

Rhetoric in Mexico Retoryka w Meksyku

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Rhetorical Appeals in the Lyrics of Selected Songs by Lila Downs Apele retoryczne w tekstach wybranych piosenek Lili Downs

Abstract

The article analyses the lyrics of selected songs by Lila Downs, paying special attention to the rhetorical appeals of logos, ethos and pathos they contain. The results of the analysis reveal all three types of rhetorical appeals, as well as passages combining two or all three of them. Pathos appeals to emotion, often using specific linguistic means (hyperbole, irony), ethos evokes both historical figures and indigenous people as examples, and logos involves predominantly social criticism.

Artykuł analizuje teksty wybranych piosenek Lili Downs, ze zwróceniem szczególnej uwagi na zawarte w nich apele retoryczne: logos, etos i patos. Wyniki analizy ujawniają wszystkie trzy rodzaje apeli retorycznych, jak również fragmenty łączące dwa lub trzy z nich. Patos odwołuje się do emocji, często z użyciem określonych środków językowych (hiperbola, ironia), etos przywołuje postacie historyczne i rdzenne ludy jako przykłady, a logos zawiera głównie krytykę społeczną.

Key words

rhetorical appeals, rhetoric of music, song lyrics, Mexico, Lila Downs
apele retoryczne, retoryka muzyki, teksty piosenek, Meksyk, Lila Downs

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Rhetorical Appeals in the Lyrics of Selected Songs by Lila Downs

1. Introduction

The present study aims to investigate the rhetorical appeals present in selected songs by the Mexican singer Lila Downs. Unlike, for example, in advertisements or in political speeches, where rhetorical appeals are used for the purpose of persuasion, in songs the use of rhetoric is obviously much subtler. An exception is patriotic songs written for a particular purpose, such as a call to arms during a war, which function as operative texts, that is, they attempt “to persuade the audience of something” (Reiß and Vermeer 2014, 137). However, in Lila Downs’ case, the lyrics are expressive rather than operative texts, which means that they constitute works of art (Reiß and Vermeer 2014, 137) and express the author’s feelings and attitudes, for example, towards Mexico, its traditions, social injustice, etc. Even though some of her lyrics might indirectly aim to persuade the listeners to try to fight for justice and human rights in Mexico, it can be assumed that, in the case of listeners from faraway countries, such as Poland, the songs are mainly expected to evoke particular feelings in them and, to some extent, to inform them about Mexico. In fact, as will be shown below, the lyrics do not always seem to be politically engaged: some are, also in a broader historical and economic context, but others focus on the expression of Mexican identity, its food, customs, traditions, etc.

Therefore, the lyrics can be categorised in terms of the rhetorical appeals of logos, pathos and ethos, defined by Aristotle (*On Rhetoric*, 1356a). However, since their aim is not persuasion, rather than rhetorical strategies, they are regarded here as rhetorical appeals to reason, emotions and character in a broad sense, including references to historical figures serving as examples, respectively. Consequently, lyrics aiming to evoke particular emotion in the listener can be classified as pathos, those which present some logical arguments, for example, in favour of social change, can be associated with logos, whereas those which refer to character – not

necessarily the singer's character, but also to famous people from Mexico's history – can be connected with ethos. Certainly, this distinction may not always be clear-cut, as, for example, a mention of the exploitation of workers in a maquiladora (“a low-cost factory in Mexico that is owned by a foreign corporation,” Kenton 2022, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/maquiladora.asp>) might be an example of logos, as a logical argument against this kind of economic activity, and of pathos, as a means to evoke emotions of sympathy, anger, etc. in the listener. Similarly, ethos might involve mentioning a famous historical character as well as a symbol of traditional knowledge and wisdom, such as a curandera (a medicine woman); however, if it evoked feelings of national identity in a Mexican listener, the same passage might be associated with pathos. Indeed, as songs can be interpreted differently by different listeners, the reception of the rhetorical appeals included in them can also vary. For this reason, the present article will adopt a multifaceted approach to the rhetorical appeals in Lila Downs' songs, taking into consideration different possible interpretations.

