



**RELATIONSHIPS, GRIEF, AND RELIGIOSITY: AN ANALYSIS OF
THE DISCURSIVE ETHOS IN *WHITE HORSE* AND *WOULD'VE
COULD'VE SHOULD'VE* BY TAYLOR SWIFT¹**

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to define and analyze the discursive *ethos* present in some songs by the singer Taylor Swift. The central theme of this research is the construction of identities in discourse, exploring the messages and narratives. The proposed analysis aims to examine the utterances in order to comprehend the formation and development of the *ethos* present in the selected songs, highlighting how their artistic statements shape the public perception. The research adopts the theoretical perspective of Maingueneau (2005, 2006, 2008, and 2014) on Discourse Analysis, Enunciative Scene, Discursive *Ethos*, which explores how attitudes and communicative conduct reflect the viewpoints and positions of a specific public. *White Horse* and *Would've, Could've, Should've* from the albums *Fearless* and *Midnights*, respectively, are analyzed. The research reveals that, through poetic narrative, Swift shares possibly personal experiences, establishing a deep connection with her audience who identifies with the themes and adheres to the speeches presented. Throughout the analyses, two distinct *ethos* were identified: one related to grief and the other with nuances of religious themes.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Enunciative Scene, Discursive *Ethos*, Taylor Swift.

RESUMO: Este estudo tem como objetivo definir e analisar o *ethos* discursivo presente em algumas canções da cantora Taylor Swift. O tema central desta pesquisa é a construção de identidade(s) no discurso, explorando suas mensagens e narrativas. A análise proposta visa examinar as enunciações para compreender a formação e desenvolvimento do *ethos* nas

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canções escolhidas, destacando como suas declarações artísticas moldam a percepção do público. A pesquisa adota a perspectiva teórica de Maingueneau (2005; 2006; 2008 e 2014) sobre Análise do Discurso, *Ethos* Discursivo e Cena Enunciativa, que explora como as atitudes e condutas comunicativas refletem os pontos de vista e posicionamentos de determinado público. São analisadas duas músicas, *White Horse* e *Would've, Could've, Should've*, dos álbuns *Fearless* e *Midnights*, respectivamente. A pesquisa revela que através da narrativa poética, Swift compartilha experiências possivelmente pessoais, estabelecendo uma conexão profunda com seu público, que se identifica com os temas e adere aos discursos apresentados. Ao longo das análises, foram identificados dois *ethos* distintos: um relacionado ao luto e outro com nuances de temática religiosa.

Palavras-chave: Análise do Discurso, Cena Enunciativa, *Ethos* Discursivo, Taylor Swift.

ONCE UPON A TIME, A FEW MISTAKES AGO: INTRODUCTION

There are various popular sayings that emphasize the importance of words and the intention behind them. Exploring a more scientific bias, the interest in researches to comprehend the meaning behind discourses and utterances is not something new. This involves analyzing the use of words and the context in which discourses are made. If the utterances are oral, the way in which the voice is used is also considered, along with how the interlocutor interprets what is said and how the enunciator is perceived, among other aspects.

In this way, Discourse Analysis, with its various strands introduced by authors such as Bakhtin (1992), Pêcheux (2008), and Maingueneau (2015), makes it possible to understand different meanings beyond linguistic factors, delving deeper into sociological, historical, psychological, anthropological, and/or philosophical orders. As a language science, Discourse Analysis seeks to uncover the production of meanings by incorporating the connection between language, subject, and context (Van Dijk, 2008). This results in the creation of meaning that occurs between the subjects, encompassing the message sender and receiver.

Drawing on Dominique Maingueneau's theoretical perspective (2005, 2006, 2008, and 2014) on Discourse Analysis, Discursive *Ethos*, and Enunciative Scene, this study aims to understand how an individual's attitudes and behaviors during communication can reveal their points of view and positions. According to the author, discursive *ethos* is the mechanism

through which the speaker constructs their image in speech, aiming to build trust with their audience and potentially persuade them.

This work focuses on music as an object of study, aiming to analyze potential meanings embedded within it. The examination of how the speaker establishes their authoritative voice and delineates the roles of the listeners can further enhance comprehension of the power dynamics in music and how artists use it as a tool for communication and personal expression.

The song choices for this work are those of American singer and songwriter Taylor Swift. Known for her versatility in the world of music, she presents lyrics and melodies in her songs that offer diverse opportunities for easy identification, interpretation, and analysis. Additionally, the way she has built her career and achieved success over the years, resulting in awards, record-breaking achievements, and so on, has led to her inclusion in our analysis. Two songs were chosen from two albums to discuss the construction of the discursive ethos and the scene of enunciation. The songs selected were *White Horse* from the album *Fearless* and *Would've, Could've, Should've* from the album *Midnights*.

Therefore, the question guiding this work is: how is it possible to observe the construction of the discursive *ethos* in Taylor Swift's songs, and what are the potential implications for understanding and analyzing her lyrics? The main aim of this research is to theoretically comprehend the formation and evolution of *ethos*, and to analyze the *ethos* present in the singer's songs. As a specific goal, we must comprehend the construction of the enunciator in the speech, as well as its influence on the conception and perspective of the discursive *ethos*. This study examines how the statements in Swift's songs are structured to create an artistic image and positioning, as well as to understand their impact on the public.

With that being said, this work presents the following structure: the theoretical chapter includes an explanation of Dominique Maingueneau's concept of discourse analysis, the author's biography and main contributions, as well as his idea of enunciative scene and discursive *ethos*. Additionally, there will be a brief history of pop music, the singer's biography highlighting key points in her career, and a step-by-step of each analysis. The text will proceed with the analysis and comments based on Maingueneau's theory, concluding with final remarks to wrap up the text. All the titles in this work quote a Taylor Swift's song lyric.

WHAT IF I TOLD YOU NONE OF IT WAS ACCIDENTAL?: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Striving in definition of Discourse Analysis can be a challenging task due to its diverse aspects and the modernity behind new forms of discourse, such as virtual ones, for example. Several authors influenced the area, including Bakhtin (1992), Norman Fairclough (2003), Teun A. Van Dijk (2008), Michel Foucault (2005), Émile Benveniste (1966; 1974) and Michel Pêcheux (2008), among others. For those authors, the discourses are always related to power, knowledge, ideologies and social, political and cultural environments, media, being an integral part of social identity.

The focus of this work follows the French Discourse Analysis, which, despite originating in France, extended beyond geographical borders. Its emergence was heavily influenced by figures such as Michel Foucault (2005), Émile Benveniste (1966; 1974), and Michel Pêcheux (2008), all influential thinkers who also impacted our author of focus, Dominique Maingueneau.

Introduced in the 1960s, French Discourse Analysis emerged from the necessity to break away from the traditional patterns of structuralism and generativism, as suggested by Marinho (2019) in his studies. What is established in this field of study is the idea that the subject is constantly being (re)constructed, with their environment being shaped by language, and language in turn being influenced by external factors. This creates a continuous cycle where linguists and history are interconnected and codependent (Marinho, 2019).

When analyzing the authors who influenced Maingueneau, Foucault (2005) shows that discourse extends beyond mere words on paper. It is shaped by historical and social contexts, varying modes of thought, and other elements external to language. Therefore, these factors are equally important in constructing meaning, in addition to linguistic aspects. According to Foucault (2005), due to multiplicities, discourse/utterance arises from specific situations and serves as a form of positioning, constructions that emerge within particular social and historical contexts. He demonstrates how power is evident in these discourses, impacting what can be said and how it can be expressed in different settings. This reflection delves deeply into how power dynamics are intertwined with language, influencing the way we communicate and interact within society.

