

UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA

FACULTAT DE FILOLOGIA, TRADUCCIÓ I COMUNICACIÓ

DEGREE FINAL DISSERTATION

BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN ENGLISH STUDIES



**“I’D LIVE AND DIE FOR MOMENTS THAT WE STOLE / ON
BEGGED AND BORROWED TIME”: A QUEER READING OF
FORBIDDEN LOVE IN TAYLOR SWIFT’S DISCOGRAPHY**

Submitted by Catalina Nazario Abbott
Supervised by Claudia Alonso Recarte
Academic year: 2022-2023

Student Statement of Original Authorship

I, Catalina Nazario Abbott, confirm that this dissertation has been written solely by the undersigned and contains the work of no other person or persons except where explicitly identified to the contrary.

I also state that said dissertation has not been submitted elsewhere for the fulfilment of any other qualification.

I make this statement in full knowledge of and understanding that, should it be found to be false, I will not receive a grade and may face disciplinary proceedings.

Word count (excluding reference list, figures, legends, tables and appendices): 12320.

Signature:  _____

Date: 1/06/2023

Abstract

The act of queer reading has become an intrinsic part of the LGBTQ+ experiences, both in search for representation as well as to challenge the cisheterosexual normativity of traditional texts. Applying this act onto popular media has become common and has expanded to a demand for space on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community, in a world where non-normativity is excluded and hidden. Thus, the act of queering the work of artists who are considered cisheterosexual by the mainstream, such as Taylor Swift, can become political. Known for her songwriting, Swift is a great candidate for a transversal analysis of her lyrics through the view of the LGBTQ+ community. In this dissertation, I will analyse how, through the theme of forbidden love, Swift presents a series of narratives in her music that can closely relate to the life experiences of queer people, emphasizing on the importance of reclaiming these narratives for the LGBTQ+ community.

Key Words: Taylor Swift, queering, LGBTQ+ community, cisheterosexual, song lyrics.

Resum

Les lectures *queer* se han convertit en una part intrínseca de les experiències LGTBQ+, amb l'objectiu tant de trobar representació com de desafiar la cisheterosexualitat normativa dels textos tradicionals. Aplicar lectures *queer* a mitjans populars s'ha convertit en un acte comú i s'ha estès fins a passar a ser en una exigència per part de la comunitat LGTBQ+ de poder ocupar espai en un món on la normativitat s'exclou i es manté oculta. Per aquest motiu, l'acte d'aplicar una lectura *queer* a obres d'artistes considerats cisheterosexuals pel públic general, com Taylor Swift, pot convertir-se en un acte polític. Coneguda per la seua habilitat com a compositora, Swift és una gran candidata per a un anàlisi transversal de les seues lletres des de una perspectiva LGTBQ+. En este treball es busca analitzar com, a través del tema de l'amor prohibit, Swift ofereix en la seua música una sèrie de narratives que poden relacionar-se estretament amb les experiències de persones *queer*, emfatitzant sobre tot la importància de reclamar aquestes narratives per part de la comunitat LGTBQ+.

Paraules clau: Taylor Swift, lectura *queer*, comunitat LGTBQ+, cisheterosexual, lletres de cançons.

Resumen

Las lecturas *queer* se han convertido en una parte intrínseca de las experiencias LGBTQ+, con el objetivo tanto de buscar representación como de desafiar la cisheterosexualidad normativa de los textos tradicionales. Aplicar lecturas *queer* a medios populares se ha convertido en algo común y se ha expandido hasta pasar a ser una exigencia por parte de la comunidad LGBTQ+ de poder ocupar espacio en un mundo donde la no normatividad se excluye y mantiene oculta. Por esto, el acto de aplicar una lectura *queer* a obras de artistas considerados cisheterosexuales por el público general, como Taylor Swift, puede convertirse en un acto político. Conocida por su habilidad como compositora, Swift es una gran candidata para un análisis transversal de sus letras desde una perspectiva LGBTQ+. En este trabajo se busca analizar cómo, a través del tema del amor prohibido, Swift ofrece en su música una serie de narrativas que pueden relacionarse estrechamente con las experiencias vitales de personas *queer*, enfatizando sobre todo la importancia de reclamar estas narrativas por parte de la comunidad LGBTQ+.

Palabras clave: Taylor Swift, lectura *queer*, comunidad LGBTQ+, cisheterosexual, letras de canciones.

Contents

1.	Introduction	1
1.1.	<i>Queer Studies and Queer Readings</i>	1
1.2.	<i>Taylor Swift: From Songwriter to LGBTQ+ Icon</i>	3
1.3.	<i>An Overview of Academic and Non-academic Approaches to Taylor Swift's Lyrics</i>	4
2.	Queer coding	6
2.1.	<i>Subtext, Clichés, and Themes in Queer Stories</i>	8
2.2.	<i>Forbidden Love in LGBTQ+ Narratives</i>	10
3.	Analysis of Taylor Swift's Lyrics	11
3.1.	<i>Secrecy, Running and Hiding</i>	12
3.2.	<i>The Impossibility of Love</i>	20
3.3.	<i>To Impersonate a Man Loving a Woman</i>	26
4.	Conclusion	30
	Bibliography	32

1. Introduction

The main topic of this study is the importance of a queer interpretation of the theme of forbidden love in Taylor Swift's discography, focusing specifically on its representation through the concepts of running away and hiding a relationship, anticipating the downfall of said relationship, and the act of impersonating a man to express one's love for a woman, as these are three of the most common narratives found in both queer media and Swift's discography. The scope of the analysis will be of a selection 29 songs out of the 225 that comprise Swift's work, and it will be done transversally throughout all her albums to encompass as many examples as possible. The objective of this analysis is to prove that a queer reading can be fruitful even when applied to the production of an artist that, seemingly, perfectly fits into the cisgender heterosexual normativity of pop music, as well as to draw light to the importance that the act of queering these kinds of texts holds for the identity and politics of queer people.

1.1. *Queer Studies and Queer Readings*

Despite the Merriam-Webster's dictionary definition of queer studies as "an academic field of study focusing on matters relating to gender, human sexuality, and sexual orientation with emphasis on LGBT issues and culture" ("Queer Studies"), queer studies have been under constant contradiction since they emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. As Siobhan B. Somerville states,

Introducing the field is a daunting task . . . because [it] has been characterized by two fundamental aspects of queer critical practice that thwart any attempt to define its parameters: a deep, as yet unresolved (and probably unresolvable) contradiction in the meanings of "queer" itself, and a determined refusal to decide ahead of time what does or does not fall within the purview of queer studies. (Somerville 2)

One of the main disputes throughout the decades has been the meaning of "queer" in queer studies, being considered either as a group of sexualities and/or genders that cannot be considered normatively cisheterosexual, or a perspective that focuses less on existing identities and more on "understanding the production of normativity and its queer

companion, nonnormativity” (Somerville 2). For the benefit of the subject at hand, I will be focusing on the former definition, more specifically on the act of queer reading, born from applying queer studies to literature. Queer reading, or queering, as stated by Jenny Björklund in *Lambda Nordica* (2018), emerged throughout the 1990’s and 2000’s, and evolved alongside and within queer theory to challenge the established heterosexuality in media and literature. It is defined as “the practice of a reader—regardless of their sexuality or gender identity—to look for aspects in a text (e.g., book, play, television show, movie, or other media) that could be interpreted as queer in sexuality and gender, although the queerness might not be apparent” (Crawley 560). Although traditionally applied to classics, the act of queering can be applied to modern texts as well as explicitly queer texts, but it is commonly found in texts and media littered with connotative queerness, and it is up to the reader to bring those aspects of a text to the light:

[T]he queerness of mass culture develops in . . . adopting reception positions that can be considered "queer" in some way . . . But unless the text is about queers, it seems to me the queerness of most mass culture texts is less an essential, waiting-to-be-discovered property than the result of acts of production or reception. (Doty xi)

The reasons behind the queer analysis of a text can range from personal to political, from the seeking of one’s own pleasure in finding representation, to breaking the barrier of connotation to which mass culture queerness has been relegated (Doty xi). For queer youth especially, queering can become an act of self-identification: “Media make up a significant amount of [the youth’s] leisure time that is often spent in pursuit of pleasure and affirmation, and, as such, media function as a tool that gives queer youth agency to construct complicated, non-heteronormative identities” (Lipton 163-164); as well as a political statement, using queer readings as a way to demand equality and put the spotlight on queer issues (Lipton 167).

The importance of queer readings in media and texts of all kinds is clear and needed. It is, as mentioned, a fundamental part of growing up queer, as many LGBTQ+ teens and young adults try to find themselves represented in both queer and non-queer stories. Because of this, it is not strange to find a large pool of non-academic queer interpretations of the lyrics of some musicians, especially musicians whose fanbase is largely made up of young queer women, such as Taylor Swift’s (Dajches and Stevens 5).

1.2. Taylor Swift: From Songwriter to LGBTQ+ Icon

Taylor Alison Swift is a singer-songwriter, director, actress, producer, and businesswoman. She was born on the 13th of December 1989 in Pennsylvania and moved to Tennessee at the age of 14 to begin her music career. Her discography is composed, as of today, of a total of twelve albums: ten studio albums and two re-recorded albums that span from country to pop to indie folk.

The most remarkable aspect of Swift's artistic career is her songwriting and the ability she has of infusing a narrative-ness into her lyrics and build a story out of her songs. Her music is praised by her storytelling, which has granted her a long list of honours over her almost 17-year career. A few examples are her 12 Grammy awards, 3 of them being Albums of the Year ("Taylor Swift"), and her Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts Degree granted by New York University in May of 2022 (Avila). As she states, songwriting is "the element of my life that I hold most sacred, ... my favorite part of my job" (Swift, "How Taylor Swift Writes a Love Song").

