness, showing that grief is a process of negotiation as it should be instead of linear resolution. Therefore, even though the album builds upon the framework of Kubler-Ross, it also reconstructs this framework, creating a cyclic narrative form, which shows that grieving is experienced as recursive, overlapping and ultimately transformative.

Narrative Techniques as Mechanisms of Emotional Suffering

Although this cyclical arrangement of grief in the album establishes its emotional architecture, it is the narratological ways of structurally encoding psychological experience into narrative form that maintains its coherence. Repetition, analepsis, shifting focalization, do not function as mere stylistic tools in the album Silakbo; but, instead, they act as mutually dependent mechanisms that arrange, maintain and modify the emotional flow of the album. By these methods, the album creates a coherent narrative, in which grief is not only depicted but actually ingrained into the fabric of the text.

Repetition is the main organizing principle of the album and it serves as a formal analogue of the compulsive temporality of grief. Elizabeth Margulis (2017) points out that repetition in music increases the salience of emotions by familiarizing people and reinforcing their actions. But in Silakbo, the repetition goes beyond the cognitive role it performs and becomes a process of affective obsessiveness, which reflects the inability of the persona to disassociate with the lost object (Gibbons, 2024). The repetitive use of lexical elements, thematic repetitions and emotional refrains across songs play out what can be called affective looping in that the subject is repeatedly drawn back to the same emotional state. Indicatively, the recurring use of the word return whether through longing, recollection or imagined rejoining is a re-creation of the cyclicity of attachment, which does not allow the narrative closure. Repetition is not in this sense redundant but generative: it brings narrative continuity, by means of translating psychological repetition into textual form, which thereby aligns form with emotional experience.

Analepsis also adds more to this recursive format by bringing about disruption of time in the flow of the stories in the album. Examples of such a manipulation of time include the rejection of a chronological sequence of events in order to create meaning in the song, like in Pahina (Prince, 2019). These flashbacks are not merely elements that provide some background information; but instead, they break up any flow of action, placing the persona at the center of an ongoing loop of memory. This is in line with the fact that narrative time is by definition reconstructive; determined by the process of remembering and reinterpretation (Nelson and Spence, 2020). In Silakbo, the role of analepsis is a narrative and psychological device: it increases the time frame of the story at the same time showing the inability of the persona to get out of the past. This repetitive turnover to memory, in a psychoanalytic viewpoint, can be seen as a state of psychic fixation, where unresolved emotional experiences are obsessively revisited (Gibbons, 2024). Therefore, not only does the analepsis break the linearity of time, but also it brings into reality the continuity of sorrow into narrative time.

In addition to repetition and analepsis, the development of the focalization is complemented, and it is also used as the index of the psychological change of the persona. Based on the idea of narrative as a structuring of perspective introduced by Coste (2017), in Silakbo, the focalization moves towards the course of the album, in which the focalization becomes coherent. Early tracks are marked by externally focused and unstable points of view, emotional disorientation and agency diffusion. The voice of the persona in these instances is reactive and overwhelmed, which can be considered signs of a subject who is lost in grief and is unable to take a critical stance. With the album progressing, focalization is however becoming more internalized and reflective, a gradual shift towards self-awareness. This change is especially noticeable in Hinga, where the narrator's voice becomes more controlled and introspective, a shift towards emotional immersion to more reflective processing. In narratological terms, this shift can be associated with the changes in perspective and narrative positioning; in terms of psychology, this shift can be attributed to the development of the notion of agency and the onset of emotional reconfigurations.

Notably, these methods do not work autonomously but rather work as an organized system which supports the coherence of the album. Emotional persistence is reinforced by repetition, the temporal progression is destabilized by analepsis and focalization follows up the development of the self. They create together a narrative structure where grief is not handled by the linear development but is restructured continuously through the formal processes. This interaction shows that the unity of the album is not the result of a linear narrative of the plot but the unification of narrative form and the experience of the psyche. It is possible to state that Silakbo is unified with the help of the network of narratological strategies that encode grief in the architecture of the narrative as such. The album is coherent as a macro-narrative where individual songs are interdependent parts of a larger system that is dynamically evolving.

Grief as Transformative Process: Fixation to Agency

In addition to its cyclic composition and narrative coherence, Silakbo assembles grief as a transformative psychological operation, wherein the persona is slowly transformed in his fixation on emotion to reflective agency. The given transformation can be best explained using the psychoanalytic theory, especially the difference between melancholia and mourning. In melancholia the subject continues to be affectively tied to the lost object which leads to repeated attachment, psychic entrapment as well as lack of ability to shift emotional energy. Mourning, in contrast, is a gradual process of dealing with loss and allowing the subject to reintegrate the self and to renegotiate attachment (Gibbons, 2024).