For Benveniste (1966; 1974), it is interesting to observe how language is a complex system that goes far beyond mere transmission of information. It also plays a fundamental role in the construction of identities and social relationships, emphasizing the importance of

contextualization and subjectivity in understanding language. Benveniste (1974) distinguishes the act of enunciation (the concrete performance of a speech act by a subject at a specific moment) and the utterance (the linguistic product resulting from this act), emphasizing that discourses not only transmit information but also construct identities and social relations.

Subsequently, according to Michel Pêcheux (2008), discourse analysis is a method for understanding how language shapes meanings and power dynamics within our society. The author discusses the significance of rules and historical circumstances that shape how we communicate. Pêcheux also emphasizes the role of social, ideological, and political factors in shaping the creation and interpretation of texts.

In this way, based on the summary of the ideas and authors presented, we can direct our focus to the central point of this research: the analysis of discourse from the perspective of Dominique Maingueneau, addressing his concepts of discursive *ethos* and enunciative scene.

I THINK HE KNOWS: DOMINIQUE MAINGUENEAU

Dominique Maingueneau is a professor of Linguistics in the Department of French Language at Paris IV-Sorbonne University. He has worked in the field of discourse analysis since 1976, following the French tradition and focusing on the approaches of Foucault, pragmatics, and theories of linguistic enunciation. His research explores the constituent discourses (philosophical, religious, scientific, literary, etc.) that legitimize social practices.³

According to Maingueneau (2015), discourse analysis is a method for understanding creation, interpretation, and sharing of discourses in various social contexts. He emphasizes the significance of not only considering the linguistic content but also examining the historical, social, cultural, and institutional context that molds the discourses. His approach is focused on conducting an analysis that observes not only the explicit statements but also the implicit aspects and persuasion techniques used to influence the public, prompting a reflection on discursive practices within diverse social contexts (Maingueneau, 2015).

Due to his critical approach to discourse analysis, Maingueneau (2008) developed an interest in studying discursive *ethos*. He decided to delve into this topic because he viewed it as a crucial tool for comprehending the wider social dynamics that influence the production and understanding of speeches, as well as the mechanisms of persuasion.

³ The author's biography can be found: <https://colunastortas.com.br/autor/dominique-maingueneau/>. Access: 02 may. de 2024.

WHAT IF I TOLD YOU I'M A MASTERMIND?: ETHOS

In order to better understand the materialization and connection of discourses, Discourse Analysis has revived the concept of *ethos* from Aristotelian rhetoric. One of the main challenges we encounter when dealing with the concept of *ethos* is its highly intuitive nature, as pointed out by Maingueneau (2008).

In summary, there are times when the concept that a speaker influences how his listeners perceive him when communicating, and seeks to exercise control is particularly straightforward. Therefore, according to Maingueneau (2008), in addition to persuading with arguments, *ethos* also enables us to consider how individuals identify with specific positions, which is a crucial aspect of the discourse's identity.

Auchlin (2001) suggests that *ethos* is more practical than just a theoretical concept. It can be a powerful tool for influencing behavior and persuading people in real-life situations, such as public speeches. In other words, *ethos* is more effectively utilized when put into action rather than solely discussed in theories.

Before we delve into the discussion of Maingueneau's concepts regarding the notion of *ethos*, it is important to highlight the trajectory evolving from the rhetorical notion of *ethos* to discourse analysis. To accomplish this, we must refer back to ancient rhetoric, particularly Aristotle's Rhetoric, the first work in which we encounter a conceptual elaboration.

Aristotle's intention, when developing his reflections, was not to analyze what is persuasive for a specific person, but rather for different types of individuals. In other words, he aimed to understand what convinces the general public or a specific group.

Persuaded by character [= *ethos*] when discourse has a nature that grants the speaker credibility; for honest individuals inspire in us a great and immediate confidence on matters in general, and complete confidence on those that admit no certainty whatsoever, leaving room for doubt. However, this confidence must result from the discourse itself, not from a prior judgment about the speaker's character. (Aristotle, 1356a, p. 5-6 apud Maingueneau, 2008, p. 13).⁴

The rhetorical *ethos* is based on creating a good impression through consistently constructing the speech, presenting an image of oneself capable of persuading the audience and gaining trust (Maingueneau, 2008). This *ethos* is linked to the manner of expression and

⁴ Original Portuguese text sourced from Maingueneau (2008, p. 13): “Persuade-se pelo caráter [= *ethos*] quando o discurso tem uma natureza que confere ao orador a condição de digno de fé; pois as pessoas honestas nos inspiram uma grande e pronta confiança sobre as questões em geral, e inteira confiança sobre as que não comportam de nenhum modo certeza, deixando lugar à dúvida. Mas é preciso que essa confiança seja efeito do discurso, não uma previsão sobre o caráter do orador (1356a: 5-6).”

external knowledge about the speaker. To convey a more positive image of oneself, Aristotle suggests the speaker can utilize three main qualities: prudence, virtue, and benevolence.

As for speakers, they inspire confidence for three reasons, which indeed, apart from demonstrations, determine our belief: prudence (*phronesis*), virtue (*aretè*), and benevolence (*eunoia*). If indeed speakers distort the truth in what they say or advise, it is because of all these things at once or because of one of them: either they lack prudence and are unreasonable; or, being reasonable, they suppress their opinions out of dishonesty; or, being prudent and honest, they lack benevolence. This is why they may, even knowing the best course to take, not advise it (Aristotle, 1378, p. 6-14 apud Maingueneau, 2008, p. 13).⁵

Thus, from Maingueneau's (2008) narratives in his studies, what we can comprehend about rhetorical *ethos* is that it involves more than just the words we use to describe ourselves. Our true essence is revealed through our actions, the way we behave, and the way we lead our lives - qualities that are easily recognizable when they are genuine, and challenging to imitate when they are not (Aristotle, 1356a, apud Maingueneau, 2008). Our manner of speaking, the words we select, and the gestures we exhibit all impact communication, but it is crucial that our honesty and integrity truly reflect who we are, both in our words and in our actions.

In concluding the definition of *ethos*, it is important to highlight that, despite variations in the rhetorical tradition, it still shares fundamental concepts with Aristotelian *ethos*. However, delving deeper into this aspect exceeds the scope of this research. Maingueneau further expands on this perspective of *ethos*, focusing on the discursive strategies that construct authority and credibility within the discourse itself.

Based on this, we will further explore the author Maingueneau and his studies concerning discursive *ethos* and the enunciative scene. Following an analysis of the concepts of rhetorical and discursive *ethos*, it is crucial to comprehend the subdivision suggested by Maingueneau (2008, p.15) regarding his understanding of *ethos*, as posited by the author:

The *ethos* is crucially linked to the act of enunciation, but it cannot be ignored that the audience also constructs representations of the speaker's *ethos* before they even

⁵ Original Portuguese text sourced from Maingueneau (2008, p. 13): “Quanto aos oradores, eles inspiram confiança por três razões; as que efetivamente, à parte as demonstrações, determinam nossa crença: a prudência (*phronesis*), a virtude (*aretè*) e a benevolência (*eunoia*). Se, de fato, os oradores alteram a verdade sobre o que dizem enquanto falam ou aconselham, é por causa de todas essas coisas de uma só vez ou de uma dentre elas: ou bem, por falta de prudência, eles não são razoáveis; ou, sendo razoáveis, eles calam suas opiniões por desonestidade; ou, prudentes e honestos, não são benevolentes; é por isso que podem, mesmo conhecendo o melhor caminho a seguir, não o aconselhar (1378a: 6-14).”

speak. It seems necessary, then, to establish a distinction between discursive *ethos* and pre-discursive *ethos* (Maingueneau, 2008, p.15).⁶

When discussing pre-discursive *ethos*, Maingueneau (2008) refers to the attributes that are acknowledged or ascribed to the speaker before they even begin speaking or writing. In the specific context of the speech in question, the author describes these attributes as stereotypes associated with ethical worlds. These stereotypes may include factors such as confidence, social status, or any other characteristic that influences the initial perception of the author by the public. While an individual may initially have a strong pre-speech *ethos* due to their position, authority, or image, this does not guarantee that such a perception will be maintained by their audience throughout their speech.