2. Music and rhetoric

2.1. Music as a form of communication

By and large, music constitutes a form of communication, even though it differs considerably from linguistic communication. On the one hand, song lyrics can undoubtedly convey a variety of messages, from narration, through the expression of feelings to persuasion. On the other hand, the tune itself can perform a rhetorical function (Holmberg 1985, 73-74). In fact, as observed by Sellnow and Sellnow (2001, 396), there is a dynamic interaction between the content of the lyrics and the musical score, both of which “communicate and persuade” and can thus be approached from a rhetorical perspective. According to Sellnow and Sellnow (2001, 398), “music symbolizes emotion through rhythmic patterns of intensity and release.” Langer ([1942] 1957, 238, quoted in Sellnow and Sellnow 2001, 398) regarded those patterns as representing the “general forms of feeling” in daily life. This relationship between intensity and release patterns in music, on the one hand, and feelings and emotions, on the other, makes it possible to analyse music which Sellnow and Sellnow (2001, 398) describe as “essentially didactic.” However, in Sellnow and Sellnow's opinion (2001, 398), not all music is didactic. Music whose only purpose is entertainment evokes a mood but cannot be regarded from a rhetorical perspective, nor can, in fact, the lyrics of such songs. In Sellnow and Sellnow's words (2001, 398), “[i]n these songs, the human voice functions essentially as an instrument in the ensemble of sound rather than as a mode for communicating a message or perpetuating an argument.” In their view

(Sellnow and Sellnow 2001, 399), “didactic music communicates as an aesthetic symbol by creating an illusion of life for listeners through the dynamic interaction between virtual experience (lyrics) and virtual time (music).” Following Langer ([1942] 1957, 218, quoted in Sellnow and Sellnow 2001, 399), they assume that the message conveyed by a song results from the relationship between its lyrics and the music and involves both “conceptual” and “emotional content.” As Sellnow and Sellnow (2001, 412) observe, the interplay between music and lyrics is important because listeners concentrate on different aspects of a musical work and, while some focus on the message conveyed by the lyrics, others put emphasis on the score.

Certainly, as observed by Kock (2018, 185), there are few rhetorical studies of music, even though music has some meanings, which concern its semiotics. In his view, musical works do have meaning, but it is different from the meaning of utterances in the linguistic sense (Kock 2018, 186). Undoubtedly, an attempt to extract meaning from a piece of music is not the goal of listening to it. However, experiencing the meaning of a piece of music constitutes a source of aesthetic gratification (Kock 2018, 186). In order to investigate listeners’ perception of music, Kock (2018, 188) applied what he calls “aesthetic protocol analysis.” The participants were expected to sit still, listen to a piece of classical music and fill in a form regarding their reception of the piece as an aesthetic object. As Kock (2018, 197) remarks, on the one hand, a number of elements were shared by different individuals, which he (2018, 197) describes as “significant intersubjectivity.” On the other hand, he also observed individual variation, on the basis of which he states that musical meanings are neither fully objective, nor fully idiosyncratic. He concludes that musical meaning exists, but it works differently from semantic meaning in language (Kock 2018, 208). However, in his opinion, rhetoric should study the processes occurring in listeners’ perception of music, as rhetoric studies “how human artefacts impact human minds” (Kock 2018, 209). Nevertheless, such studies should not focus on what a piece of music “says,” but rather on its aesthetic impact resulting from the “listeners’ engagement with the multitude of sign relations that occur in their minds as they listen” (Kock 2018, 209).

It can thus be seen that, in music, both the score and the lyrics can convey a message, which is nonetheless much more complex than that of a linguistic utterance and, consequently, open to different interpretations. In addition to the conceptual content of the lyrics, both the lyrics and the tune evoke certain emotions. However, an analysis of the musical scores of Lila Downs’ songs is beyond the scope of the present article, as it focuses on the rhetorical appeals present in the lyrics, whereas an investigation of the aesthetic impact of her songs might be the topic of another study.