Taylor Swift has been rather vocal about her support to the LGBTQ+ community, dating back to the opening track of her album *1989* (2014), where she states: "And you can want who you want / boys and boys and girls and girls" (Swift, "Welcome to New York"). Swift mentioned, when asked what inspired the song, that she wrote about "what I love about New York, a freedom to and celebration of being unique. ... I wrote the song kind of following the... when gay marriage became legal in New York" ("Taylor Swift Interview The Talk" 13:44-14:07). Swift's support for the LGTBQ+ community increased over time, as she left back the country roots of her first albums and became fully outspoken during the promotion of her album *Lover* in 2019. During this era, she released "You Need To Calm Down", a single that has been named by fans as a "gay anthem" (Daw). She accompanied it with a very obviously queer themed music video and lyrics such as "Why are you mad, when you could be GLAAD" (Swift, "You Need to Calm Down"), a clear reference to the GLAAD organization¹, and "shade never made anybody less gay!" (Swift, "You Need to Calm Down"). She also donated to the aforementioned organization and published an Instagram post encouraging her fans to write to their senators in hopes of forwarding the Equality Act, which would avoid

¹ The GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) organization is the world's biggest media advocacy organization for LGBTQ+ people. It helps increase engagement and media accountability to help real LGBTQ+ stories gain visibility and contain correct representation. For more information, visit <https://www.glaad.org/about>.

discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in their workplace and home, as well as signing a petition “to urge the Senate to support the Equality Act” (Swift, “Photo of a letter”). In addition to this, Swift donated in April of 2019 \$113,000 USD “to aid in efforts to stop anti-LGBTQ legislature in Tennessee” (DeSantis).

Swift’s connection to the LGBTQ+ community has been debated at large throughout the Internet, with people both claiming that she is queer and others that she is straight (Geraets). These arguments stem, mostly, from the themes of secret or hidden love that can be found in her music. Swift’s songs are, largely, autobiographical, and focus mainly on her love life, which, when paired with the scrutiny she has been under for most of her teenage years and early twenties, has led her to be criticised by the media and deemed a “serial dater” (Swift, “The Rolling Stone Interview”). This, in addition to being in the spotlight of the music industry since she was 16 years old, has led Swift to close off her private life from the public, which can be reflected in her songs. As she mentions in her *Rolling Stone* interview. “... you realize that you can’t just show your life to people. I used to be like a golden retriever, just walking up to everybody, like, wagging my tail. “Sure, yeah, of course! What do you want to know? What do you need?” Now, I guess, I have to be a little bit more like a fox.”

1.3. An Overview of Academic and Non-academic Approaches to Taylor Swift’s Lyrics

Regarding the literature of this specific subject, a queer analysis of Taylor Swift’s lyrics is not a common topic among scholars. Her music and career have been mentioned regarding other topics aside from queer studies, like Paul Théberge’s 2021 article on the power that Swift holds as an artist in today’s musical paradigm, or Nate Sloan’s 2021 view on songwriting as a craft, a sanctuary and agency for Swift. Other authors, like Maryn Wilkinson in her 2017 article for the *Celebrity Studies* journal, analyse Swift’s use of her own “quirkiness” (or as Wilkinson puts it, “zany” [441]) to work her way through her transition from country to pop music in 2014. Some articles that might come closer to the subject at hand and touch upon Swift’s connection to the LGBTQ+ community focus either on a statistical view of her fans, such as Dajches and Stevens’ 2022 article, or a review of Swift’s “You Need to Calm Down” (2019) music video in relation to Rainbow Capitalism, as Smialek does in his 2021 article.

Despite the scarcity of scholarly texts focusing on a queer analysis of Swift's lyrics, López Romero's 2021 postgraduate essay "Subtexto y simbología lésbica en las letras de los álbumes de Taylor Swift *folklore* y *evermore*, en relación con poemas de Emily Dickinson," touches upon the topic, as she compares the possible sapphic interpretation of Swift's lyrics, mainly in her 2020 sister albums *folklore* and *evermore*², with Emily Dickinson's poetry, focusing on the importance of a queer reading in both artists, their use of metaphors, symbolisms and subtext. Another scholarly-adjacent text can be found in Stephanie Burt and Julia Harris' 2020 *Overland* article. Burt (an English Professor at Harvard) and Harris (a PhD student from the same institution) focus in an informal way on the childhood yearning of same-gender friendships and relationships found in the *folklore* (2020) album, as well as the covert queerness of the songs when seen from the perspective of a queer person that feels like they have "lost" their childhood. Both texts reach one similar conclusion: Swift's ability to portray feelings and experiences that align with those who are part of the queer community, specifically sapphic women, is strikingly accurate, regardless of her own sexuality. She expresses in her music a kind of secret and judged upon love that society expects to be outgrown, but is eventually not, something sapphic women can very closely relate to.

In a less academic setting, Swift's connection to queerness through her lyrics has been extensively analysed and mentions of her album *folklore* (2020) can be found in many articles for online magazines. Perhaps this difference between the amount of academic and non-academic articles resides in a lack of interest on behalf of academia towards contemporary pop music, or it might be because the biographical nature of the lyrics and the assumption that Swift is a heterosexual woman discourage from a queer interpretation of them. Regardless, most of these non-academic articles come from the personal experience of queer people as the authors. Some touch on the way Swift helped them come to terms with their own sexuality, such as Maura Fallon's 2020 deeply personal entry on *The Thirlby*, or the way they found a real, clear sign of queer allyship in the lyrics of the album, like Kircher's 2020 piece. Some articles skim over the suspicion of queerness in Swift's own life, comparing it with the queer subtext in *folklore*, such as Romano's (2020), and others focus on the sapphic subtext in the album, alongside other musicians, such as Grace Lemon's article. *folklore*'s queer subtext is notable enough to have earned a very brief mention in Jill Mapes' *Pitchfork* review of the album.

² The titles of both *folklore* and *evermore*, as well as the title tracks of the songs, are stylized in lower case.

When it comes to the rest of her discography, most of the queer analyses of her more autobiographical albums are found on social media, where fans speculate over Swift's sexuality by creating connections between her lyrics and her real-life relationships or friendships. The theories range from simple tweets and jokes (@meanlore) to PowerPoints explaining why certain albums could be about old, very close friends of the artist. These online discussions have led to the harassment of several people, including a debacle after the release of *folklore* in which some people would 'out' sapphic Swift fans to their families for suggesting that some of the songs might have queer interpretations, known amongst fans as the "bettygate" (Smiley). These less academic articles reach similar conclusions as their more academic counterparts: that Swift represents in her music strikingly similar experiences and feelings to those expressed by queer people. In addition, most of the debates in this area are focused on whether Swift might be queer or not, and who the muses she sings about might be (most speculations point toward model Karlie Kloss and actress Dianna Agron). Other discussions online mention the morality of Swift's use of themes surrounding queerness when she is publicly seen as heterosexual, and debate whether Swift is "queerbaiting"³ her fans (Rosenblatt) or hinting towards a possible closeted queerness. Although it is still being heavily discussed, many agree that, if Swift is heterosexual, she should not be appropriating queer imaginary in her music.

All in all, the lack of variety in academic queer readings of Taylor Swift's discography leaves a big gap in research that can be extensively investigated. Since the more popular queerings that do exist focus on Swift's 9th studio album, *folklore*, and the analysis of her other albums is exclusively non-academic and with a focus on the singer's biography, a field of study searching for queer subtext in the rest of her discography without considering her personal life is wildly unexplored, and thus will be the focus of this dissertation.

2. Queer coding

This dissertation is divided in two sections. The first one will focus on explaining what queer coding is and its importance in regards to queerings, as well as the role of subtext and of metaphors in relation to LGBTQ+ stories, mentioning the historical lack of

³ Queerbaiting is "a fan-conceived term that describes a tactic whereby media producers suggest homoerotic subtext between characters in popular television that is never intended to be actualised on screen" (Brennan). It has lately been applied to other kinds of media, such as musicians.

representation in today's media. This will then connect to the themes of running and hiding and the anticipation of a doomed relationship, as well as the act of writing as a woman from the perspective of a man. These themes and clichés will then be fleshed out, commenting on how the narratives they are part of affect the characters or elements that are involved. As examples and indication that these narratives create symbols in the queer subconscious, some explicit LGBTQ+ media will be mentioned. The aim of this section is to establish a base knowledge on the importance of connotation and subtext for queer stories and how this relegation to the unsaid creates, alongside real queer experiences, the repetition of images and situations that have historically been connected to queerness and are represented in explicit queer media.

In the second section, these themes and clichés will be applied transversally to Taylor Swift's discography (as of February 2023) through a queer reading, with the intention of demonstrating that many of her songs can be read from a queer perspective. This analysis will draw from the already established information from the previous section. The focus of the analysis is on the reception of the lyrics on behalf of the listener, and thus Swift's authority will not be considered in the analysis, aside from the fact that she identifies as a woman. The analysis could qualify as reader oriented in Bleich's subjective criticism theory, as I myself identify as a lesbian and this essay's aim is to claim that Swift's lyrics can be read from a queer perspective, thus symbols that could be related to queerness are sought after in the analysis. It must be said that this queer reading is completed by the interpretation of the LGBTQ+ community, as the narratives that will be analysed are usually ones that relate to queer people's common life experiences. Another listener's experience, however, could present different approaches. Finally, conclusions will be drawn.