For this reason, Maingueneau (2008) also presents the concept of discursive *ethos*, which is constructed within the discourse itself through specific linguistic and discursive strategies, such as the tone of the discourse, the choice of arguments, and the organization of the text, among other elements. Thus, the dynamics may vary according to the target audience and the communicative context. In other words, the same speech can be used for different purposes, provoking different reactions, depending solely on the speaker for this outcome.

Maingueneau (2008) expands the understanding of *ethos* beyond the literal content of words, incorporating subtle and complex elements. It is essential to distinguish, within the author's subdivisions, the relationship between what is stated and what is implied when analyzing discursive *ethos*. Persuasion and the construction of the essay are not solely reliant on statements made by the announcer, but also on how these statements are shaped, presented, and contextualized within the discourse as a whole:

There are always contingent elements in a communication act, regarding which it is difficult to determine whether they are part of the discourse or not, but they influence the construction of *ethos* by the recipient. Ultimately, it is a theoretical decision: whether *ethos* should be related to the verbal material itself, attributing power to words, or whether elements such as the speaker's attire, gestures, in short, the entire context of communication should be integrated into it—and in what proportions. The problem is exceedingly delicate, given that *ethos*, by its nature, is a behavior that, as such, integrates verbal and non-verbal aspects, causing multi-sensory effects on recipients (Maingueneau, 2008, p.16).⁷

⁶ Original Portuguese text sourced from Maingueneau (2008, p. 15): “O *ethos* está crucialmente ligado ao ato de enunciação, mas não se pode ignorar que o público constrói também representações do *ethos* do enunciador antes mesmo que ele fale. Parece necessário, então, estabelecer uma distinção entre *ethos* discursivo e *ethos* pré-discursivo.”

⁷ Original Portuguese text sourced from Maingueneau (2008, p. 16): “Há sempre elementos contingentes num ato de comunicação, em relação aos quais é difícil dizer se fazem ou não parte do discurso, mas que influenciam a construção do *ethos* pelo destinatário. É, em última instância, uma decisão teórica: saber se se deve relacionar o *ethos* ao material propriamente verbal, atribuir poder às palavras, ou se se devem integrar a ele – e em quais

From this, arising from both pre-discursive and discursive construction, there is indeed the formation of an effective *ethos*. This *ethos* reflects the actual impact of the speaker's interaction with the audience. Based on this effective *ethos*, the speaker's perception and credibility can demonstrate influence and trust in the author, as well as whether the speech successfully affected and persuaded the target audience in line with its objectives. In this manner, it is evident that, according to Maingueneau, *ethos* is perceived as a constructed element. Consequently, the author introduces another concept that enhances the comprehension of discourse and *ethos*: the enunciative scene.

According to Maingueneau (2015), the enunciative scene plays a crucial role in the production and reception of discourse in general. The context in which the speech is presented and received is fundamental in making sense of the content, providing a setting and context::

The term 'scene' also has the advantage of being able to refer simultaneously to both a setting and a process: it is, at the same time, the well-defined space in which plays are performed ('on the scene are...', 'the king enters the scene'), and the sequences of actions, verbal and non-verbal, that inhabit this space ('throughout the scene,' 'a domestic scene') (Maingueneau, 2015, p. 117).⁸

Therefore, the enunciative scene for the author is responsible for validating and legitimizing the discourse, as "a text is essentially the trace of a discourse in which speech is enacted" (Maingueneau, 2015), thus contributing to establishing the credibility and legitimacy of the communication. Consequently, the presentation of speech has a substantial impact on how the content is perceived and accepted by the audience.

In order to understand the enunciative scene, it is essential to consider the aspects the author takes into account based on the notions of the scene. These aspects can be subdivided into the following categories: encompassing scene, generic scene, and scenography.

The encompassing scene is the broader context in which a speech occurs. It encompasses the type of speech, whether it be philosophical, poetic, political, advertising, or others. Other related factors include the physical and social environment, as well as society's expectations regarding speech. However, Maingueneau (2006) argues that the comprehensive

proporções – elementos como as roupas do locutor, seus gestos, ou seja, o conjunto do quadro da comunicação. O problema é por demais delicado, posto que o *ethos*, por natureza, é um comportamento que, como tal, articula verbal e não-verbal, provocando nos destinatários efeitos multi-sensoriais.”

⁸ Original Portuguese text sourced from Maingueneau (2015, p. 117): ”O termo “cena” apresenta ainda a vantagem de poder referir ao mesmo tempo um quadro e um processo: ela é, ao mesmo tempo, o espaço bem delimitado no qual são representadas as peças (“na cena se encontra...”, “o rei entra em cena”), e as sequências das ações, verbais e não verbais que habitam esse espaço (“ao longo da cena”, “uma cena doméstica”).”

scene alone is not enough to fully explain the discursive activities of individuals, and that multiple comprehensive scenes may be involved in a specific utterance.

In defining the second scene, the generic one, as its name suggests, is connected to the genre of speech. This genre defines specific roles associated with discursive institutions and is essential for discursive competence. Maingueneau (2015) uses a contract or a set of expectations as an example to outline the roles of participants and the rules that regulate discourse in order to simplify his ideas. Defining the scenic framework of the text enables the audience to identify the type and discursive genre.

Scenography, according to Maingueneau's theory, pertains to the specific and dynamic context that arises during the utterance of a speech, in which elements such as tone of voice, gestures, images used, and even the current emotional atmosphere are considered.

Let's take the example of a novel; the story can be told in multiple ways: it could be a sailor recounting his adventures to a stranger, a traveler narrating an episode in a letter to a friend, an invisible narrator participating in a meal and delegating the narrative to a fellow diner, and so on (Maingueneau, 2015).⁹

Thus, scenography is not limited to just declaring a scene, but rather the process of integrating the description of the setting as an integral part of the scenography itself. It evolves as the speech progresses. In other words, scenography involves organizing the environment in which communication will occur, essential to legitimize the speech.

In summary, the enunciation scenes not only delimit the physical and social context in which the discourse develops, but they also influence the verbal practices and behavioral expectations imposed on the participants involved in the discursive interaction.

Given this, it is evident that Dominique Maingueneau's contributions are significant not only for linguistics, but also for being addressed and applied in several other areas of knowledge. Throughout his career and works, the author emphasizes the importance of analyzing speeches beyond grammatical constructions. What Maingueneau and other authors have studied demonstrates that language is intrinsically linked to social, political, educational, media, and artistic contexts. His vision of *ethos* and enunciative scene enables us to embark on this work aiming to discursively establish what the singer Taylor Swift conveys in her

⁹ Original Portuguese text sourced from Maingueneau (2015): “Tomemos o exemplo de uma novela; a história pode ser contada de múltiplas maneiras: pode ser um marujo contando suas aventuras a um estrangeiro, um viajante que narra numa carta a um amigo algum episódio por que acaba de passar, um narrador invisível que participa de uma refeição e delega a narrativa a um conviva etc. Da mesma maneira, um texto membro da cena genérica romanesca pode ser enunciado, por exemplo, por meio da cenografia do diário íntimo, do relato de viagem, da conversa ao pé da fogueira, da correspondência epistolar etc.”

lyrics, whether through the choice of words and grammatical formations or the context, whether about love, pain, or other themes. It is always important and interesting to consider the incorporation of additional strands of linguistic and literary studies to enrich the study of the English language and teacher training, allowing for reflections beyond those that pertain to teaching, learning, literary analysis, and translation.