2.2. Rhetorical appeals in songs

As was mentioned in the introduction, song lyrics can contain a variety of rhetorical appeals. Certainly, many songs serve as an expression of identity, be it national identity or belonging to a movement or ideology. At the same time, songs can call upon the listener to take action. Undoubtedly, patriotic songs have played an important role in the history of nations and, as noted by Sellnow and Sellnow (2001, 395), songs were sung to encourage slaves to run away from plantations, to make workers join trade unions, or, in the case of the 1960s protest songs, to send anti-war messages. Soldiers fighting for Poland's independence were also accompanied by a variety of military and patriotic songs, which gave them courage, expressed their longing for freedom and everyday life, mourned the dead and sustained soldiers' hope for victory (Leś-Runicka, Perończyk and Pacyniak 2018, 5).

In their analysis of Chinese patriotic songs, Kobzhitskaya, Koshel and Adilkhanian (2022) focus on the expression of pathos as “a specific rhetorical method for making speech more expressive and convincing” (Kobzhitskaya et al. 2022, 1). The songs they analyse contain a number of tropes, including “hyperboles, metaphors, reinterpretations and comparisons” (Kobzhitskaya et al. 2022, 2), as well as references to Chinese history, geography and cultural symbols, such as the Great Wall of China, or the Yellow River and the Yangtze, depicted as “the two dragons” (Kobzhitskaya et al. 2022, 3). As Kobzhitskaya et al. (2022, 4) conclude, the emotional dominant in these songs is patriotism, whose components include, among others, heroism, youth, force, happiness, the defenders' power as well as service and sacrifice, the nation's cohesion and salvation, China's supremacy and uniqueness.

However, even popular music can inspire feelings of national identity, which is exemplified by the expression of Brazilianness in samba lyrics. As Azevedo Alvarenga and Bonilha Mazzotti (2019, 2) state in the introduction to their article, they analyse popular songs whose lyrics reflect the Brazilian cultural ethos, expressed in the romantic representation of social identity, praising unique Brazilian qualities, facing external threats to the Brazilian ethos, and “the transformation of an unfamiliar genre into a recognizable one.” They chose the samba, as it constitutes a part of Brazilian cultural identity. The lyrics quoted by them include, among others, “a national identity *personification* with a romantic nature, based on exaltation of people's qualities and on the feeling of complicity for inhabiting the same territory, speaking the same language and having a common history” (Azevedo Alvarenga and Bonilha Mazzotti 2019, 6), as well as elements associated with feelings of Brazilianness, such as the tambourine, the banana, the guitar and Copacabana, a beach in Rio de Janeiro. As they conclude, the rhetorical analysis

of selected samba lyrics makes it possible to expose the psychosocial processes of Brazilian identity construction, where musicality affirms social identity (Azevedo Alvarenga and Bonilha Mazzotti 2019, 10).

As for songs used in the fight against injustice, Nkoala (2020) analyses the rhetoric of two South African struggle songs from the apartheid period, concentrating on the means of persuasion. In the light of Aristotle's principles of rhetoric, she classifies one song as an example of deliberative rhetoric, warning the listeners of a possible future event; according to her, the song is dominated by ethos, as it focuses on "human character and goodness" (Nkoala 2020, 15). The other song is not classified into any of the main rhetorical appeals, ethos, pathos or logos, but as an example of forensic rhetoric, concerned with the past (Nkoala 2020, 12). However, it consists mainly of rhetorical questions, suggesting that there is no logical explanation of what black South Africans had done to deserve discrimination and harsh treatment and, in this form, the lyrics are even more persuasive (Nkoala 2020, 11-12).

Last but not least, another genre of music known for its specific rhetoric is rap, which, as noted by Brummett (2015, 252), "is loaded with social and political meanings bespeaking race, nationalism, and economic class, among other things." However, as he later adds, gangsta rap, which he analyses in more detail, though presenting itself as "a rhetoric of the real," actually perpetuates several falsehoods, such as violence, materialism and brutality constituting important parts of African American reality (Brummett 2015, 256). Yet, rap also has the potential of making a positive social critique and, consequently, combating racism, which some artists, in fact, choose to do (Brummett 2015, 261).