In the previous songs the persona is placed in a sadistic framework. Emotional attachment prevails even after the realization of loss and the recurrent revisiting of memory is an indication that the lost object still prevails in the inner world of the persona. This can be traced in the repetitive imagery of the album in terms of return, haunting, wounds and emotional imprisonment. These images do not merely tell how sad it is; it reflects a psychic state whereby the persona cannot be able to be separated with what has been lost. In this way, grief is not represented as a state of emotional distress, but as a state of mental stasis, where the self is in an organized state of absence.

This depressive state is further enhanced by the narrative techniques. The repetition and analepsis do not only serve the purpose of supporting the unity of the persona; they also dramatize entrapment of the persona. Repetition is a reflection of the compulsive relapse into painful memory, whereas analepsis provokes the storyline to move back to the past, incapable of the direct flow towards the resolution. Using these devices the album manages to change the psychic fixation into a narrative form. The fact that the persona is unable to move forward is thus not just thematic but also structural.

The turning point is Hinga's, which serves as the most important moment in the album in terms of psychological and narrative discontinuity. Compared to the previous songs, where the persona is consumed with longing, rage and emotional repetition, Hinga brings the potential of a break, consciousness and control of emotions. The act of breathing turns out to be symbolic since it breaks the obsessive pattern of bereavement. It is the first definite point, where the persona starts to perceive the pain, not only live in it.

The start of mourning is signaled by this moment, according to a psychoanalytic perspective. The persona is not ready to get over the loss right away, but starts creating an intellectual distance between them. This is a significant difference: transformation in Silakbo is not shown as an abrupt healing but as the slow development of an agency in grief. The persona starts to change his/her position of being manipulated by loss in order to actively confront and process the loss. It can be seen as a reflection of the concept of mourning as a process by which the subject gradually restructures the self in connection with loss, as put forward by Gibbons (2024).

On the narrative level, Hinga also entails the change in the focalization and pace of narration. Previously used songs are characterized by lack of steadiness, emotional urgency, and choppy view. The narrative voice, in Hinga, is more regulated and self-reflective, making it seem that the persona is starting to assume interpretive control of the experience of grief. This confirms the opinion that narrative meaning develops based on the arrangement of perspective expressed by Coste (2017). The voice change is thus not simply tonal, the change signifies a more profound change in the relation of the persona to the self and to the lost object.

The last song in the album, especially Silakbo, continues this change by introducing grief as part and not as something that has been washed away. The acceptance is not manifested in the form of full closure. Rather it is symbolized as a reorientation of attachment wherein the persona is still characterized by loss but is no longer paralysed by it. This is in line with modern-day grief studies, which challenge the notion that grief culminates in final resolution but rather perceive it as an on-going, adaptive, and relational process (Guldin & Leget, 2024).

Therefore, the transformative trajectory of the album does not proceed to the pain to complete recovery, but the fixation to reconfiguration. The persona never gives up on memory, instead, memory is re-placed into a more stable sense of self. That is why, Silakbo provides the more complicated concept of healing: healing is not the loss of sorrow, but the ability to live with sorrow without being completely controlled by it.

Silakbo applies the grief theory to demonstrate the emotional struggle as transformative through the presentation of grief as a process through which the identity of the persona is reorganized. The album builds the transformation process as an unfinished and significant process. The state of grief does not disappear but changes in its role: it no longer enslaves the persona with repetition; on the contrary, it becomes the condition under which it is possible to become aware of oneself, have agency, and integrate one's emotions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined Cup of Joe's Silakbo as a cohesive narrative text that portrays grief as a cyclical and transformative emotional process. Through the integration of Kubler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief, narratology, and psychoanalytic theory, the analysis demonstrated that the album reconstructs grief into a recursive narrative system where emotional states overlap, recur, and evolve. The findings reveal that narrative techniques such as repetition, analepsis, and shifting focalization function as structural mechanisms that transform psychological experience into narrative form. Through these devices, the album achieves coherence not through linear progression but through emotional recurrence and thematic continuity. A significant contribution of this study is the identification of "Hinga" as the narrative and psychological turning point of the album. The track marks the transition from melancholic fixation toward reflective agency, illustrating how grief evolves into emotional reconfiguration rather than complete closure. Furthermore, the study contributes to literary criticism, grief studies, and narratology by demonstrating how OPM albums can function as coherent macro-narratives capable of representing complex emotional and psychological experiences. Ultimately, Silakbo presents grief not as a process that culminates in absolute resolution but as an ongoing negotiation through which emotional repetition gradually becomes a source of transformation, self-awareness, and agency.