For the next section, it is necessary to present, even in summary, two additional points that are part of and complement this work: pop music and the renowned artist who composed the songs focused on in the analyses, Taylor Swift.

YOU AND ME, WE GOT BIG REPUTATIONS: POP MUSIC AND TAYLOR SWIFT

According to Lima (2004), music is an important means of transmitting aesthetic, ideological, moral, religious, and linguistic values. The author argues it is essential to understand language as a reflection of culture, through which the meanings present in texts are formed. Therefore, songs play a fundamental role in revealing the rich cultural diversity.

Music, beyond just being a form of language, has the potential to stimulate sensations and feelings. Pop music, with its ability to adapt to social environments, as posited by Featherstone (1995), fosters connections. It possesses the power to instill a sense of global belonging, transcending regional borders and emphasizing common norms and values.

However, how can the audience feel connected? This connection can be established through live performances, music videos, music shows, and even intimate performances by fans in their bedrooms. Additionally, the audience can connect through engaging melodies, meaningful lyrics, or by identifying with the experiences of artists and songwriters.

When we consider great songs, there always arises the question: "What is the message of these lyrics?" "What does this artist want to convey to me?" "How does this resonate with my personal identity?" The role of song interpreters is crucial, but the task of a composer is even more meticulous as it requires both creativity and technical knowledge to create original musical pieces..

An artist's success in sharing their music depends on the receptivity of their target audience. The easy access provided by digital music platforms, a result of technological evolution and the efforts of the cultural industry, makes the experience of discovering these artists and their music more and more common. Now, we are going to introduce an artist who is among the great songwriters and who is steadily gaining more fans.

Taylor Alison Swift, also known by her stage name Taylor Swift, was born on December 13, 1989 in Pennsylvania, United States. In an effort to pursue a career in country music, she relocated to Nashville at the age of 14 with her family. With her dedication and family support, Taylor Swift successfully secured a major contract with a renowned record label at the age of 16, leading to great success in her career.¹⁰ Throughout her extensive professional journey, we will outline some of the most significant milestones in her career.

In 2006, Taylor released her self-titled debut album, which was a huge commercial success. The album included hits such as *Teardrops on My Guitar* and *Our Song*. Two years later, in 2008, she released her second album, *Fearless*, which established her as one of the top country artists at the time. With standout singles like *Love Story* and *You Belong With Me*, Taylor Swift gained even more fans around the world and won four Grammy Awards, including Album of the Year. In her third album, *Speak Now* (2010), the artist showed greater creative independence, as she wrote all the songs herself.

In 2012, Taylor showcased her versatility by releasing the album *RED*, which marked her transition towards pop while still containing elements of country. Two years later, in 2014, the singer definitively solidified this change in her career with the release of *1989*, establishing herself as a prominent figure in the pop scene. In 2017, with *Reputation*, Taylor made her return to pop and the spotlight, showcasing a darker, more electronic sound and exploring themes of fame and reputation. *Lover* (2019) presented a blend of musical styles and influences, featuring a softer and more romantic sound with pop, country, and indie influences, along with a unique visual aesthetic that her fans had never seen before.

Many fans believe that in 2020, during the pandemic, the singer truly showcased her versatility by releasing two surprise albums and deviating from the typical practice of releasing new albums only every two years. With *Folklore* and *Evermore*, a blend of indie and introspective sounds were presented, carrying on the style of one another. Some fans humorously refer to them as sister albums or suggest that *Evermore* consists of leftovers from *Folklore*, but the reality is that both albums delve into themes of nostalgia, romance, introspection, and fiction.

Since the beginning of her career, the singer has won several important awards in the world of music and currently holds multiple accolades such as Album of the Year, Best Artist, Best Video, Woman of the Year, among others. This can be attributed to Taylor Swift's knack

¹⁰ The discography of Taylor Swift, compiled by journalist Paola Churchill on CNN Brasil on November 23, 2023. Available at: <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/entretenimento/conheca-a-discografia-completa-de-taylor-swift>. Access: 7 jun. 2024.

for innovation, which is evident in her discography of 11 albums spanning various genres including country, pop, pop rock, synth-pop, indie folk, and alternative rock.¹⁰

Moreover, her narrative compositions were frequently lauded by critics. In the early stages of her career, the singer often delved into the realm of anonymous crushes from her high school days. During that period, the teenager was expected to exhibit behavior that aligned with the songs she performed, in order to serve as a positive role model for the many young girls who looked up to her. As her career progressed, there was a noticeable evolution in her representation of relationships in her lyrics, showcasing a more mature perspective that coincided with his adulthood. In interviews, she mentioned that not all of her songs were based on personal experiences and sometimes they were inspired by observations or fictional narratives. In addition to themes of romance and love, her music also touches on topics such as parent-child relationships, friendships, feelings of alienation, fame, and career aspirations.¹⁰

AND I BET YOU THINK ABOUT ME: METHODOLOGY

The research adopted for this study is qualitative in nature, as defined by Minayo (2007, p. 24), dedicated to the examination of the "universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values, and attitudes."¹¹ By analyzing these socially constructed phenomena, our aim is to understand and interpret reality. This perspective allows for a more detailed and contextualized analysis of the discursive characteristics found in two distinct songs from two albums by singer Taylor Swift, in order to explore the discursive *ethos*.

The albums were chosen based on relevance and their release dates. The first album selected was *Fearless*, the artist's second album, originally released in 2008 and re-released in 2021. The chosen song was *White Horse*, which won the award for Best Country Vocal Performance at the 2010 Grammys. The second song chosen for analysis was *Would've, Could've, Should've* from the album *Midnights*, released in 2022 as the singer's tenth work.

Content analysis will be carried out to identify and categorize linguistic discursive elements that contribute to the discursive ethos in the lyrics. Moraes (1999, p. 2) argues that content analysis has a relevant meaning in the context of social research and that "[...] it

¹¹ Original Portuguese text sourced from Minayo (2007, p. 24): "Universo dos significados, dos motivos, das aspirações, das crenças, dos valores e das atitudes."

constitutes something far beyond a simple data analysis technique, representing a methodological approach with its own characteristics and possibilities”.¹²

In this analysis, we aim to identify the formation and development of the *ethos* in the selected songs by examining the statements made within them and how they influence public perception. To conduct this analysis, we will present excerpts from the lyrics in their context. By delving into the concept of *ethos*, we will uncover the messages conveyed by the songs and the image portrayed by the speaker. To conduct this analysis, we will present excerpts from the lyrics in their context. By delving into the concept of *ethos*, we will uncover the messages conveyed by the songs and the image portrayed by the speaker.

SAD BEAUTIFUL TRAGIC: THE ANALYZES

WHITE HORSE - FEARLESS

The first song, *White Horse*, belongs to the album *Fearless*, so a brief context about the album and the song itself is necessary.

The album *Fearless* is a country work with light pop influences. It contains 13 songs in its original version, including hits such as *The Way I Loved You*, *Love Story*, and *You Belong With Me*. In its most recent version, the singer added songs that had been discarded from the original version, totaling 13 more tracks. This album, on its initial release, achieved great accomplishments and awards, including the most prestigious in the musical world: Album Of The Year at the 2010 Grammy Awards. The compositions address themes such as teenage love, rejection, self-empowerment, combined with scenarios related to fairy tales.