Indeed, rhetoric is often used for the purpose of persuasion, which can be realised in different ways. However, as Aristotle (*On Rhetoric* 1355b) observes, the function of rhetoric "is not to persuade but to see the available means of persuasion in each case." The means of persuasion, called "pisteis" (*On Rhetoric* 1356a), include ethos, that is, making the speaker credible through character as "almost, so to speak, the most authoritative form of persuasion" (*On Rhetoric* 1356a), pathos, which involves persuasion by evoking emotions in the listener, and logos, where arguments are given to show the recipient the truth or apparent truth. However, as was signalled in the introduction, song lyrics do not necessarily have to serve the purpose of persuasion or may do it indirectly. Following Aristotle (*On Rhetoric* 1355b), it can be assumed that, rather than analysing the means of persuasion used by Lila Downs in her lyrics, the present study had better focus on identifying the elements that might function as possible means of persuasion and classifying them in terms of logos, pathos or ethos.

3. Lila Downs and her music

Ana Lila Downs Sánchez, known as Lila Downs, is a versatile and internationally known Mexican singer. She was born in 1968 as the daughter of a Scottish-American professor of art and cinematographer and a Mexican Mixtec cabaret singer. She performs music of multiple genres and sings in Spanish, English as well as indigenous languages, including Mixtec, Zapotec, Nahuatl, Mayan and Purépecha. In addition to her musical activity, she is also known for her activism aimed at preserving Mixtec and other indigenous Mexican languages, as well as for her involvement in humanitarian causes and social and political activism. In some of her songs, she celebrates her Mixtec heritage (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lila_Downs).

According to Guevara (2014, 551), Lila Downs sets a new paradigm, fluctuating between Mexico and the United States and, “as a transnational artist performing for multiple audiences, challenges the rigid typologies/categories that typically define ethnicity.” By manipulating and combining different musical traditions, including Latin American folklore and pop, Downs has achieved a “multicultural fusion” (Guevara 2014, 552). Crossing the border between Mexico and the United States, on the one hand, and combining Mexican national culture with “regional Oaxacan ethnic and musical traditions,” on the other, she has formed “a hybrid ethnic identity” (Guevara 2014, 552). However, her ethnic identity is still being renegotiated, as she needs “to meet the expectations of both the Spanish-speaking media linked to an imagined Latino/a audience, and a US “mainstream news media” that caters to an imagined English-speaking audience” (Molina Guzmán 2006, 237, cited in Guevara 2014, 555). Guevara (2014, 557) emphasises that “Downs’ selection of genres and music styles is crafted to embody all facets of her identity politics.”

It is noteworthy that Lila Downs draws upon the generation of such Latin American folklorists as Mercedes Sosa, Atahualpa Yupanqui, Víctor Jara and Violeta Parra, known for their political commitment and opposition to the 1970s and 1980s Latin American military dictatorships, reflected in the music movement called “la nueva canción” (“the new song”) and “la nueva canción chilena” (“the new Chilean song”). Downs herself also shows her political involvement in some of her songs, such as *Dignificada (Dignified)*, a tribute to the human rights activist Digna Ochoa y Plácido, whose assassination, as suggested by the lyrics, the Mexican government tried to dismiss as a suicide (Guevara 2014, 557).

Another tragic event in Mexico’s history commemorated by Lila Downs’ music is the 1997 Acteal massacre, presented in the lyrics of *Smoke (Acteal)* (Downs 2001). As explained by the Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos

(The National Commission of Human Rights) (2023), on December 22, 1997, a paramilitary attack on defenceless civilians was perpetrated in the village of Acteal in the region Los Altos de Chiapas. In 1992, an organisation called Las Abejas (The Bees) had been formed to conduct a peaceful and non-violent pursuit of their rights to the territory, freedom of expression and autonomy. At that stage, dialogue, respect and negotiations led to the signature of the San Andrés Accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture in 1996. However, the Mexican government, headed by the then President Ernesto Zedillo, ignored the accords and intensified the militarisation of the zone, starting in February 1997. On December 22, 1997, members of Las Abejas were praying for peace in the municipality of Chenalhó, when soldiers wearing black and blue clothing to integrate into the community took strategic positions around the church and at 11 a.m. they started shooting at the defenceless men, women and children. They killed 45 people, including 21 women, four of whom were pregnant, 15 children and 9 men, while 25 people were seriously wounded. The state's involvement in the massacre was officially recognised as late as 2020, when the Undersecretary for Human Rights, Population and Migration, Alejandro Encinas Rodríguez, admitted the state's responsibility for the violation of fundamental human rights and apologised publicly. This event was followed by reparations for the survivors and "collective actions aimed at the social reconstruction of the community" (Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos 2023, 7, translation by the author).