This dissertation is structured following a series of assumptions about the dynamics of queer coding. Textually speaking, coding is defined as the adoption on behalf of the creator, either consciously or not, of a system of signals that can range from the use of certain words to the creation of certain images. These signals are used to avoid directly stating a message, the consequences of which might be unwanted, and leaving it up to the audience to decode what the creator is saying. Coding is complex and usually relies on ambiguity (Radner and Lanser 414).

Queer coding, thus, is the use of signals that can closely relate to the LGBTQ+ community, in both positive and negative ways, without explicitly stating that a character or storyline is queer. These queer coded signals can be based on stereotypes that might

be harmful for the community, as, historically, queer coded characters have been a consequence of the 'Hays Code'⁴, “a list of rules that [film] studios could follow to avoid the censors' wrath” (Couvares 593), amongst which the avoidance of ‘sexual perversion’ (homosexuality) was high on the list. To prevent censorship, creators in film would come up with characters heavily based on stereotypes, usually to create humour (Kim 159). Over time, as the Hays Code was repealed, queer coding evolved and nowadays it is commonly used in media of all kinds to create both explicit and non-explicit queer storylines. Creators can use these queer symbols to, as mentioned before, try to communicate with their audience without an explicit statement, which might put them or their career in danger. In the same way, queer readings can focus on these queer coded elements to bring out a non-cisheterosexual meaning from a text, the intention of which might or might not be to express this meaning.

2.1.Subtext, Clichés, and Themes in Queer Stories

Subtext is a very important part of queer readings, as most of the queer representations in media history have been either negative or severely lacking. As defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, subtext is “the implicit or metaphorical meaning (as of a literary text),” that is, what is not said outright or directly. Queer subtext can be found in many pieces of media, either because the creators intentionally place it, or because the reader interprets it that way, and has been a big part of the queer representation that any LGBTQ+ person might have searched for growing up.

The search for queer subtext is commonly used in oppositional or resistant readings of a text, which can be used in both a personal and political sense, as Kabir states, “oppositional readings have the effect of validating a counterculture in opposition to the dominant culture, where we not only resist the received orthodoxies, but also reinvent the parameters of what is possible” (209). From a queer perspective, an oppositional reading challenges the cisheteronormative message, validates, in Kabir’s words, queer culture, and opens the limits to what can be considered “love” or “a relationship”, for example.

⁴ The Motion Picture Production Code, or Hays Code, was a list of guidelines regarding self-censorship that was applied to most films released by major studios in USA from the years 1934 to 1968 (Lewis). The Hays Code has affected queer representation in media throughout its history and after (Kelleher).

On a more personal level, queer subtext, or connotation, allows LGBTQ+ people to see themselves represented in media that can be actively excluding them: “if connotation, as the dominant signifying practice of homophobia, has the advantage of constructing an essentially insubstantial homosexuality, it has the corresponding inconvenience of tending to raise this ghost all over the place” (Miller 119). Using queer clichés as a connotative element of a story instigates the reader to try to dig up more of these subtextual or connotative elements, and, when not explicitly denied, can be considered a confirmation of this representation (Miller 119). Kabir, from a lesbian perspective on subtext, affirms that “the position of the lesbian spectator of mainstream film is one where we are usually denied any direct representation of lesbian desire” (185), and thus, historically, lesbians have, and still tend to, push queer readings onto mainstream texts in favour of creating their own representation where one is not offered (Kabir 208).

This long history of subtextual representation in media, either because of profit or because it was illegal to represent queer people in any explicit way, has left a long list of clichés that can be found in both explicit and subtextual LGBTQ+ stories. This use of connotation and subtext has eventually become denotative in many explicitly queer texts, creating a series of symbols that are common to the queer experience. This feeds back into the connotation, as the repeated use of a specific narrative in explicit queer media will be picked up as queer by LGBTQ+ people if used in non-explicit queer media. These clichés and themes can be both positive and negative, some based on the real-life experiences of the LGBTQ+ community, others, on the stereotypes that the cisheterosexual normativity has set upon queer people.

A negative way of representing queer people can be to “[tend] both to dichotomize anyone glbt [sic] as victim or villain and to reinforce demeaning stereotypes and caricatures” (Raymond 101). Presenting queer characters as inherently evil and with the unstoppable desire of ‘perverting’ the youth or celebrating the suffering of a queer character because of their queerness are just a few examples of bad representation of LGBTQ+ experiences in media, usually born from homophobia and transphobia. Other clichés can stem from the lives of real LGBTQ+ people and their positive or negativity depends more on the way they are depicted than on the clichés themselves. Some examples of these are themes such as self-hate (or interiorized homophobia), coming out narratives, stereotypical characters such as butch lesbians or feminine gay men, and, the concept this essay will be focusing on, forbidden love.

2.2. Forbidden Love in LGBTQ+ Narratives

The theme of forbidden love has historically been used in media and literature, and its presence in modern ways of storytelling is still seen. Its use in LGBTQ+ narratives is frequent, and it is usually based on queer people's own experiences. Homosexuality has been persecuted throughout history, and it is still condemned nowadays in many countries. This hate towards queer romance has imbued the concept with a sense of prohibition, which is further emphasized with the common queer practice of keeping the relationship hidden in favour of protecting oneself and one's loved ones. An example of this can be the way Anne Lister coded part of her diary, especially those sections where she spoke of her love to women (Rowanchild 199), or the way Dickinson represented her queerness through metaphors in her poems (Juhasz 24).

As art usually imitates life, the forbidden aspect in LGBTQ+ relationships has filtered into literature, media, and music. It is very easy to find examples of different ways forbidden love has been represented in queer storytelling, from the concept of cheating to other more complex aspects of queer experiences, such as interiorized homophobia. The focus of this essay will be on three specific narratives through which forbidden love can be represented: firstly, the idea of running away and/or hiding a relationship; secondly, viewing the relationship as doomed from the start, either directly by the narrator or by the reader; and thirdly, the act of impersonating a man with the end goal of safely expressing love to another woman. These narratives are usually found in explicit LGBTQ+ media, as they are very common in both queer storytelling and queer experience and are three of the main ways Swift expresses forbidden love in her music.

These three narratives repercuss on the characters in several ways. When touching on the cliché of wanting to hide or run away in a relationship, the tensions in the narrative usually revolve around the fear of being discovered and the thrill of having something that is forbidden. The idea of hiding a relationship can translate to a sense of yearning and anxiety, as the impossibility of making the love public can lead to an intense fear and constant dread to what might happen if it is discovered, to a point in which it could even become paranoia. This can be seen in Taylor Jenkins Reid's novel, *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* (2017), or Netflix's *The Half of It* (2020). There is a positive, idealized perspective on this. The idea of fleeing and abandoning everything for one's lover can be seen as appealing for the characters, especially in those situations in which the context

does not allow them freedom. Fantasizing about leaving everything and everyone behind can be considered its own escapism.

When the relationship in a narrative has the sense that it is doomed, the consequences in the characters can be varied. It can range from restraint, avoiding the relationship altogether and focusing on fantasies; to regret, feeling guilt for not acting sooner. Other angles can focus on the positive side of knowing something is going to end, by fixating on the time they might have left or the good memories they bring out of the experience. Films like *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (2019) and shows such as *A League of Their Own* (2022) portray these kinds of narratives. Other iterations of the cliché might be falling for one's (straight) best friend, something Dodie expresses in her song "She" (2019).

Finally, the trope of impersonating a man in queer narratives usually involves a sense of searching for stability and safety. In a straight-passing relationship, the characters can act out their love without fearing being harmed or judged upon. Films such as *The Handmaiden* (2016) or *Elisa y Marcela* (2019) work with this concept. This cliché takes sometimes a more metatextual turn, where readers or listeners may situate themselves in the place of the character of the opposite gender or the muse of the song. Queer women might feel a deep connection with songs written by men that are addressed to women, as is the case of Hozier's fanbase, for example (Stern).

As seen, the use of these clichés and tropes and their connections to real life queer experiences are common. Because of this, many queer readers can identify these symbols when reading texts that might not be explicitly queer, and especially if making use of the ambiguity of subtext. Some queer creators have exploited this in the past, as a way of truly expressing themselves through their art without coming out publicly as LGBTQ+. In other cases, these tropes, themes, and clichés have been used by cisgender heterosexual artists with no ulterior motives, but have been picked up as queer by the audiences. This might have been the case for Taylor Swift.

3. Analysis of Taylor Swift's Lyrics

In this section, the focus will be on presenting and analysing a selection of Swift's individual lyrics and general song concepts through the lens of the queer experience. Focusing on the three key narratives through which Swift expresses her theme of

forbidden love, the imaginary of her music will be read and connected to symbols that might be common amongst the LGBTQ+ community.

3.1. Secrecy, Running and Hiding

To begin the analysis, this section will focus specifically on the themes of hiding and running away that can be found in a selection of Swift's lyrics throughout her discography. Secrecy is a common theme throughout her music, with brief mentions in the beginning of her career and deeper, more complex meanings as her pen becomes more elaborate. The perspective on this secrecy also changes throughout the years and throughout her work, from a romanticised, brief mention in her earlier albums to a more complicated, frustrating and anxiety inducing trope in her later music.