Thus, the song *White Horse*, from the album *Fearless*, is presented as a starting point for the analysis. Building on the theoretical discussion, the aim is to establish the enunciative scene and discursive ethos. At the 2010 Grammy Awards, *White Horse* was honored with the awards for Best Country Song and Best Female Country Vocal Performance.

Its genre could be described as a discreet and melancholic country-pop ballad. The general theme of the song revolves around fairy tales, complete with princesses and white horses, as implied by the title itself. Contrary to what the title suggests, the song is not

¹² Original Portuguese text sourced from Moraes (1999, p. 2): “[...] constitui-se em algo muito além de uma simples técnica de análise de dados, representando uma abordagem metodológica com características e possibilidades próprias.”

romantic. Instead, the enunciator ends up heartbroken upon realizing that her beloved is not the perfect model she had envisioned.

This information aids in the construction of an enunciative scene, as Maingueneau (2015) asserts that it is crucial to offer a scenario and context to comprehend what was expressed. To approach a specific enunciative scene, it is important to set initial points. In this instance, drawing from the information provided, we have what represents the broader context of the music being analyzed. Thus, the title alludes to fairy tales and prompts us to make assumptions about the music, as white horses are typically depicted as companions of noble and romantic princes in these narratives.

It is a song that falls somewhere between poetic and artistic, as it was written by a teenager who romanticizes romantic experiences, a stereotype of that age. The atmosphere created by the song's expectations reflects society's expectations regarding language. The title and the author play a key role in shaping the content of the song. As the lyrics progress, various aspects will be revealed. To fully understand the speaker's discursive activities, other factors must be taken into account to establish the concrete enunciative scene. This scene does not equate to the enunciation itself, but rather sets the stage for the speech conditions by presenting the *ethos*, influencing the audience's expectations and the author's potential intentions (Nascimento, 2020).

In this manner, through establishing the initial expectations regarding the enunciative scene and the *ethos*, these elements enable the commencement of the analysis. All excerpts from both songs will be numbered as follows: excerpt 1, excerpt 2, and so forth.

Excerpt 1:

*Say you're sorry, that face of an angel
Comes out just when you need it to
As I paced back and forth all this time
'Cause I honestly believed in you*

The narrator of the song starts by informing that her loved one is apologizing for a mistake made, indicating a deviation from the expected behavior she had anticipated. Through her choice of words, she expresses that despite her efforts to progress in their relationship, she constantly found herself back at square one. There is a sense of disillusionment as she reflects on her belief in the person she once saw, attributing her youthful naivety to her perception of living in a fairy tale. Moving forward, excerpt 2 continues the analysis:

Excerpt 2:

*Stupid girl, I should've known, I should've known
That I'm not a princess
This ain't a fairytale
I'm not the one you'll sweep off her feet
Lead her up the stairwell
This ain't Hollywood
This is a small town
I was a dreamer before you went and let me down
Now it's too late for you and your white horse
To come around*

In Excerpt 2, which is also repeated in other moments of the song, one can observe the awakening to reality after the end of an idealized relationship. The artist uses metaphors and cultural references to express her perception that she was, in fact, a naive girl who did not understand what was really happening in her romantic relationship. She acknowledges that she is not a princess and that the love story was not a fairy tale, realizing now that she was not the one chosen to have a happy ending with this loved one. The mention of Hollywood, a place where romantic films are produced, serves to contrast with the reality of the small town where she resides, where things are very different. Despite having created expectations about this love, she admits that she would have been a dreamer in any other situation with any other person. The excerpt concludes with the mention of the white horse, symbolizing that it is already too late for the idealized prince to try to save her or to change things between them.

In Excerpt 3, the announcer¹³ reveals that she finally understands she never truly had an opportunity to be chosen as that person's legitimate love. In a way, she blames herself for allowing herself to fall in love so easily.

Excerpt 3:

*[...]And never really had a chance
My mistake, I didn't know to be in love
[...] I had so many dreams about you and me
Happy endings, but now I know*

¹³ The announcer, in this analysis, is connected to the concept of the *lyrical self* in literature. The term *lyrical self* is used to designate the voice that manifests itself in songs, poems, etc. It is important to emphasize that the *lyrical self* is not necessarily associated with the person who expresses it, as that individual can represent, in their work, a lyrical self that differs from their own experience. Definition of the lyrical self as taken from the source: Gênero lírico: estrutura, elementos, tipos de poemas. Available in: <https://brasilecola.uol.com.br/literatura/genero-lirico.htm>. Access: 13 July. 2024.

In excerpt 3, the speaker continues to demonstrate her idealization by discussing how she dreams of happy endings for the two of them. Despite sharing these optimistic dreams, she emphasizes that they are merely fantasies that will never materialize.

In regards to the construction of *ethos* and defining it, some key points that can be highlighted include: an individual who is in love and ultimately left disappointed - such as a teenager experiencing her first love and a significant relationship, is someone whose expectations have been shattered in the course of the relationship, a passionate individual who longed to be someone's beloved and chosen partner.

Closing the reading of the first song, there are two more important Excerpts (4 and 5): the first consists of her once again warning that someone is sorry for belatedly realizing what they lost or took for granted. It is someone who is begging for forgiveness and love from their loved one, which may suggest infidelity on the part of that partner. This takes us back to the point where she says: "*I'm not a princess and I'm not the one you'll sweep off her feet / Lead her up the stairwell*", also suggesting that perhaps there is already another girl in this story. Soon, the enunciator makes it clear that she does not want it anymore and that she is sorry for not being able to stand it and continue in this relationship as she wanted before it happened.

Excerpt 4:

*And there you are on your knees
Begging for forgiveness, begging for me
Just like I always wanted, but I'm so sorry*

Next, a variant of the excerpt analyzed above (Excerpt 2) is presented. This variant may go unnoticed by some individuals because it utilizes the same structure, but includes words that alter the interpretation of the text.

Excerpt 5:

*Cause I'm not your princess
This ain't a fairytale
I'm gonna find someone someday
Who might actually treat me well
This is a big world
That was a small town
There in my rearview mirror disappearing now
And it's too late for you and your white horse
Now it's too late for you and your white horse
To catch me now*

In the last stanza, she expresses a note of self-affirmation and hope as she declares she is ready to move on, leaving the small town and the illusions of a fairytale love behind. By including "your" in "*Cause I'm not your princess*", she is being more direct about the intended recipient of her message. Initially, she did not use a possessive adjective, which conveyed a more general message that she is not a princess. However, in the revised version, she acknowledges that she is not the princess of the person she loves. Maintaining her hopeful tone, she emphasizes that the world is vast and she will find someone who truly appreciates her. The contrast between the big world and the small town offers a fresh perspective, suggesting that her previous view of life and love was limited by her belief that everything she desired could be found there. Thus, leaving the city may not equate to physically departing the location, but rather signifies a shift in mindset towards embracing new possibilities. This disappointment in love ultimately serves as a catalyst for embracing reality over fictional or superficial expectations.

Therefore, when considering the enunciative scene, it is understood that the established *ethos* underwent different phases throughout the narrative. As a result, it is possible to explain this *ethos* by associating it with the 5 phases of grief, a theory developed by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in 1969. These 5 phases represent the emotional stages that individuals may go through when dealing with a significant loss, not necessarily related to death. It is important to note that, despite being labeled as 5 phases, the order in which these stages occur can vary from person to person..