It can thus be seen that Lila Downs' lyrics reflect, on the one hand, her Mexican identity and attachment to tradition and customs, however hybrid and transnational that identity may be, and, on the other, her social and political involvement. As the above examples show, her lyrics refer to important events and social problems in Mexico, so it can be assumed that, as in the case of the South African songs discussed by Nkoala (2020), moving the listener to reflection can be regarded as the use of rhetorical appeals in which potential means of persuasion could be identified.

4. The analysis of rhetorical appeals in Lila Downs' lyrics

4.1. The material under analysis

The present study analyses the lyrics of sixteen songs by Lila Downs, fourteen of which are in Spanish: *La niña* (1998), *Pinotepa* (1999), *La línea* (2001), *Tránsito* (2001), *El bracero fracasado* (2001), *Dignificada* (2004), *La cumbia del mole* (2006), *Mezcalito* (2011), *Zapata se queda* (2011), *La Patria Madrina* (2015), *Envidia* (2017), *Tus pencas* (2017), *Son de Juárez* (2017), *Resistiré México* (2020); and two are in English: *Smoke (Acteal)* (2001) and *Minimum Wage* (2008).

In the case of Spanish lyrics, an English translation of the relevant lines by the present author and, if necessary, an explanation will be provided. However, the translation is not artistic, but rather it aims to render the meanings of the excerpts as precisely as possible, often with a footnote explaining the meaning in more detail or presenting the possible interpretations.

The songs were chosen on the basis of, first, their relevance to Mexico in a broad sense, including Mexican identity, traditions, as well as the social and political situation, given Lila Downs' activism mentioned in Section 3 above, and, second, the presence of rhetorical appeals categorisable as logos, pathos or ethos. In fact, just as Azevedo Alvarenga and Bonilha Mazzotti (2019, 2) emphasise that samba lyrics reflect the Brazilian cultural ethos, it might be assumed that Downs' lyrics evoking events in Mexican history, resistance against oppression, including mental resilience, etc. reflect the Mexican cultural ethos.

As already mentioned, the lyrics of *Smoke (Acteal)* and *Dignificada* (“Dignified”) refer to tragic events in Mexican history. *Envidia* (“Envy”) is more general and refers to the relations between white people and indigenous ones; however, it goes beyond Mexico, as it also mentions such ethnic groups as the Mapuche from Chile and the Lakota from North America. *Zapata se queda* (“Zapata stays”) evokes the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, so it might be regarded as a reflection of the Mexican ethos. *La niña* (“The girl”), *La línea* (“The line”), *El bracero fracasado* (“The frustrated unqualified farm labourer”), *Tránsito* (“Traffic”) and *Minimum Wage* deal with such questions as poverty, social injustice and emigration. On the other hand, *La Patria Madrina* (“Homeland the Godmother”) involves a combination of Latin American history and ethos with criticism of contemporary consumerism and the resulting destruction of the environment. On the other hand, *Pinotepa*, *Mezcalito* (“Little mezcal”), *La cumbia del mole* (“The cumbia of the mole sauce”), *Tus pencas* (“Your leaves”) and *Son de Juárez* (“Sound of Juárez”) are songs about Mexico, its cities (Pinotepa Nacional and Oaxaca de Juárez), national dishes (mole, a Mexican sauce; cumbia being a Latin American musical genre) and drinks (mezcal, an alcoholic drink made from agave, or pulque, “an alcoholic beverage made from the fermented sap of the maguey (agave)” plant (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulque>); here, a penca is the thick leaf of such plants as the agave or the prickly pear, <https://dle.rae.es/penca>). Finally, *Resistiré México* (“I will resist, Mexico”) was a collective project of Mexican artists realised during the pandemic and encouraging the listener to stay strong and resilient in the face of adversity.

4.2. Research questions and analysis criteria

The study aims to answer the following research questions: 1. What rhetorical appeals can be identified in the lyrics? 2. How are logos, pathos and ethos expressed in the lyrics of the songs analysed here? 3. To what extent can such lyrics be regarded as potential means of persuasion and to what extent are they simply expressive texts which mainly serve to evoke particular emotions?