Secrecy is mentioned briefly in many of Swift's songs, especially in her country albums *Taylor Swift* (2006), *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* (2008-2021)⁵ and *Speak Now* (2010). Songs such as "Stay beautiful" or "Our song" present lyrics that mention the relationship being a secret: "He whispers songs into my window / In words that nobody knows" (Swift, "Stay Beautiful") or "When we're on the phone and he talks real slow / 'cause its late and his mama don't know" (Swift, "Our Song"). If the pronouns are disregarded, the experience of living a relationship hiding away from one's parents is very familiar to queer stories. A different, more mature perspective of this innocent secrecy can be found in her song "seven", from her album *folklore* (2020), where, with the neutral pronoun 'you', Swift sings to an old childhood friend with "braids like a pattern" (Swift, "seven"). The secrecy in the lyrics is pure, unaware of the heaviness that it carries, with secret promises seen in lyrics like "cross your heart, won't tell no other", or wishes of protecting the I's friend: "Then you won't have to cry / or hide in the closet" (Swift, "seven"). This last lyric resonates heavily with queer audiences, as the situation of an abusive household where one cannot be oneself is common (*2018 LGBTQ Youth Report* 4). The sense of secrecy in "seven" can be read as the love between two children, two young girls who have not yet faced the hard cold hatred of real life, but still feel like their love must be kept a secret, as it might not be well received.

⁵ In this section of the analysis, I considered the date of the album releases as something important, as it marks Swift's evolution of the concept of hiding in her music. Because of this, albums with re-releases will feature the original year of release as well as the year of re-release.

The theme of secrecy and fleeing becomes more present in Swift's early albums in a romanticised way, especially in *Red (Taylor's Version)* (2012-2021). Songs like "Enchanted", with lyrics such as "The playful conversation starts / counter all your quick remarks / like passing notes in secrecy" (Swift, "Enchanted") that wish for a version of a romantic affair away from prying eyes that can be even idealistic. Songs such as "Run (Taylor's Version) (From the Vault)", which features Ed Sheeran, offers the idea of leaving behind life and friends to be with the person one loves. The song, using the neutral pronoun 'you', opens with the lyrics:

Give me the keys, I'll bring the car back around
 We shouldn't be in this town
 And my so-called friends, they don't know
 I'd drive away before I let you go
 So give me a reason and don't say no, no (Swift, "Run").

Swift speaks of the lyrical I's "so-called friends", presenting them in a negative light as they do not seem to accept the relationship the muse and the I are a part of. She continues the song with the chorus:

And run, like you'd run from the law
 darling, let's run
 run from it all
 we can go where our eyes can take us
 go where no one else is, run
 ooh, we'll run (Swift, "Run").

The mentions of fleeing to a place "where no one else is", comparing this with "running from the law", in addition to the previous lyrics of "we shouldn't be in this town", can paint the picture of a couple fleeing from a place where their relationship is frowned upon in favour of somewhere where no one can judge them. It is an interesting counterpart to Swift's "Getaway Car", from her album *Reputation* (2017), which utilizes the same themes but in a more fatalistic kind of way, as the lyrical I is running away from the relationship, instead of with her partner.

Another song with a romantic perspective on fleeing is “The Very First Night (Taylor’s Version) (From the Vault)”, where the lyrical I begins with “I wish I could fly / I’d pick you up and we’d go back in time” (Swift), offering the idea of escaping into the past. As the song continues, the themes of friends and family not considering the relationship as something serious or important reappears:

’Cause they don’t know about the night in the hotel
 they weren’t ridin’ in the car when we both fell
 didn’t read the note on the Polaroid picture
 they don’t know how much I miss you” (Swift, “The Very First Night”).

This lack of acknowledgement to the relationship can be compared to the way in which queer couples are sometimes relegated to being “friends” by family members or close friends. The repetition in the post-chorus of the words, “Take me away”, insists on the wish that the lyrical I has of leaving behind the place and the people that have judged her by who she loves and how much. This idea of falling for someone and having to flee because the relationship has been discovered and the people involved are either not safe or are being persecuted can be found in films such as *The Handmaiden* (2016).

As Swift enters her pop era, especially with her album *1989* (2014), the concept of secrecy is seen in a more negative light. The idea of being caught by the public eye in a relationship causes anxiety to the lyrical I, and hiding or fleeing becomes a central and essential part of her relationships. This fear of being discovered and the relationship, or the I herself, not surviving the criticism of the public view is seen in lyrics such as: “Are we out of the woods yet? Are we out of the woods yet?” and “Are we in the clear yet? Are we in the clear yet?” (Swift, “Out of the Woods”), where the same lines are repeated over and over as a representation of the rushing thoughts brought forth with anxiety. The image brought forth by another song, “I Know Places”, is that of a hunting session in which the lyrical I and her partner are the prey. Working alongside “Out of the Woods”, Swift simulates the idea of two people running through the trees trying to escape a terrible destiny. The lyrics “’Cause they got their cages, they got their boxes and guns / They are the hunters, we are the foxes and we run” further push this idea forward, and other lyrics strengthen the parallelisms she is trying to create between being hunted as prey and having one’s relationship discovered by the public:

I can hear them whisper as we pass by
 It's a bad sign, bad sign
 Something happens when everybody finds out
 See the vultures circling, dark clouds (Swift, "I Know Places").

This deep fear encourages a queer reading of the songs, as the consequences of a sapphic relationship being discovered by the media, family, friends, or the public in general can be devastating for the lives of queer people, in some cases being even fatal.

This reality is further represented in "The Archer", as the terror of becoming discovered evolves from focusing exclusively on the relationship to affect the lyrical I herself. The anxiety is no longer only placed on the affair being found out, but the I being discovered for who she really is and being rejected for it, as the bridge chants:

'Cause they see right through me
 they see right through me
 they see right through
 Can you see right through me?
 They see right through
 They see right through me (Swift, "The Archer").

This fear brings forth the need of safe spaces, areas in which a person can be themselves with or without their partner with no fear of being judged or discovered. In "I Know Places", Swift expresses this through the lyrics "Baby, I know places we won't be found / And they'll be chasing their tails trying to track us down / 'Cause I, I know places we can hide" (Swift), where the lyrical I presents to her lover a haven where they can enjoy their love away from prying eyes. Confining the relationship to these safe spaces, on the other hand, can create rifts in the relationship. This can be seen in the song "Wonderland", where Swift compares this love and these safe spaces with Wonderland, the magic world from *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carol. With the lyrics "We found Wonderland, you and I got lost in it / And life was never worse, but never better" (Swift) she paints the idea of these safe spaces as necessary, but at the same time harmful for the relationship. This can lead to the interpretation that hiding away a relationship from the public view, having to hold back from expressing one's love for their significant other in public, can be harmful for the couple.

The next step in the evolution of Swift's portrayal of secrecy and hiding is that of frustration, a very present feeling in the lyrics of her album *Reputation* (2017). As the lyrical I becomes aware that the only way to live a happy relationship is to have it hidden from public view, frustrations begin to arise due to the constraints set upon the relationship and themselves. Songs such as "Dancing With Our Hands Tied", express these frustrations thoroughly with lyrics such as "I, I loved you in secret", "Picture of your face in an invisible locket" or "But we were dancing / Dancing with our hands tied, hands tied" (Swift). Dancing with one's hands tied could be interpreted here as dancing without being able to touch or embrace the I's significant other as she truly wants to, probably due to the relationship being secret. Another song that follows this theme is "Dress", as the lyrical I sings:

Our secret moments in a crowded room
 They got no idea about me and you

 All of this silence and patience, pining in anticipation
 My hands are shaking from holding back from you (Swift, "Dress").

Again, the secrecy of the relationship, "Everyone thinks that they know us / But they know nothin' about" (Swift, "Dress"), prevents the I from touching and embracing her loved one as she truly wishes. These frustrations finally explode in "Cruel Summer", from *Lover* (2019), where the I screams at the listener: "I don't wanna keep secrets just to keep you." In this very short but sentimental lyric, the I begins to consider that, maybe, being discovered by the public eye is worth it as long as it allows her to be with her lover.

Before continuing to the final part of this section of the analysis, it is necessary to mention two specific songs from Swift's discography that encapsulate in an outstandingly accurate way the concept of secrecy and hiding from the perspective of queer women. Both these songs, "illicit affairs" and "ivy", touch upon the concept of infidelity. "illicit affairs" finds the I speaking to herself about the negative consequences of the affair she is partaking in:

And that's the thing about illicit affairs
 And clandestine meetings and longing stares
 It's born from just one single glance

But it dies and it dies and it dies
A million little times” (Swift, “illicit affairs”).

She also focuses on the ways she and her lover keep the affair hidden: “So you leave no trace behind / Like you don’t even exist” and:

Make sure nobody sees you leave
Hood over your head, keep your eyes down
Tell your friends you’re out for a run
You’ll be flushed when you return (Swift, “illicit affairs”).

The lyrical I also expresses her frustration towards the affair and her lover “Look at this godforsaken mess that you made me”, and an important lyric to point out is “You showed me colors you know I can’t see with anyone else” (Swift, “illicit affairs”), as it can lead to the interpretation of the muse as a woman who has helped the I discover her sexuality, and thus the I feels like she cannot connect with her partner, most probably a man, again. The closing of the song “And you know damn well / For you, I would ruin myself / A million little times” (Swift, “illicit affairs”) gives the sense to the listener that the affair is something forbidden, something “dirty” that is “ruining” the lyrical I, which has a heavy queer connotation considering the historical perspective of society on the LGBTQ+ community.