The *ethos* established from the analyzed excerpts reveals the presence of five stages: denial, anger, negotiation (bargaining), depression, and acceptance. We will briefly outline these concepts to connect them to our true objective, which is *ethos*.

Visibly, there is a presence of denial in the lyrics being analyzed, as seen in parts like "*As I paced back and forth all this time /Cause I honestly believed in you*", and "*Stupid girl, I should've known, I should've known / That I'm not a princess / This isn't a fairytale*". As the name suggests, at this stage, there is a refusal to believe in what has happened, along with intense pain and difficulty in dealing with the situation. Shortly after, when moving beyond the denial phase, feelings of anger emerge, along with a sense of injustice and a struggle to accept the current circumstances. This is illustrated in the following lines: "*Maybe I was naive, got lost in your eyes / And never really had a chance / My mistake, I didn't know that to be in love / You had to fight to have the upper hand,*" as well as in "*That I'm not a princess / This isn't a fairytale / I'm not the one you'll sweep off her feet / Lead her up the stairwell.*"

Even though the speaker takes a passive stance, there may still be underlying anger at not being chosen or because there is another girl involved in the story.

The third moment associated with mourning is negotiation/bargaining, which, in this case, does not involve explicit negotiation. There is an implicit desire for things to have been different and for the partner to have acted differently. This phase involves an attempt to ease the pain and explore potential solutions to escape from the harsh reality, trying to make up for what is lacking with something else, whether it be a new emotion, object, or different attitudes. In *White Horse*, this is emphasized in the following lines: *“And there you are on your knees; Begging for forgiveness, begging for me”* and *“Now it's too late for you and your white horse / To come around.”* The subsequent stage is depression, during which the individual turns their focus inward, experiencing a profound sense of sorrow in response to the loss. In our song, this stage is depicted more broadly, portraying a deep sadness stemming from the mourning of lost love. An example of this would be: *“I was a dreamer before you went and let me down”* and *“I had so many dreams about you and me / Happy endings, but now I know.”* During the depression phase, the individual, when introspecting, expresses their pain; the artist conveys this by feeling responsible for their own naivety and experiencing sorrow for not being able to maintain a connection with this person. Nonetheless, it is evident that her greatest remorse lies in her own naivety.

In the final phase of grief, with acceptance, reality finally becomes clearer, no matter how difficult and painful it may be. Even in the face of this loss, it is possible to move forward in a healthy way after accepting the pain, although this sadness may last for a long time. And that is exactly what we have at the end of the song: *“And there you are on your knees, begging for forgiveness, begging for me, just like I always wanted, but I'm so sorry”* and *“I'm gonna find someone someday who might actually treat me well”* and *“This is a big world”* and *“Now it's too late for you and your white horse to catch me now.”*

In this way, when Maingueneau (2014) defines *ethos* as the image that the speaker constructs of themselves in their speech to influence their interlocutors, we can understand why the song has become a symbol of strength for many fans who identify with the experience of overcoming a broken heart and finding their own path. The singer demonstrates the importance of recognizing one's own strength and independence, rather than waiting for a savior. The song reflects the journey of empowerment of a young woman who learns from both her mistakes and successes, drawing from life's experiences. She asserts that she is not a

princess waiting for a prince, but rather seeking someone who will treat her well and being prepared to move forward after facing various challenges, both in situations and emotions.

WOULD'VE, COULD'VE, SHOULD'VE - MIDNIGHTS

For the upcoming analysis, the second album chosen is Taylor Swift's *Midnights*. The songs on the album touch on themes such as regrets, self-criticism, fantasies, heartbreak, and passion. In a mysterious manner, the artist incorporates references to both her personal and public life, playing with the lyrics to create a collection of nocturnal confessions that originated from her sleepless nights. The album is available in standard edition as well as extended versions with additional songs, amounting to a total of 23 tracks. Songs reached top positions on charts, such as *Anti-Hero*, *Bejeweled*, *Lavender Haze*, and *Karma*. Following the release of *Midnights*, Taylor Swift became the first artist to take over the top 10 spots on the Billboard Hot 100, winning Album of the Year and Best Pop Vocal Album at the 2024 Grammy Awards.

The concept of the *Midnights* is organized into five main themes: self-hatred, revenge fantasies, reflections on what could have been, romantic experiences, and moments of vulnerability. Taylor described the album as a collection of stories from 13 sleepless nights throughout her life. Because of its different compositions, themes, and productions/genres of the songs, this album and one of its songs were chosen to define the *ethos*. The album presents more sincere, confident compositions and is frank, without delving too much into romanticism, fiction, and romantic idealizations, as seen in *Fearless* and the fairy tales.

The song selected from the album is *Would've, Could've, Should've*. Initially not included in the standard edition, this song was added as a bonus track in the *Midnights (3am Edition)* and its other variants. It was written and produced by Swift in collaboration with other artists, featuring elements of pop and soft rock. The song is considered one of the best in her career and is viewed as a sequel to *Dear John*, from her third studio album, *Speak Now*.

The song portrays the enunciator detailing a ruined romantic relationship from the past, along with the traumas, fears, and regrets she carries as a result. The lyrics deal with the emotions of the 19-year-old girl who was involved with an older man, and as the song unfolds, she expresses how this relationship continues to haunt her when she is older.

When determining an enunciative scene for this song, we must begin with the title, which may not appear to have an explicit meaning but leads us to further understand the

song's enunciation. The title is filled with informal contractions of modal verbs followed by auxiliary verb *have*. The combination of the three modes prompts us to seek the reason for this exaggeration. In the English language, *Would* can indicate possibility, preference, or intention in the past, while *Could* is used to express ability, possibility, or permission in the past, and *Should* indicates obligation, advice, or past expectation. Once again, in the title, all of them are accompanied by *have* as an auxiliary verb to indicate completed action in the past.

We understand that the issues addressed in the lyrics are related to speculation, possibility, and regret in past events. Such contractions, common in everyday life, represent frequently used expressions that imply decisions made with regret or an apology for something done. In other words, the enunciator seeks to justify a decision taken based on situations initiated by someone else, seeking a justification for their error and would have avoided going through such situations. That being said, it is necessary to define the first excerpt for analysis in order to understand more about the song, the scene, the *ethos*, and the discursive choices. Once again, to avoid confusion, all excerpts will be listed as follows.

Excerpt 1:

*If you would've blinked, then I would've
Looked away at the first glance
If you tasted poison, you could've
Spit me out at the first chance*

At the outset, the enunciator introduces some points. Firstly, she accuses someone else of initiating everything, implying that if that person had not stared at her the first time they met, she would not have engaged in this game of sustaining eye contact, indicating that they both enjoy competing and winning. Then, she shifts the blame back to him, implying that there is a more concrete and physical element involved, insinuating that if she were truly poisonous and harmful, he should not have continued desiring to experience this "poison".

Excerpt 2:

*And if I was some paint, did it splatter
On a promising grown man?
And if I was a child, did it matter
If you got to wash your hands?
Oh, all I used to do was pray
Would've, could've, should've
If you'd never looked my way*

It is then confirmed the person she got involved with is actually older. Despite being a young adult, perhaps at that moment she still felt like a child, and it mattered that someone older looked at, desired, or was involved with someone of a different age. She questions what would have happened if she were a child and what that would mean for him. In the United States, each state has its own laws regarding the age of consent (which ranges from 16 to 18 years old) in romantic or sexual relationships between adults. Moving forward, somehow, it is once again understood that he needs to clean his hands, not just by washing them, but that somehow he will always have stained hands and his reputation is tarnished as a man.