The criteria of analysis are based on the general characteristics of logos, ethos and pathos. As was mentioned in the introduction, lyrics which appeal to reason are classified here as logos, those which appeal to the listeners' emotions represent pathos, and those which are based on character, including the idealised characters of historical figures as well as traits associated with the cultural ethos, are classified as ethos. Thus, passages which refer to Mexico's history and tradition, including religious beliefs and traditions, are regarded here as examples of ethos. On the other hand, passages expressing feelings or presenting scenes which can evoke certain feelings in the listener are examples of pathos. It might be assumed that logos is not very strongly represented in lyrics functioning as expressive rather than operative texts, but still, facts presented in such a way as to inform the listener rather than to move them can be treated as instances of logos. Certainly, as was mentioned above, following Aristotle (*On Rhetoric* 1355b), the analysis is not going to focus on persuasion, as an investigation of listeners' reactions goes beyond the scope of the study, but on identifying potential means of persuasion in the lyrics.

Finally, since the rhetorical appeals might be interpreted differently by different listeners and, moreover, some passages in the lyrics might possibly belong to more than one category depending on their interpretation (for example, what seems an appeal to reason to one recipient might evoke emotions in another), the analysis is qualitative, focusing on the ways of expressing the rhetorical appeals of logos, pathos and ethos rather than on their numbers in the material being analysed.

4.3. Results and discussion

First of all, songs, being expressive texts, certainly contain appeals to emotion. Selected examples of pathos are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Examples of pathos in Lila Downs' song lyrics

No.	Song	Example
1.	La cumbia del mole	<p>A mi me gusta el mole que Soledad me va a moler A mi me gusta el mole que Soledad me va a moler</p> <p>Mi querida Soledad Me va a guisar un molito Por el cielo de Monte Albán De noche sueño contigo</p> <p>(I like the <i>mole</i> sauce that Soledad is going to grind for me [repeated])</p> <p>My dear Soledad Is going to stew a little¹ <i>mole</i> sauce for me By the sky of Monte Albán I dream about you at night)</p>
2.	Tránsito	<p>Lloro a mi patria querida Por lo lejos que estoy de ella Con el alma entristecida También lloro por aquella Que por mí se anda perdida Y yo perdido por ella (I am crying for my beloved homeland Far away as I am from it With my saddened soul I am also crying for the one Who is² lost for me And I am lost for her)</p>
3.	La Patria Madrina	<p>Hoy me levanté con el ojo pegado Ya miré el infierno, ya miré las noticias Fosas, muertos, daño a madre naturaleza Ambición, poder y a mí me agarró la depre (Today I got up with a glued eye (or: an eye sticky with pus³) I looked at hell, I watched the news Pits, the dead, harm to Mother Nature, Ambition, power, and I got depressed)</p>
4.	La Patria Madrina	<p>Tu eres la patria de toda mi ilusión El que no respete le parto el corazón (You are the homeland of all my hopes⁴ He who does not respect you, I will cut (literally: split, cut in half) his heart)</p>
5.	Smoke (Acteal)	Oh axe of our fire, bring justice to life

1. A diminutive which does not refer to the amount of sauce but rather expresses the author's positive emotional attitude to it.

2. The form "se anda" (literally: goes around) implies continuity or duration.

3. Literally "a glued eye," but in English it would suggest having one's eyes glued to something, i.e. watching it closely, which is also a possible interpretation in the context of watching the news.

4. In Spanish, "ilusión" can mean both "illusion" and "hope" or "desire" (<https://dle.rae.es/ilusi%C3%B3n>). In the context of the song, the most plausible interpretation would be hope (or, more broadly, hopes) connected with a positive image of the homeland.