“ivy”, in the same way as “illicit affairs”, explains an infidelity, in this case with the I singing directly to the muse. Through lyrics such as

He’s in the room
Your opal eyes are all I wish to see
He wants what’s only yours
.....
Spring breaks loose, the time is near
What would he do if he found us out?
.....
I’d live and die for moments that we stole
On begged and borrowed time
So tell me to run

Or dare to sit and watch what we'll become
And drink my husband's wine. (Swift, "ivy")

Here, Swift expresses both the need to hide and the fear of being found out by the husband of the lyrical I, as well as her wish to run away with her lover if she is asked. The queerness in the song, aside from the affair itself, is found in the descriptions regarding the lover. The I finds her muse in a "faith-forgotten land", which can be interpreted as a graveyard but also brings forth the idea of faithlessness or sinfulness, which is only encouraged by the touch of the lover being described as "tarnished, but so grand", and the I wishing to know "The fatal flaw that makes you long to be / Magnificently cursed", which can be read as the lover being proud of her own queerness, thus longing to be "cursed", connecting back to the faithlessness and sinfulness previously mentioned. The lover is also compared to the ivy plant, an invasive climbing plant that is known for breaking walls and rocks with its roots:

Oh, I can't
stop you putting roots in my dreamland,
My house of stone, your ivy grows,
And now I'm covered in you (Swift, "ivy")

These lyrics emphasize the idea Swift tries to put forward of a love that cannot be controlled and is bound to be destructive, continuing with the idea of being "cursed". It can also be interpreted that the house of stone Swift mentions is her heterosexual marriage, while the ivy that grows is her lover, who will eventually destroy the structure. To finish the song, the bridge expresses once again the frustration of the lyrical I towards an affair that must be kept hidden:

So yeah, it's a fire
It's a goddamn blaze in the dark
And you started it
You started it. (Swift, "ivy")

This can be connected to "illicit affairs" through the idea that the lover, a woman, has helped the I discover her sexuality and thus is blamed for "starting the fire".

Finally, Swift's journey through the perspectives of secrecy ends with the concept of escapism into the relationships, especially present in *folklore* (2020). In songs such as "The Lakes", the lyrical I expresses her wish to, once again, abandon everything in favour of her lover:

Take me to the Lakes where all the poets went to die
 I don't belong and, my beloved, neither do you
 Those Windermere peaks look like the perfect place to cry
 I'm setting off, but not without my muse.

This perspective, although romantic, is not idealized as it was when Swift began her career. The I has experienced what suffering through secrecy and hiding brings to a person and is inclined to the idea of running away from those who shame her, but without hiding in the process. Another song, "Sweet Nothing", from *Midnights* (2022), follows a similar concept, where the relationship itself becomes the safe space for the Lyrical I:

They said the end is comin'
 Everyone's up to somethin'
 I find myself runnin' home to your sweet nothings
 Outside, they're push and shovin'
 You're in the kitchen hummin'
 All that you ever wanted from me was sweet nothin'.

The protagonist of the journey has left behind the fears and anxieties about the relationship becoming public and has embraced the love and herself, ignoring the violence of the public world.

This journey is one that many queer people have had to experience. The idealisation of keeping a relationship a secret, the anxieties produced by the fear of being discovered, and the acceptance that secrecy might be the only option, to then decide that the relationship, both with oneself and one's lover, is more important than the opinions, hatred, and violence of society, resonates with the lives of countless members of the queer community. Many still are forced to live in hiding due to external factors that might put in danger their lives, and applying a queer reading to songs like these could make this struggle more visible.

3.2. The Impossibility of Love

Swift presents in some of her music a rather sad view of love and relationships and this is manifested through different lenses and connotations. In some songs, the perspective is fatalistic and painful, giving the idea that the lyrical I knew from the beginning that the relationship was a mistake, or knows it in the moment, but still pursues it. In others, the relationship is simply not possible and does not occur, but the I expresses her anger and frustration towards the unfairness. A couple of the examples show the concept of a final date, a specific period that the relationship can last, but after that it becomes unviable. There are, in addition to these, a few songs that must be pointed out individually due to their specific meanings.

Going into a relationship with the knowledge that it cannot possibly end in a positive light is an experience lived by many queer people, both in the past and today. Usually connected to situations in which queerness is persecuted, having the unequivocal sense that the relationship is doomed is a logical outcome when the society around you constantly harasses you. Another perspective on this is the idea that the person you are going to fall for ‘will get you in trouble’. If a queer person is closeted, they might feel like engaging in a relationship with someone of the same gender could not under any circumstances end in a positive way, due to the fear of being discovered. Swift’s lyrics can be interpreted this way from two different angles: a devastating love story where the relationship will end and the lyrical I will be left emotionally destroyed, or a different view, where she will look back onto the relationship as a fond memory.

A way in which Swift expresses this idea of devastating, doomed love is through the imaginary of dreams and fantasies. This is the case in songs such as “Treacherous (Taylor’s Version)” and “gold rush”, as both play with the idea of temptation and falling for a person who is not good for the I. Introducing the song with the lyrics “Put your lips close to mine / As long as they don’t touch” (Swift, “Treacherous”) conditions the listener to believe this song is a fantasy about a relationship that cannot happen, which is then further proven with the lyrics “And I’d be smart to walk away / But you’re quicksand” (Swift, “Treacherous”). In “gold rush”, on the other hand, the idea of fantasy is presented through the oneiric sound of the introduction to the song, as well as the chorus beginning with “But I don’t like a gold rush, gold rush”, this gold rush being the lyrical I’s love interest. “gold rush” then sets up a series of back-and-forth interactions between the choruses and the verses, where the I fantasizes about her love interest: “What must it be

like to grow up that beautiful? / With your hair falling into place like dominoes” (Swift, “gold rush”), and then proceeds to remind herself over and over that “it could never be” (Swift, “gold rush”). In a similar way, “Treacherous (Taylor’s Version)” describes the process of falling for the love interest in the verses: “I can’t decide if it’s a choice, / Getting swept away” (Swift, “Treacherous”), and sets the reminders of the dangers in the choruses “This hope is treacherous / This daydream is dangerous” (Swift, “Treacherous”).

It could be said that these two songs are two sides of the same coin, as both touch upon the idea of a love that cannot succeed through the concept of fantasizing, but there is one key difference. In “Treacherous (Taylor’s Version)”, Swift uses the future past tense “would” to express the lyrical I’s desire to fall for the love interest if she could allow herself to: “And I just think you should, think you should know / That nothing safe is worth the drive / And I would follow you, follow you home” (Swift, “Treacherous”). She then changes this “would” for a “will” in the last bridge of the song: “And nothing safe is worth the drive / And I will follow you, follow you home” (Swift, “Treacherous”), indicating the lyrical I has fallen to the temptation of the love interest, fulfilling the fantasy despite knowing it is a bad idea. In “gold rush”, on the other hand, Swift uses positive sentences, such as “At dinner parties, I call you out on your contrarian shit / And the coastal town we wandered ‘round had never seen a love as pure as it” (Swift, “gold rush”), to express what the lyrical I is fantasizing about, but changes completely in the second chorus, using negatives: “At dinner parties, I won’t call you out on your contrarian shit / And the coastal town we never found will never see a love as pure as it” (Swift, “gold rush”), which indicates that the I has abandoned her fantasies, as she is aware that the relationship with her love interest is one that cannot succeed. This is further emphasized with the use of “‘Cause it could never be” and “‘Cause it will never be” (Swift, “gold rush”).

This difference in the meaning of the songs could be explained by the years of difference between the release of both. The original version of “Treacherous” was released in 2012 on her album *RED*, when Swift was still 22 years old, but *evermore*, the album on which “gold rush” is found, was released in 2020, two days before Swift turned 31. It has been mentioned before that Swift’s *RED* album romanticises the concept of hiding a relationship, something that is left behind as Swift’s music evolves. This could also be applied to the idea of doomed relationships. The songs allow a queer reading, especially, with the use of fantasies and temptation. Queerness has been presented throughout history as a temptation of lust, and many LGBTQ+ people have had their

desires relegated to the world of dreams and fantasies due to the inability to fulfil them because of social or personal situations. The difference between both songs, that is, one falling for the temptation while the other one does not, could be read as a queer person who has been burned out of love.

In “Dancing with Our Hands Tied”, Swift presents the image of a crumbling building falling around a single couple dancing in the spotlight. The song plays with the previously mentioned concept of hiding, and the terrible consequences that come when this secret relationship is discovered. From the mention of having “a bad feeling” that shows the I is aware of how little future the relationship has, to the breakup and the bridge, where the I confesses that, if possible, she would go back and stay in the relationship despite everything, the song focuses on the guilt the lyrical I feels for breaking up the couple:

I’d kiss you as the lights went out
Swaying as the room burned down
I’d hold you as the water rushed in
If I could dance with you again (Swift, “Dancing with Our Hands Tied”).

The queer interpretation behind this song relies on the cause of the breakup: the public eye. The introduction of the song with the lyrics “I, I loved you in secret” (Swift, “Dancing with Our Hands Tied”) and the line “People started talking, putting us through our paces” (Swift, “Dancing with Our Hands Tied”) tells the listener that the reason behind the breakup was public speculation. This image offered by Swift lends itself easily to the queer perspective, as the idea of breaking up a relationship out of fear of being discovered resonates closely with queer people who might be closeted. The regret in the song can be emphasized if read from the hypothetical of someone who, sometime after coming out, regrets not doing it earlier and thus losing a very treasured relationship.

The more positive version of this idea of seeing a relationship as unfruitful from the beginning can be found in songs such as “Stay Beautiful”, where Swift sings to someone named Corey and expresses her feelings, but accepts it if he does not feel the same way. With lyrics such as “I hope your life leads you back to my door / Oh, but if it don’t / Stay beautiful” and:

If you and I are a story

That never gets told
 If what you are is a daydream
 I'll never get to hold, at least you'll know (Swift, "Stay Beautiful").

This song can be related to the idea of falling for your best friend, an experience very common in queer women. Swift uses the trope in other songs, such as "Dress":

I don't want you like a best friend

 And if I get burned, at least we were electrified" (Swift).