Excerpt 3:

*Oh, all I used to do was pray
Would've, could've, should've
If you'd never looked my way
I would've stayed on my knees
And I damn sure never would've danced with the devil
At nineteen
And the God's honest truth is that the pain was heaven*

From this third excerpt onwards, the enunciator introduces religious aspects into his lyrics, a common occurrence in Taylor Swift's songs. The singer had a lot of exposure to religion due to her family, particularly her mother. While the singer's personal life is not pertinent to our analysis, it is worth noting that she consistently incorporates these religious elements in her songs. This can be seen in her requests for forgiveness, pleas for assistance, expressions of gratitude, and depictions of her romantic experiences.

In excerpt 3, it is evident that she saw herself as a sweet and innocent girl who prayed on her knees to God and did not focus on other things. She was calm, but everything changed when someone looked at her. If she had continued in this way, under divine protection, she would not have come into contact with the devil, nor would she have danced like him. In the last line, it is observed that, despite appearing regretful, there was something good that she began to like or enjoy, possibly the song indirectly referring to sexual issues.

Excerpt 4:

*And now that I'm grown
I'm scared of ghosts
Memories feel like weapons
And now that I know
I wish you'd left me wondering
If you never touched me, I would've*

Gone along with the righteous

Another point has been confirmed: this is the reflection of an older individual who is now analyzing everything that happened in their youth, reflecting on the past, decisions, and attitudes. Despite having grown up, this person continues to be terrified by the memories and their choices, even if those choices were influenced by someone who should have been wiser and more aware of a young girl. They even compare these memories to the pain of a wound caused by a weapon, meaning that the emotional hurt is so intense that it becomes physical. It is evident that they would prefer to live with their imaginations, illusions, and fantasies, as it would be easier to cope with. Furthermore, making reference once again to something religious and possibly sexual, they make it clear that the fact that they were touched took away their purity and the opportunity to remain alongside the righteous, those who do not sin.

Excerpt 5:

*And if you never saved me from boredom
I could've gone on as I was
But, Lord, you made me feel important
And then you tried to erase us
Oh, you're a crisis of my faith
Would've, could've, should've
If I'd only played it safe*

Up until this point, she has expressed regret about this moment in her life, although she has also highlighted that some aspects were pleasant. Now, however, she claims that she was bored. It is implicit that, at some point, she questioned the way she lived before him, as well as her connection with the divine. She then makes it clear that the way he won her over was by making her feel important. By considering religiosity once more, she felt like just another person crying out for God's attention. However, this same person, after giving her the attention that perhaps her ego needed, tried to pretend that nothing happened. She recognizes that she should have been more cautious in this situation.

Excerpt 6:

*God rest my soul
I miss who I used to be
The tomb won't close
[...] I can't let this go
I fight with you in my sleep
The wound won't close
I keep on waiting for a sign*

I regret you all the time

In this excerpt, she begins by returning to her religious origins by asking God to bless her soul, that is, forgive her sins and free her from suffering because she misses who she was - her purity. Even though she tries to bury this story, she cannot. Even appealing to the divine, this conflict continues until her dreams, connecting what she said in other passages about being afraid of the ghosts in this story. The sign she asks for does not mean that she expects him to return, but rather a sign to know if she will overcome it, since she feels that she always returns to this feeling of guilt and anguish, and never really overcomes it.

Excerpt 7:

*If clarity's in death, then why won't this die?
[...] Living for the thrill of hitting you where it hurts
Give me back my girlhood, it was mine first*

And as a final important section for analysis, two questions are highlighted. Firstly, her view of death, which she perceives as a release from suffering. Additionally, she expresses a desire to inflict pain where it hurts the most, whether physically or emotionally. She also requests the return of the innocence of youth that he took from her, as it rightfully belonged to her and she should have been able to retain it. The fact that she became involved with him suggests the possibility that she acted out of affection for him or believed that their relationship was normal and acceptable. Being in a relationship with someone older who manipulated her may have led her to do things she wouldn't have done with someone her own age. Although she may have been consenting, he, as an adult, was the one who influenced her actions. Throughout the story, it becomes evident that only now, in adulthood, is she able to truly reflect on what occurred, prompting her to question why an older man did not have the same awareness before tragedy struck.

Therefore, when considering the construction of *ethos*, we have several considerations that help define it. This song symbolizes an emotional journey that delves into the pain of regret and the loss of innocence. In this way, our *ethos* presents itself as a remorseful figure who seeks to show how allowing larger influences to interfere in her life continues to affect her. However, while this *ethos* is negatively affected and tormented, there is an ambiguity in her statements that suggest there may be some positive and fulfilling aspects to this experience for her. This implies that the feeling of regret is not always the sole outcome, as showing the totality of her regret would only emphasize the negative aspects.

The ambiguity may be explained by his choice of contractions (*Would've, Could've, Should've*), which, as previously explained, due to their more informal use, sometimes do not convey the true message. Additionally, the use of *Would've, Could've, Should've* implies that even while acknowledging the points and regrets, she decided to act anyway as some people persist in making mistakes. This *ethos* fails to understand that revisiting such moments does not alter what has already occurred. In connection to the author Maingueneau (2014): "every written text, even if it denies it, has a specific vocality that allows it to be attributed to a characterization of the enunciator's body... to a guarantor who, through their tone, confirms what is being stated..." (p. 271).¹⁴

Returning to the religious basis of music, it is widely understood that music and religion are often connected in various contexts. While they may seem like distinct forms of expression, they share a common origin that fulfills and motivates human needs. Music is frequently utilized as a substitute for prayer or to deepen one's connection with God/spirituality. Therefore, it is evident that when a speaker reaffirms their faith ("*Oh, all I did was pray*", "*I would have gotten on my knees*", "*And the honest God truth is that the pain it was paradise*", "*And I'm sure I would never have danced with the devil*", "*Gone with the righteous*", "*Oh, you are a crisis of my faith*" and "*God rest my soul*"), they are also reaching out to a higher power for guidance and support. In this scenario, the individual seeks to overcome their suffering and may be seeking forgiveness for allowing themselves to be influenced or experience hardship.

What we can say is that, through this poetic narrative, the consequences of a relationship that profoundly marked her youth and adulthood due to the negative impact on her life are being shared. She got involved with someone whom, upon reflection, she realizes she should have avoided. The song primarily uses religious metaphors to express internal conflict and the struggle to reconcile the past with the present. The repetition of certain passages throughout the narrative resonates like an echo of continuous pain, indicating that the impact of this relationship still haunts her. By sharing these personal experiences, this *ethos* creates a deep connection with its audience, who can relate to the themes of regret.

WE MUST KNOW: HOW DID IT END? THE LAST POINT OF VIEW

¹⁴ Original Portuguese text sourced from Maingueneau (2014, p. 271): "Todo texto escrito, ainda que a negue, possui uma vocalidade específica que permite remetê-lo a uma caracterização do corpo do enunciador... a um fiador que, por meio de seu tom, atesta o que é dito..."