6.	La niña	Hay melena negra carita triste Rosa María Buscando vives tus días y noches una salida Que un domingo libra este infierno tuyo por tu alegría Maquiladora solo un recuerdo será algún día (There is black hair, a little sad face, Rosa María You live your days and nights, looking for a way out May you be liberated one Sunday from this hell of yours by your joy, The <i>maquiladora</i> will only be a memory one day)
7.	Dignificada	Allá en la noche un grito Y se escucha lejano Cuentan al sur Es la voz del silencio (There in the night a cry And it is heard far away They say in the South It is the voice of silence)
8.	Son de Juárez	En mi memoria el tiempo corre Soy el aroma de cedro y de copal Sagrado mi derecho de pensar (In my memory time flies I am the aroma of cedar and copal Sacred is my right to think)
9.	Envidia	Es que me tienes envidia Viste, la vida sonríe Y mi corazón es feliz (In fact, you ⁵ envy me You saw, life is smiling And my heart is happy)
10.	La línea	¡O qué maravilla es esta! Lo que el TLC provocó (Oh, what a marvel this is! The one produced by the Free Trade Agreement)

As the above examples show, the lyrics express the sender's feelings, which may also be expected to be shared with the listeners. (The general term "sender" is used here, as it cannot be assumed that these are necessarily the feelings of Lila Downs herself. Even though this might be the case, the lyrics could also express, for instance, the feelings of a hypothetical Mexican emigrant to the U.S.).

In Example 1, the sender says she likes the *mole* sauce Soledad is going to grind for her and later adds that her dear Soledad is going to stew a little sauce for her; by the sky of Monte Albán (an archeological site near Oaxaca, Rybski 2023), she dreams about the addressee at night. On the one hand, this may be an expression of the sender's emotions related to traditional Mexican food, a specific place and person, but, on the other hand, the name Soledad means loneliness, so the lyrics may also express loneliness and nostalgia, and possibly evoke similar feelings in the listener. Similar feelings can be found in Example 2, where a Mexican says: "I am crying for my beloved homeland, far away as I am from it, with my saddened

5. "Es que" (literally: it is that...) is a linking expression which serves to emphasise the statement.

soul I am also crying for the one who is lost for me and I am lost for her.” Similarly, in Example 8, the sender feels nostalgia: “in my memory time flies, I am the aroma of the cedar and of copal [a tree resin from Mexico]; sacred is my right to think” (the present author’s translation). The metaphor of the sender being an aroma and the non-canonical word order strengthen its emotional impact.

In Examples 3 and 4, the sender expresses their⁶ horror at the destruction of nature and his or her love for the homeland respectively. The sender got up with his or her eye glued, looked at hell, watched the news, saw pits, the dead, harm to Mother Nature, and the ambition and power depressed him or her. In Example 4, the sender addresses the homeland of all his or her hopes and threatens to cut the heart of anyone who disrespects it. These hyperboles are supposed to evoke strong emotions in the listener as well.

Examples 5, 6 and 7 are expressions of despair and/or protest against injustice and oppression. In 5, surviving inhabitants of Acteal demand justice; the metaphor “axe of our fire” is likely to have a stronger effect on the addressee than a non-metaphorical statement. In 6, the sender addresses the girl, Rosa María, with black hair and a sad face, who looks day and night for a way out; the sender wishes her that one Sunday, she should be freed from that hell by her joy and that the maquiladora should be only a memory. Example 7 refers to the murder of Digna Ochoa y Plácido: a distant cry is heard at night and in the South they say it is the voice of silence. The metaphor “la voz del silencio” (the voice of silence) alludes to the silencing of voices demanding justice for the victim and increases the emotional load of the lyrics.

In Example 9, the sender stresses the fact that it is the white person who envies the Native American: “in fact, you envy me; you saw, life is smiling and my heart is happy” (the present author’s translation). Not only does the sender express his or her happiness, but the personification of life as a smiling person evokes a vivid image which appeals to the listener’s emotions.

Finally, in Example 10, the apparent exclamation of delight is followed by a phrase which reveals its ironic character: “Oh, what a marvel this is! The one produced by the Free Trade Agreement” (the present author’s translation). Arguably, the irony stresses the sender’s bitterness and increases the emotional impact of the song on the addressee.