"Wildest Dreams (Taylor's Version)" plays once again with the previously mentioned idea of dreams and fantasies. Despite the song not focusing on the negative perspective of doomed love, and not using the device of fantasizing about someone, connections can be drawn to both "gold rush" and "Treacherous (Taylor's Version)" in the use of the I wishing to be remembered in the fantasies of another:

Say you'll remember me

 Say you'll see me again
 Even if it's just in your
 Wildest Dreams, ah, ha (Swift, "Wildest Dreams").

The lyrics "Someday when you leave me / I bet these memories / Follow you around" (Swift, "Wildest Dreams") clearly establish that the lyrical I sees no future to the relationship but chooses to cherish the memories of the time spent together. The song allows a queer reading through the wish of the I to not be forgotten, to not be seen as a "mistake" on behalf of her loved one. This draws parallelism with *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*.

Regarding the second perspective, not being able to be with the person one likes or loves, can create a sense of frustration. This is very common in LGBTQ+ experiences, as many queer people fall for straight people, or for other queer people, but the circumstances do not allow for a relationship. This is seen especially in "Gorgeous",

where the lyrical I expresses her frustration by getting angry at her love interest, with lyrics such as:

“You’re so cool, it makes me hate you so much

 You’ve ruined my life by not being mine

 You’re so gorgeous
 I can’t say anything to your face
 ‘Cause look at your face
 And I’m so furious
 At you for making me feel this way” (Swift, “Gorgeous”).

With the neutral pronoun ‘you’, Swift plays with the rhyme of the words ‘gorgeous’ and ‘furious’ to express the I’s frustrations, bringing attention to the contradiction of hating something you want. The idea of hating the object of one’s desire because of internalized homophobia or the frustration of not being able to be with that person can be seen in queer storylines such as Netflix’ show, *Everything Sucks* (2018).

Another way in which Swift expresses this “doomed-ness” in a relationship is through affairs that have a time limit. In songs such as “august” and “’tis the damn season”, the main theme of the lyrics is that, once time runs out, the relationship will end. Despite this interpretation not being inherently queer, some queer stories such as *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* present this idea of enjoying a specifically established period in which the relationship can be explored but must end when accorded. In “august”, Swift uses lyrics such as:

But I can see us lost in the memory
 August slipped away into a moment in time
 ‘Cause it was never mine
 And I can see us twisted in bedsheets
 August sipped away like a bottle of wine
 ‘Cause you were never mine (Swift, “august”).

Set in the future and using past tenses, the I is aware now that the relationship was due to end because the object of her affection “was never [hers]”. In “’tis the damn season”, on the other hand, the song is set in the present, and the lyrics express a fleeting, very short love affair between the lyrical I and her muse:

You can call me “babe” for the weekend
 ‘Tis the damn season, write this down
 I’m stayin’ at my parents’ house

 And I’ll be yours for the weekend
 ‘Tis the damn season” (Swift, “’tis the damn season”).

Finally, a couple of songs must be pointed out that do not follow the previous perspectives. These songs, “The Archer” and “False God”, both present an important view on a relationship being bound to end that does not coincide with those mentioned before. In “The Archer”, a song that expresses Swift’s fears and anxieties, the chorus of the song reads “Who could ever leave me, darling / but who could stay?” (Swift, “The Archer”). This anxiety of never being able to have a successful relationship, is emphasized through the lyrics “And all of my heroes die all alone” (Swift, “The Archer”). This fear is not uncommon amongst queer people, as the hate that the LGBTQ+ community receives most often than not results in a feeling of loneliness and isolation, especially when one is not surrounded by other queer people (Elmer, et al. 2270). This idea of not being able to ever find love is an extension of this loneliness, and can be worsened by internalized homophobia, which is another aspect that can be read in the song. The lyric “Dark side, I search for your dark side, / But what if I’m all right, right, right here?” (Swift, “The Archer”) transmit the idea that, when searching for the worse parts of herself, the I believes that those parts are what define her as a whole. If this “dark side” is seen as queerness, it can resonate with many queer listeners that might find themselves struggling with the self-hate that internalized homophobia provokes.

In “False God”, on the other hand, Swift focuses on the point of view of fighting for the relationship despite it being clearly doomed. Drawing parallelisms between this and believing in a fake deity, the song lends itself to a queer reading. If we situate the heterosexual relationship as one of the metaphorical central deities of society, that is, a pillar around which the social morality is built upon and against which rests the normative

values of our culture, a queer relationship could be seen as a false god. This reading of the song fits in with the theme of a condemned relationship: “Even if it’s a false god / We’d still worship this love” (Swift, “False God”), as well as the idea of fighting for a relationship that society has deemed as unfruitful: “They all warned us about times like this / They say the road gets hard and you get lost / When you’re led by blind faith, blind faith” (Swift, “False God”).

The queer interpretation in these songs is less obvious than the previous theme mentioned, that of secrecy and hiding, but it can still resonate with queer audiences. Queer stories and media have been feeding the idea of unfruitful or doomed relationships for years, and this image of a love that cannot be has been implanted in the LGBTQ+ community as a trope that is almost inherently ours, thus making it easily relatable when found in a text. When read by the eyes of someone LGBTQ+, their experiences turn a doomed relationship into something queer. This might be a sign that explicit LGBTQ+ media should begin creating stories in which being queer does not automatically mean to end up alone.

3.3.To Impersonate a Man Loving a Woman

To analyse the lyrics in the following songs, the fact that this music is written and performed by a woman, that is, Taylor Swift, must be considered. As previously seen, queer stories, both fictional and not, are full of examples of women writing with a masculine penname or disguising themselves as men with the objective of safely expressing their feelings to their lover. Because of this, these specific lyrics cannot be interpreted in a vacuum, and Swift’s identity as a woman must be taken into consideration to be able to offer a queer reading of the songs. With this said, this section of the analysis will focus mainly on three ways Swift directs herself to women in her music: using direct speech and beginning the lyrics with “he said”, using the second person to express a conversation in which she talks about a woman, and directly putting herself in the position of a man to sing to a woman. Before the analysis takes place, it is important to mention that it is possible that the intention behind many of these songs is that the listener interprets the lyrical I as a man, but the focus of the analysis is going to be on how, metatextually and without taking into account Swift’s original idea, a queer reinterpretation is facilitated through Swift, a woman, singing to a feminine muse.

When using direct speech in her music, Swift usually builds the scene of the lyrical I speaking to a man, and then proceeds to portray exactly what he is saying. By doing this, Swift is singing in her own voice words that express love towards women. To queer young women who are in the process of discovering themselves, as well as older sapphic women that may be in search of representation, singing these songs alongside Swift's voice can be a way of being seen, as well as a manner to turn around the traditional cisheteropatriarchal expectation of these songs being interpreted as heterosexual. Some of Swift's lyrics give the impression that the I is referring to a woman, such as:

Our song is the way you laugh
 The first date: "Man, I didn't kiss her and I should have"
 And when I got home, 'fore I said amen
 Askin' God if he could play it again (Swift, "Our Song")

This is especially the case when considering that the indicator of direct speech, that is, the "And he says" lyric, is always found in the previous verse, thus separated from que chorus. Another example of this use of the language can be found in "Mine":

You said, "I remember how we felt sitting by the water
 And every time I look at you, it's like the first time
 I fell in love with a careless man's careful daughter
 She is the best thing that's ever been mine" (Swift).

The second way with which Swift directs her music towards women is with the use of the second person, mainly in the songs "How You Get The Girl" and "Question...?". In the former, Swift hides the lyrical I behind the figure of an advisor who is trying to explain to someone how to recover a relationship with their ex-lover. Lyrics such as:

Stand there like a ghost
 Shaking from the rain, rain
 She'll open up the door and say,
 "Are you insane?"
 Say it's been a long six months

And you were too afraid to tell her what you want

And that's how it works

That's how you get the girl, girl (Swift, "How You Get the Girl").

In "Question...?", the interpretation is slightly loser. The I is now having what can be read as an argument with a former lover:

Did you leave her house in the middle of the night? Oh

Did you wish you'd put up more of a fight, oh

When she said it was too much?

Do you wish you could still touch her?

It's just a question (Swift, "Question...?").

Both these uses of the second person can be interpreted as the lyrical I speaking to herself. In the first song, she would be giving herself advice on how to get back her ex-lover, maybe motivating herself to do it. In the latter, she would be blaming herself for the mistakes that lead the relationship to its conclusion. This interpretation can be further proven when considering another of Swift's songs, "You are in Love". In this 2014 song, Swift, once again, uses the second person, but the intentions of the I referring to herself are much clearer:

'Cause you can hear it in the silence

You can feel it on the way home

You can see it with the lights out

You are in love, true love

You are in love (Swift, "You are in Love").

Finally, the clearest way that Swift has of referring to women in her music is by what she herself deems as the "masculine perspective" (*Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions* 1:20:03-1:20:09). The focus of this analysis will be on "dorothea" and "betty". In these songs, the lyrical I is supposed to be interpreted as a man, but having Swift's voice expressing love to a woman is very clearly interpretable as queer.

“betty” is one of the three perspectives on a love triangle that can be found in Swift’s 2020 album *folklore*. In the song, the I, who is revealed to be named James, sings to Betty, a girl she was seemingly dating before she had a short relationship with a third girl, who Swift names as Augustine or August in *Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions* (2020). The song reads:

Yeah, I showed up at your party
 Will you have me? Will you love me?
 Will you kiss me on the porch
 In front of all your stupid friends?
 If you kiss me, will it be just like I dreamed it?
 Will it patch your broken wings?
 I’m only seventeen, I don’t know anything,
 But I know I miss you

 I was walking home on broken cobble stones
 Just thinking of you when she pulled up like
 A figment of my worst intentions
 She said “James get in, let’s drive”
 Those days turned into nights
 Slept next to her, but
 I dreamt of you all summer long” (Swift, “betty”).