Considering the two songs analyzed in addition to the theoretically defined *ethos*, it is relevant to compare them as they were both produced by the same individual. To ensure our analysis is not purely speculative, it is important to also present another statement:

The issue of *ethos* requires that the interpretation of statements not be reduced to a simple decoding; something of the realm of sensory experience is involved in verbal communication. Ideas prompt adherence through a manner of expression that is also a manner of being. Caught in an enveloping and invisible *ethos*, the co-enunciator does more than decipher content: they participate in the world shaped by the enunciation, accessing an identity that is somehow embodied, allowing themselves to embody a guarantor. The persuasive power of discourse is partly due to its ability to compel the recipient to identify with the movement of a body, whether schematic or imbued with historically specified values (Maingueneau, 2008, p. 29).¹⁵

In this way, we understand that, when analyzing what was said, we are also part of that discourse. Understanding a statement goes far beyond simply decoding the ideas transmitted. The importance of sensory experience in verbal communication stands out, where the way something is communicated plays a fundamental role in its reception and understanding. Maingueneau makes us reflect on how ideas are transmitted not only through the words used, but also through the way they are expressed. The co-speaker actively participates in the speech, including those who analyze and Taylor Swift's own audience, who ends up being influenced in their identity and positioning within the discursive context. By actively participating in the universe created by discourse, involving oneself in an identity that is, in a certain way, embodied through the act of enunciation. Maingueneau highlights that the persuasive power of a speech goes beyond the content of the ideas, also encompassing the ability to motivate the receiver to connect with the movement of a body. This can occur in both physical and symbolic forms, including culturally specific gestures, postures, and values that are communicated through language and its use.

Therefore, when recapping the song *White Horse* and comparing it to *Would've, Could've, Should've*, we can observe an initially romantic *ethos* (the fairy tale) that disintegrates throughout the song due to one's own expectations and attitudes toward their loved one. The protagonist goes through the five stages of grief (denial, anger, negotiation,

¹⁵ Original Portuguese text sourced from Maingueneau (2008, p. 29): “A problemática do *ethos* pede que não se reduza a interpretação dos enunciados a uma simples decodificação; alguma coisa da ordem da experiência sensível se põe na comunicação verbal. As idéias suscitam a adesão por meio de uma maneira de dizer que é também uma maneira de ser. Apanhado num *ethos* envolvente e invisível, o co-enunciador faz mais que decifrar conteúdos: ele participa do mundo configurado pela enunciação, ele acede a uma identidade de algum modo encarnada, permitindo ele próprio que um fiador encarne. O poder de persuasão de um discurso deve-se, em parte, ao fato de ele constranger o destinatário a se identificar com o movimento de um corpo, seja ele esquemático ou investido de valores historicamente especificados”.

depression, and acceptance), ultimately reaching the crucial point of accepting that all experiences were valid. This leads her to reflect on her own attitudes and helps her overcome the moment of despair. As a result, she regains her sense of romanticism to some extent, hopeful to find someone who truly values her. This conveys a message to the audience to identify with the situation, as the protagonist is genuine in her emotions and convictions. Additionally, it offers hope to those who may not have realized they are in a similar situation.

However, the *Would've, Could've, Should've* stage is different. Despite all the situations described in the song being already finalized, the *ethos* does not appear to be able to overcome them. Clearly, she is stuck in three stages of grief: denial, anger, and depression. By only progressing through these three stages, the *ethos* seems to be unable to move past the situation. The issue here is not just to recall these moments, but to relive them as a form of self-punishment that hinders progress. While it is often challenging to overcome, understanding from analysis initially that it is possible to live with it, the *ethos* seems to lack knowledge on how to address the consequences of its actions.

In continuity, we recognize that there are different enunciative scenes (fairy tale/reality and religiosity/regret) that evoke conflicting feelings in relation to the songs. We believe that these conclusions were only possible due to the discursive perspective proposed in theory. Even though we did not consider all aspects related to the songs, we attempted to analyze the lyrics in the most neutral way possible. It was through considering these perspectives that we were able to identify the enunciator. Ultimately, we acknowledge that Maingueneau's theory on discourse analysis, enunciative scene, and *ethos* guide us in understanding these scenes and *ethos*, as they stem from the materialized verbatim interactions between interlocutors.

***IS IT OVER NOW?* FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In this work, we propose to analyze the enunciative scene and the discursive *ethos* of two songs by the singer Taylor Swift, based on studies in Discourse Analysis, with a focus on Dominique Maingueneau. Alongside the theoretical discussion on Discourse Analysis, enunciative scene, and *ethos*, we also contextualize pop music and the artist, and other relevant topics related to the research objective.

We understand that Discourse Analysis aims to produce and interpret meanings by considering the interaction between language, individual, and context. Maingueneau, in his studies on discourse analysis, revolutionized his concepts of enunciative scene and discursive

ethos, enabling a more careful analysis of enunciations. This allows each song to be studied specifically in his analyses, defining what instigated the beginning and the objective of this work: the construction of the discursive *ethos* in singer Taylor Swift's albums and songs, taking into consideration her artistic freedom. The proposal involved analyzing the way in which the enunciator creates her scenography, theoretically understanding the formation and development of the *ethos*, and analyzing the *ethos* according to the chosen perspective.

We understand that everything is primarily organized through enunciation scenes: fairy tales with unhappy endings and regrets that last a lifetime. The author establishes discursive elements from these scenes that consolidate the discourse through subjective language. It is evident how the enunciative scene shapes and reveals the discursive ethos: the triumph over grief and resentment. The adaptation of her messages throughout her career showcases various aspects of her artistic identity, illustrating how Taylor Swift employs her art to deeply connect with her audience through shared experiences of overcoming, love, regret, and self-discovery. Throughout the analysis, we have observed that Swift's discursive strategies adeptly engage the audience, forging an emotional connection through poetic and sincere narratives.

It is important to recognize that this research has limitations, especially in the restricted scope of songs and albums examined, leaving aside other productions that could further enhance the study of the *ethos* in her work. Furthermore, comparative studies could be conducted with other female artists to better understand how the discursive *ethos* is shaped and perceived within this feminine cultural and artistic context, which extends beyond pop music to address universal issues of human experience and emotion.

This research is the beginning of our work, as there is much more that the theoretical part could provide us. Ultimately, we achieved our goals by defining an *ethos* for the selected songs. In doing so, we have answered the questions that have motivated this research. The songs show a great deal of freedom. The incorporation of elements such as love, friendship, relationships, family, and religion enable the establishment of different *ethos*. This is evident in the two songs, which can be categorized as romantic and realistic, disillusioned and resentful, and attentive to both issues experienced and unresolved.

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That being said, I need to begin by dedicating this work to the song that changed my life. Your laughter, Simon, touched my soul deeply, echoing in my heart every day. There are no words in the English language, or any other language, that can truly express how much I love you. You have changed my life. If I have made it this far today, it is because I constantly strive to do what is best for you. As you grow older, may you come to realize that I am doing my best to be a good mother.

I am grateful to my mother, Eleilda, who tirelessly fought to ensure that my sisters and I always had the best. She went to great lengths to take care of her grandson when I couldn't, and for that, I am eternally grateful. I also want to thank my older sister, Aline, who has always supported my choices even from afar. Additionally, I extend my gratitude to the other important women in my life who have contributed to my growth: my paternal grandmother, Célia, my aunt Cleres, and my cousin Khevylla. I am forever thankful for everything they have done for me.

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I would like to share one final message, the lyrics of a song that have touched me in a way that has given me belief and strength. Reflecting on the simple things is what truly brought me to this point. This particular song has been a source of hope that has propelled me forward. While some may not understand my connection to Taylor's songs, I always find myself relating to them, whether in moments of happiness or sadness. I truly admire her songwriting abilities and I wish she could read this work and offer her thoughts. Moving on, when I think about my journey, *Long Live* comes to mind. Therefore, I will share an excerpt from the song:

*Long live the walls we crashed through
How the kingdom lights shined just for me and you
I was screaming: Long live all the magic we made
And bring on all the pretenders
I'm not afraid
Long live all the mountains we moved
I had the time of my life fighting dragons with you
I was screaming: Long live that look on your face
And bring on all the pretenders
One day, we will be remembered*

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