

## RELATIONSHIPS AND GRIEF: AN ANALYSIS OF THE DISCURSIVE ETHOS IN *WHITE HORSE* BY TAYLOR SWIFT

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**RESUMO:** This study aims to define and analyze the discursive *ethos* present in one song by the singer Taylor Swift - *White Horse* from the album *Fearless*. 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 song, 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. The research reveals that, through poetic narrative, one *ethos* was identified related to grief after a relationship. Swift shares possibly personal experiences, establishing a deep connection with her audience who identifies with the themes and adheres to the speeches presented.

**Palavras-chave:** Discourse Analysis, Discursive *Ethos*, Taylor Swift.

## RELACIONAMENTOS E LUTO: UMA ANÁLISE DO *ETHOS* DISCURSIVO EM *WHITE HORSE* DE TAYLOR SWIFT

**ABSTRACT:** Este estudo tem como objetivo definir e analisar o *ethos* discursivo presente em uma canção da cantora Taylor Swift - *White Horse* do álbum *Fearless*. 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* na canção escolhida, 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. A pesquisa revela que através da narrativa poética, foi identificado um *ethos* relacionado ao luto após um relacionamento. Swift compartilha experiências possivelmente pessoais, estabelecendo uma conexão profunda com seu público, que se identifica com os temas e adere aos discursos apresentados.

**Keywords:** Análise do Discurso, *Ethos* Discursivo, Taylor Swift.

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### ***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, Pêcheux, and Maingueneau, 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 and 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 choice for this work is by the American singer and songwriter Taylor Swift. The chosen song to discuss the construction of the discursive *ethos* and the scene of enunciation is *White Horse* from the album *Fearless*.

The main aim of this text is to theoretically comprehend the formation and evolution of *ethos* present in the chosen song. 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 *ethos*. This study examines how the statements in Swift's song are structured to create an artistic image and positioning, as well as to understand its 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, 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, and the procedures for the 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 Taylor Swift's song lyrics.

### ***I think he knows: discourse analysis and Dominique Maingueneau***

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. 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, Émile Benveniste, and Michel Pêcheux, all influential thinkers who also impacted our author of focus, 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. His research explores the constituent discourses (philosophical, religious, scientific, literary, etc.) that legitimize social practices.

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.

### ***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. However, 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.

Aristotle's intention, according to Maingueneau (2008), was not to analyze what is persuasive for a specific person, but rather for different types of individuals, i. e., he aimed to understand what convinces the general or specific public.

The rhetorical *ethos* is based on creating a good impression through consistently constructing the speech, presenting an image capable of persuading the audience and gaining trust (MAINGUENEAU, 2008). This *ethos* is linked to the manner of expression and external knowledge about the speaker. To convey a more positive image, Aristotle suggests the speaker can utilize three main qualities: prudence, virtue, and benevolence (MAINGUENEAU, 2008).

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) *ethos* as it crucially linked to the act of enunciation and the pre-established knowledge of the speaker the audience possesses, which makes fundamental the distinction between discursive *ethos* and pre-discursive *ethos*.

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 *ethos* 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.

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 (as the scene in a play) and process (the sequence of verbal and non-verbal actions).

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 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. Maingueneau (2015) mentions the novel, which is a story that can be told in various ways, from sailor's adventures told to a stranger, to a letter to a traveler's friend.

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 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.

### ***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. Now, we are going to introduce an artist whose song we analyze in this work.

Taylor Alison Swift, also known by her stage name Taylor Swift, was born on December 13, 1989 in Pennsylvania, United States, and started her career as a teenager. Since the beginning of her career, the singer has won several important awards in the world of music. This can be attributed to Taylor Swift's knack for innovation, which is evident in her discography of 11 albums spanning various genres from country, pop, to folk and rock.

In the early stages of her career, the singer often delved into the realm of anonymous crushes from her high school days. 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.

### ***And I bet you think about me: methodology***

The research adopted for this study is qualitative in nature, as defined by Minayo (2007), dedicated to the examination of unlimited meanings, beliefs, values, and attitudes. 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 one song by singer Taylor Swift, in order to explore the discursive *ethos*. The chosen song was *White Horse*, from the album *Fearless*, the artist's second album, originally released in 2008 and re-released in 2021.



Content analysis will be carried out to identify and categorize linguistic discursive elements that contribute to the discursive *ethos* in the lyrics. Moraes (1999) argues that content analysis has a relevant meaning in the context of social research and that it goes beyond a simple data analysis technique.

In this analysis, we aim to identify the formation and development of the *ethos* in the selected song by examining the statements made within it and how it could 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 song and the image portrayed by the speaker.

### ***Sad beautiful tragic: the analysis of white horse***

The song, *White Horse*, belongs to the album *Fearless*, whose compositions address themes such as teenage love, rejection, self-empowerment, and scenarios related to fairy tales. Its genre could be described as a 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 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.

This song lies between poetic and artistic, as it was written by a stereotypical teenager who romanticizes romantic experiences. As the lyrics progress, various aspects are revealed. To 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 announcer<sup>3</sup> reveals 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*

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 2 is presented. This may go unnoticed 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*

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<sup>3</sup> The annunciator, 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.

*/ 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.

***We must know: how did it end? The last point of view***

Considering the song analyzed in addition to the theoretically defined *ethos*, it is relevant to our analysis to ensure it is not purely speculative. As Maingueneau (2008), we consider the *ethos* requires statements not to be reduced to a simple decoding, since ideas come from and prompt adherence through a manner of expression that is also a manner of being. The co-enunciator participates in the world shaped by the enunciation, 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.

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*, 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, depression, and acceptance), 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.

In continuity, we recognize that there are different enunciative scenes (fairy tale and reality) that evoke conflicting feelings in relation to the song. 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 song, 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 analyzed the enunciative scene and the discursive *ethos* of the song *White Horse*, based on Maingueneau's Discourse Analysis. We also contextualized pop music and the artist, and other relevant topics related to the research object.

We understand that Discourse Analysis aims to 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 the song to be studied, defining the objective of this work: the construction of the discursive *ethos* in singer Taylor Swift's song. The proposal involved analyzing the way in which the enunciator creates her scenography, theoretically understanding the formation and development of the *ethos*.

We understand that everything is primarily organized through enunciation scenes: fairy tales with unhappy endings. 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. 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 analyze, 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 song and album 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.

Ultimately, we achieved our goals by defining an *ethos* for the selected song. In doing so, we have answered the questions that have motivated this research. The song shows a great deal of freedom and can be categorized as romantic and realistic.

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