This study implies that Silakbo by Cup of Joe can be understood not only as a musical work but also as a cohesive narrative text that represents grief as a cyclical, recursive, and transformative process rather than a linear emotional journey. The findings expand the application of narratology and grief theory by showing how albums may function as macro-narratives where repetition, sequencing, focalization, and thematic continuity structurally embody psychological experience. Furthermore, the study highlights the academic and cultural significance of Original Pilipino Music (OPM) as a valuable site for literary and interdisciplinary analysis, demonstrating its capacity to portray complex emotional and psychological realities. The research also suggests pedagogical value, as albums like Silakbo may be used in literature and language classrooms to make concepts such as narrative structure, grief, and emotional transformation more accessible and culturally relatable to students. Finally, the proposed cyclical narrative-grief model may serve as a useful framework for future studies examining emotional narratives in music and other contemporary cultural texts.

Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to express their sincere gratitude to their instructors, classmates, families, and peers for their support and guidance throughout the completion of this study. Special appreciation is also extended to Cup of Joe for creating artistic works that inspired meaningful literary analysis.

Funding

This research received no external funding from any public, commercial, or not-for-profit funding agency, and no organization provided financial support for the conduct of the study, authorship, or publication of this article.

Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

Data Availability Statement

All data used in this study were obtained from publicly available song lyrics and audio recordings from Cup of Joe's Silakbo album.

References

- Allan, D. (2017). Narrative in popular music. Routledge.
- Abisado, M., Yongson, M., & De Los Trinos, M. (2021). Towards the development of music mood classification of Original Pilipino Music (OPM) songs based on audio and lyrics keyword. 2021 5th International Conference on E-Society, E-Education and E-Technology. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3485768.3485786>
- Alberhasky, M., & Durkee, P. (2024). Songs tell a story: The arc of narrative for music. PLOS ONE, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0303188>

- Avis, K. A., Stroebe, M., & Schut, H. (2021). Stages of grief portrayed on the internet: A systematic analysis and critical appraisal. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 772696. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.772696>
- Barahan, J., Ciruela, D., Antolin, R., Eyana, L., & Kiasan, J. (2025). Popular culture: A content analysis of Filipino music by the group SB19. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.70838/pemj.460609>
- Coste, D. (2017). Narrative theory. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.116>
- Gibbons, R. (2024). The mourning process and its importance in mental illness: A psychoanalytic understanding of psychiatric diagnosis and classification. *BJPsych Advances*, 30(2), 80–88. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bja.2023.8>
- Grosz, P., Solberg, R., Katz, J., Vu, M., Jensenius, A., & Patel-Grosz, P. (2025). An outline of the narrative grammar of electronic dance music. *Musicae Scientiae*, 29, 556–575. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10298649251321709>
- Guldin, M.-B., & Leget, C. J. W. (2024). The integrated process model of loss and grief—An interprofessional understanding. *Death Studies*, 48(7), 738–752. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2023.2272960>
- Herrmann, V., Ashley, D., & Schmidhuber, J. (2024). Automatic album sequencing. arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arxiv.2411.07772>
- Kübler-Ross, E. (1972). On death and dying. *Mental Health*, 30, 21–21. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203889657>
- Margulis, E. H. (2017). *On repeat: How music plays the mind*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199990825.001.0001>
- Merlini, M. (2021). The second death of concept albums: World-building and unification strategies in the age of streaming. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Musicology*. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ism.2021.21.4>
- Nelson, S., & Spence, B. (2020). Narrative time. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.1076>
- Neto, P., Hartmann, M., Luck, G., & Toiviainen, P. (2025). An album is a story: Feature arcs in sequences of tracks. *PLOS ONE*, 20. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0316963>
- Prince, G. (2019). Narratology. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.996>
- Sebio, A. (2023). Wika at kultura ng OPM: Pagsusuri ng mga awiting Pilipino tungo sa pag-unawa sa kultura ng ika-21 siglong Pilipino. *E-DAWA: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.56901/hoct7180>
- Sumbad, C. (2025). Songs to syntax: Exploring syntactic features of selected Original Pilipino Music. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25apr1692>
- Temperley, D. (2018). *The musical language of rock*. Oxford University Press.
- Vujin, B. (2023). In faery lands forlorn: The fantastic narrative poetry of Queen's early lyrics. *Belgrade English Language and Literature Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.18485/bells.2023.15.16>

Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.