The use of feminine pronouns, the fact that the lyrical I is named James after the daughter of two of Swift’s close friends (O’Malley) and the fact that Swift herself is named Taylor after James Taylor (Allaire) just adds upon the already queer interpretation of the song.

“dorothea” follows a similar line to “betty”, with lyrics such as:

It’s never too late to come back to my side
 The stars in your eyes shined brighter in Tupelo
 And if you’re ever tired of bein’ known for who you know
 You know that you’ll always know me (Swift, “dorothea”)

Here, the I sends out a message to what can be read as an old high school love that has left town to follow her dreams “But are you still the same soul I met under the bleachers? Well” (Swift, “dorothea”).

Regardless of Swift’s true intentions behind using a masculine perspective in her music, it is undeniable that these songs can give the excuse for queer fans to sing alongside the lyrics and feel as if they are freely singing to a feminine muse. This is something that queer women have done for ages with songs written by men, and queer men have done with songs written by women, both to see themselves represented and to claim their right to occupy space in a cisheterosexual world. In these cases, Swift’s feminine voice and soft, loving lyrics towards “betty”, “dorothea”, or simply “her” help create an atmosphere of sapphic subtext that is easily read by fans who wish to connect on a deeper level to Swift’s music.

4. Conclusion

Queering, or queer reading, is a necessary, political act that challenges a straight perspective and offers representation in those texts that can be traditionally considered straight. Swift’s music has increasingly been analysed from a queer perspective in a non-academic way as her audience grows, and this might be simply that such a large fandom, a big portion of which identifies as queer, is looking to see itself represented in her lyrics. Her use of the theme of forbidden love, usually expressed in three ways (secrecy, running and hiding, the presence of an anticipation to the downfall of the relationship, and singing from a masculine perspective), is one traditionally used in LGBTQ+ media of all kinds, as well as literature, and it further inspires readers to interpret her lyrics in a queerer way.

It is interesting to see that, throughout Swift’s evolution and change of genre, how the queer interpretations of her lyrics have become increasingly easier. During her first albums, *Taylor Swift* (2006), *Fearless* (2008-2021), and *Speak Now* (2010), the use of country and the themes of puppy love are paired with masculine names and pronouns, but as Swift transitions to pop (*1989* [2014], *Reputation* [2017], *Lover* [2019]) she begins to leave behind this clarity in favour of more neutral pronouns and even feminine adjectives. It is during her indie-folk era, with *folklore* and *evermore* (2020), that Swift fully embraces the use of feminine pronouns, even singing directly to women and using feminine names, perhaps because the genre itself allows her to distance herself from the stories told, looking at it from a more fictional perspective rather than biographical.

Despite Swift's music being seen generally as straight, especially regarding her image as an American Sweetheart, a queer interpretation, as seen in the transversal analysis, is completely possible, as many of the lyrics found in Swift's discography can and are closely related to the themes and clichés previously mentioned. I personally believe that an alternative reading of the singer's discography, in which the normativity of cisgender heterosexual love is pushed aside in favour of a queerer, sapphic love story, is not only an option but something needed. Swift's audience is enormous, spanning hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people, and amongst those people a big percentage are bisexual women and lesbians, such as myself. The need for representation, although decreasing lately, is still very much present. People will always project their own experiences upon art, especially music, and especially if those people find it hard to see themselves in everyday stories. In addition to this, projecting ourselves onto art makes us feel less lonely, and can help build a community, more so when referring to a celebrity whose audience is generally young and has access to the Internet. Moreover, forcing our existence upon a cisheterosexual narrative gives us personal representation but also forces a cisheteropatriarchal society to see us, which is a political statement, as queer people have been made invisible for centuries, and thus queer readings make our existence obvious even in the most normative spaces, such as pop music. Swift's music is as queer or as straight as one may want it to be, just like every other piece of art that we, as humans who wish to see themselves represented, may come across.

To expand upon the thesis presented in this final degree dissertation is very possible, as some aspects have been left aside due to lack of time and space. A song-by-song analysis of Swift's discography searching for the same themes and clichés could be an option, as the transversal approach only allows for a "skimmed over" analysis of her music. Other themes related to queerness could be exploited, such as internalized homophobia or the cliché of cheating. Swift's lyrics could be read from other critical frameworks, such as gender studies, and other aspects of her music can be investigated. She is still active as an artist, so this same essay could be expanded on further in a few years, after she releases more music. Swift's lyricism is rich and complex and has many nuances to it that can be of interest from an academic perspective.

Bibliography

@meanlore. “how many devastating break up albums with undeniably fruity undertones does taylor swift have to write for y’all to accept the fact that she and karlie kloss aren’t together anymore.” *Twitter*, 17 Jan. 2023, 1:39 p.m., <https://twitter.com/meanlore/status/1615327857450053633?s=20>. Accessed 15 Feb. 2023.

2018 *LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign, 2018. <https://www.hrc.org/resources/2018-lgbtq-youth-report>. Accessed 26 May 2023.

Allaire, Christian. “5 Things You Didn’t Know About Taylor Swift.” *Vogue*, 8 Aug. 2019, <https://www.vogue.com/article/taylor-swift-5-things-you-didnt-know>. Accessed 2 March 2023.

Avila, Daniela. “Taylor Swift Shares Her Best 'Life Hacks' in Nostalgic Speech as She Earns Honorary Doctorate from NYU”. *People*, 18 May 2022, <https://people.com/music/taylor-swift-nyu-commencement-honorary-doctorate-speech/>. Accessed 2 Feb. 2023.

Björklund, Jenny. “Queer Readings/ Reading the Queer.” *Lambda Nordica*, Vol. 23, no. 1-2, Oct. 2018, pp. 7-15, <https://www.lambdanordica.org/index.php/lambdanordica/article/view/481>.

Bleich, David. “The Subjective Character of Critical Interpretation.” *College English*, vol. 36, no. 7, 1975, pp. 739–55. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/375172>. Accessed 3 May 2023.

Brennan, Joseph. “Queerbaiting: The ‘playful’ possibilities of homoeroticism.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 21 no. 2, 2018, pp. 189–206. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877916631050>. Accessed 20 Feb. 2023.

- Burt, Stephanie & Harris, Julia. "Our love lasts so long: queer devotion in Taylor Swift's *Folklore*." *Overland*, 31 Aug. 2020, <https://overland.org.au/2020/08/our-love-lasts-so-long-queer-devotion-in-taylor-swifts-folklore/>. Accessed 15 Feb. 2023.
- Couvares, Francis G. "Hollywood, Main Street, and the Church: Trying to Censor the Movies Before the Production Code." *American Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 4, 1992, pp. 584–616. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2713216>. Accessed 13 Feb. 2023.
- Crawley, S. Adam. "Chapter 110 Queer Reading". *Encyclopedia of Queer Studies in Education*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004506725_110 Web.
- Dajches, Leah, & Stevens Aubrey, Jennifer. "Queer folklore: Examining the Influence of Fandom on Sexual Identity Development and Fluidity Acceptance Among Taylor Swift Fans." *Psychology of Popular Media*. Advance Online Publication, 5 May 2022. *APA PsycNet*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000408>. Accessed 13 Feb. 2023.
- Daw, Stephen. "Why Taylor Swift's Open Support for the LGBTQ Community Should Be Celebrated." *Billboard*, 14 June 2019, <https://www.billboard.com/culture/pride/taylor-swift-lgbtq-community-you-need-to-calm-down-8516021/>. Accessed 14 Feb. 2023.
- DeSantis, Rachel. "Taylor Swift Donates \$113,000 to Support LGBTQ Advocacy Group in Tennessee." *People*, 9 April 2019, <https://people.com/music/taylor-swift-donation-tennessee-lgbtq-advocacy-group/>. Accessed 14 Feb. 2023.
- Dodie (Dorothy Miranda Clark). "She". *Human*. Duddleodde (self-released), distributed by The Orchard, 2019, *Apple Music*, <https://music.apple.com/es/album/she/1434062921?i=1434062946>.
- Doty, Alexander. *Making Things Perfectly Queer*. University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Elisa y Marcela. Directed by Isabel Coixet, Rodar y Rodar, Netflix España, Lanube Películas & TV3, 2019. *Netflix*
<https://www.netflix.com/es/title/80121387?s=i&trkid=13747225&vlang=es&clip=81009499>. Accessed 23 Feb. 2023.

Elmer, Eddy M., van Tilburg, Theo and Fokkema, Tineke. "Minority Stress and Loneliness in a Global Sample of Sexual Minority Adults: The Roles of Social Anxiety, Social Inhibition, and Community Involvement." *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*. vol 51, no. 4, 22 Jan. 2022, pp. 2269-2298. *SpringerLink*,
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-021-02132-3>. Accessed 26 May 2023.

Fallon, Maura. "Clinging to Subtextual Visibility: Queering Taylor Swift's *folklore*." *The Thirlby*, 3 Aug. 2020, <https://www.thethirlby.com/camp-thirlby-diary/2020/8/3/clinging-to-subtextual-visibility-queering-taylor-swifts-fo>.
 Accessed 15 Feb. 2023.

Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions. Directed by Taylor Swift, Taylor Swift Productions & Big Branch Productions, 2020. *Disney+*,
<https://www.disneyplus.com/es-es/movies/folklore-las-grabaciones-en-long-pond-studio/3Xlc0EjKtKpp>. Accessed 2 March 2023.

Geraets, Nell. "Queer as Folklore: Why are fans arguing over Taylor Swift's sexuality?" *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 Oct. 2022,
<https://www.smh.com.au/culture/celebrity/queer-as-folklore-why-are-fans-arguing-over-taylor-swift-s-sexuality-20221012-p5bp8i.html>. Accessed 14 Feb. 2023.

Graham, Will and Jacobson, Abbi, creators. *A League of Their Own*. Sony Pictures Television and Amazon Studios, 2022, *Prime Video*.
https://www.primevideo.com/detail/0RSU4JWOGGX915XGBODNHVSS5UG/ref=atv_srfle_c_srfea62b_1_1_1.

Jenkins Reid, Taylor. *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*. Washington Square Press. 2018.

Juhasz, Suzanne. "Amplitude of Queer Desire in Dickinson's Erotic Language." *The Emily Dickinson Journal*, vol. 14 no. 2, 2005, p. 24-33. *Project MUSE*, [doi:10.1353/edj.2006.0011](https://doi.org/10.1353/edj.2006.0011).

Kabir, Shameem. *Daughters of Desire: Lesbian Representations in Film*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1998. Print.

Kelleher, Patrick. "The long, potted history of LGBTQ+ Hollywood – from queer silent film to the problematic present." *Pink News*, 23 Feb. 2022, <https://www.thepinknews.com/2022/02/23/hollywood-lgbt-film-cinema-television-history/>. Accessed 1 May 2023.

Kim, Koeun. "Queer-coded Villains (And Why You Should Care)." *Dialogues@RU* 18.1 (2017): 156-165.

Kircher, Madison Malone. "Taylor Swift's Songs Can Be As Gay As You Want Them to Be." *Vulture*, 29 July 2020, <https://www.vulture.com/2020/07/taylor-swifts-songs-can-be-as-gay-you-want-them-to-be.html>. Accessed 15 Feb. 2023.

Lemon, Grace. "Subtext, But Make It Sapphic." *Scene and Heard*, 18 Dec. 2020, <https://www.sceneandheardnu.com/content/subtext-but-make-it-sapphic>. Accessed 15 Feb. 2023.

Lewis, Maria. "Early Hollywood and the Hays Code." *ACMI*, 14 Jan. 2021, <https://www.acmi.net.au/stories-and-ideas/early-hollywood-and-hays-code/>. Accessed 1 May 2023.

Lipton, Mark. "Queer Readings of Popular Culture." *Queer Youth Cultures*, edited by Susan Driver, Sunny Press, 2008, pp. 163-179.

López Romero, Raquel. *Subtexto y simbología lésbica en las letras de los álbumes de Taylor Swift Folklore y Evermore, en relación con poemas de Emily Dickinson*. 2021. Universitat de Barcelona. Postgraduate Study.

Mapes, Jill. "Taylor Swift: *folklore* Album Review." *Pitchfork*, 27 July 2020, <https://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/taylor-swift-folklore/>. Accessed 15 Feb. 2023.

Miller, D. A. "Anal Rope." *Representations*, no. 32, 1990, pp. 114–33. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928797>. Accessed 20 Feb. 2023.

O'Mallie, Katie. "Taylor Swift Namechecked Blake Lively And Ryan Reynold's 3 Daughters In Her Grammy Speech." *Elle*, 15 March 2021, <https://www.elle.com/uk/life-and-culture/culture/a33411648/taylor-swift-blake-lively-daughters-james-innez-betty/>. Accessed 2 March 2023.

Portrait of a Lady on Fire. Directed by Céline Sciamma, Lilies Films, Arte France Cinéma & Hold up Films, 2019.

"Queer studies." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/queer%20studies>. Accessed 1 Feb. 2023.

Radner, Joan N., and Susan S. Lanser. "The Feminist Voice: Strategies of Coding in Folklore and Literature." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 100, no. 398, 1987, pp. 412–25. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/540901>. Accessed 13 Feb. 2023.

Raymond, Diane. "Popular Culture and Queer Representation: A Critical Perspective." *Gender, Race and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*, edited by Gail Dines & Jean M. Humez, SAGE, 2003, pp. 98-110.

Romano, Aja. "The queering of Taylor Swift." *Vox*, 30 Jul. 2020, https://www.vox.com/21337354/folklore-swift-kaylor-betty-gay-lesbian-subtext?utm_campaign=ajaromano&utm_content=chorus&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter. Accessed 15 Feb. 2023.

Rosenblatt, Kalhan. "Taylor Swift 'Midnights' album release prompts more Tay-spiracies on social media." *NBC News*, 21 Oct. 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/pop-culture/taylor-swifts-midnights-album-release-prompts-tay-spiracies-social-media-rcna52772>. Accessed 20 May, 2023.

Sloan, Nate. "Taylor Swift and the Work of Songwriting." *Contemporary Music Review*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2021, pp. 11-26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2021.1945226>.

Smialek, Erik. "Who Needs To Calm Down? Taylor Swift and Rainbow Capitalism." *Contemporary Music Review*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2021, pp. 99-119, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2021.1956270>.

Smiley, Marty. "'Disturbing': Taylor Swift's LGBTQ fans say they're being 'outed' for their sexuality." *SBSNews*, 31 Aug. 2020, <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/the-feed/article/disturbing-taylor-swifts-lgbtq-fans-say-theyre-being-outed-for-their-sexuality/syxwf8emj>. Accessed 15 Feb. 2023.

Stern, Charlie H. "Accidental Sapphic Icon Hozier Stands With His LGBTQI+ Fans." *Rolling Stone*, 2 May, 2023, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/hozier-lgbtq-fandom-rights-1234725573/>. Accessed 20 May 2023.

"Subtext." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/subtext>. Accessed 20 Feb. 2023.

Swift, Taylor (@taylorswift). Photo of a letter to Senator Lamar Alexander. *Instagram*. 1 June 2019. https://www.instagram.com/p/ByJzCNZDMgG/?utm_source=ig_embed. Accessed 14 Feb. 2023.

Swift, Taylor. "august." *folklore*. Republic Records, 2020. CD.

---. "betty." *folklore*. Republic Records, 2020, CD.

---. "Cruel Summer." *Lover*. Republic Records, 2019. CD.

- . "Dancing With Our Hands Tied." *Reputation*. Big Machine Records, 2017. CD.
- . "Dress." *Reputation*. Big Machine Records, 2017. CD.
- . "Enchanted." *Speak Now*. Big Machine Records, 2010. CD.
- . "False God." *Lover*. Republic Records, 2019. CD.
- . "Gorgeous." *Reputation*. Big Machine Records, 2017. CD.
- . "gold rush." *evermore*. Republic Records, 2020. CD.
- . "How Taylor Swift Writes a Love Song." Interview by Joe Coscarelli. *New York Times*, 24 Dec. 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/24/arts/music/taylor-swift-lover.html>.
- . "I Know Places." *1989*. Big Machine Records, 2014. CD.
- . "illicit affairs." *folklore*. Republic Records, 2020. CD.
- . "ivy." *evermore*. Republic Records, 2020. CD.
- . "Our Song." *Taylor Swift*. Big Machine Records, 2006. CD.
- . "Out of the Woods." *1989*. Big Machine Records, 2014. CD.
- . "Question...?" *Midnights*. Republic Records, 2022. CD.
- . "Run (Taylor's Version) (From the Vault)." *Red (Taylor's Version)*. Featuring Ed Sheeran. Republic Records, 2022. CD.
- . "seven." *folklore*. Republic Records, 2020. CD.

- . "Stay Beautiful." *Taylor Swift*. Big Machine Records, 2006. CD.

- . "Sweet Nothing." *Midnights*. Republic Records, 2022. CD.

- . "Taylor Swift: The Rolling Stone Interview." Interview by Erik Madigan Heck. *Rolling Stone*, 18 Sep. 2019. <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/taylor-swift-rolling-stone-interview-880794/>. Accessed 14 Feb. 2023.

- . "The Archer." *Lover*. Republic Records, 2019. CD.

- . "The Lakes." *folklore*. Republic Records, 2020. CD.

- . "The Very First Night (Taylor's Version) (From the Vault)." *Red (Taylor's Version)*. Republic Records, 2022. CD.

- . "'tis the damn season." *evermore*. Republic Records, 2020. CD.

- . "Treacherous (Taylor's Version)." *Red (Taylor's Version)*. Republic Records, 2021. CD.

- . "Welcome to New York". *1989*. Big Machine Records, 2014. CD.

- . "Wildest Dreams (Taylor's Version)". Republic Records, 2021, *Apple Music*, <https://music.apple.com/es/album/wildest-dreams-taylors-version/1586258768?i=1586258772>.

- . "Wonderland." *1989*. Big Machine Records, 2014. CD.

- . "You Are In Love." *1989*. Big Machine Records, 2014. CD.

- . "You Need To Calm Down." *Lover*. Republic Records, 2019. CD.

- "Taylor Swift". *Grammy Awards*, <https://www.grammy.com/artists/taylor-swift/15450>. Accessed 2 Feb 2023.

“Taylor Swift Interview The Talk.” *YouTube*, uploaded by Douglas Sawicki, 31 July 2016, <https://youtu.be/V62L3N0K7MQ>. Accessed 14 Feb. 2023.

Théberge, Paul. “Love and Business: Taylor Swift as Celebrity, Businesswoman, and Advocate.” *Contemporary Music Review*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2021, pp. 41-59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2021.1945227>.

Wilkinson, Maryn. “Taylor Swift: The hardest working, zaniest girl in show business...” *Celebrity Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2019, pp. 441-444, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2019.1630160>.