By contrast, such songs as *Tus pencas*, *Pinotepa* and *Mezcalito* consist practically entirely of appeals to emotion. On the one hand, they simply express the sender’s feelings for a loved one, for a particular place in Mexico, or for some aspects of Mexico (its nature, food, drinks, etc.). On the other hand, their purpose may be

6. Lila Downs recorded this song with Juanes.

predominantly entertainment and thus emotional reception, which might confirm Sellnow and Sellnow's (2001) observation. *Mezcalito* is an exception here, though, as it also contains short passages classifiable as ethos (evoking the Virgin Mary, titled "la Virgen de los Remedios" (Our Lady of Remedies)) and logos ("Dicen que tomando pierdes la cabeza y el dinero" ("They say that drinking you lose your head and your money")), which suggests other people's attempts to dissuade the sender from drinking mezcal.

The second type of rhetorical appeals analysed here is ethos. As was noted above, Lila Downs' songs contain a number of references to historical figures who may be regarded as examples of character or moral authority. Some examples are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Examples of ethos in Lila Downs' song lyrics

No.	Song	Example
1.	La Patria Madrina	¿Cuáles son los ideales de los latinoamericanos? ¡Mis hermanitos! El sueño de Simón Bolívar, José Martí, Vicente Guerrero (What are the Latin Americans' ideals? My little brothers! The dream of Simón Bolívar, José Martí, Vicente Guerrero)
2.	Zapata se queda	Serás tú Zapata Él que escucho aquí Con tu luz perpetua Que en tus ojos ví (Could it be you, Zapata, The one I hear here With your perpetual light Which I saw in your eyes)
3.	Smoke (Acteal)	Our wise people say that the mouth of the earth Has swallowed her fruit, but the eagle and snake Will stand for the truth, when the mother of corn has spoken
4.	Son de Juárez	Es su retrato, Benito Juárez Es el hermano de Guelatao Amusgo Zapoteco Mixteco Triqui Chocho Zoque Mazateco Chontal Hayuc Chinanteco Náhuatl Huave Chatín Tacuate Cuicateco (It is his portrait, Benito Juárez It is the brother of Guelatao [what follows are the names of different ethnic groups living in Mexico])

5.	Envidia	<p>A mí se me respeta Lakota, Inca, Azteca, Mapuche, Maya; mi herencia es una advertencia El mundo no se acaba porque yo no lo permito Yo soy las lágrimas en esta piedra Y danzaré este ritmo a la madre tierra (I am respected Lakota, Inca, Aztec, Mapuche, Maya; my heritage is a warning The world does not end because I do not allow it I am the tears on this stone And I will dance this rhythm for Mother Earth)</p>
6.	La línea	<p>Flor de maíz El cielo te está cuidando Llano de lumbre La tierra que te parió (Maize flower Heaven watches over you The grassy plain of fire The soil that gave birth to you)</p>

Examples 1, 2 and 4 evoke the Mexican and Latin American heroes Simón Bolívar, called “El Libertador” (The Liberator), the Cuban writer and poet José Martí, the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata and the former Mexican presidents Vicente Guerrero and Benito Juárez. Example 1 concerns the cultural ethos of Latin America, exemplified by its heroes: “What are the Latin Americans’ ideals? My little brothers! The dream of Simón Bolívar, José Martí, Vicente Guerrero” (the present author’s translation). Example 2 suggests that Zapata is still present: “Could it be you, Zapata, the one I hear here, with your perpetual light, which I saw in your eyes?” (the present author’s translation). On the other hand, Example 4 mentions Benito Juárez, after whom the city of Oaxaca de Juárez was named, followed by a list of indigenous ethnic groups: “It is his portrait, Benito Juárez, it is the brother of Guelatao” (the present author’s translation). In fact, Guelatao is not a person but the name of a municipality whose seat, San Pablo Guelatao, is the town where Benito Juárez was born (Scholes 2023). Another excerpt which evokes Native American nations and their heritage is Example 5: “I am respected. Lakota, Inca, Aztec, Mapuche, Maya; my heritage is a warning. The world does not end because I do not allow it. I am the tears on this stone and I will dance this rhythm for Mother Earth” (the present author’s translation). This shows that the power of Native Americans and the strength of their character: in spite of hardship, they maintain their tradition and gain respect.

The last two examples of ethos, 3 and 6, refer to traditional wisdom and indigenous people’s beliefs. Extract 3 quotes what wise people say: “the eagle and snake will stand for the truth,” which symbolises persistence in fighting for the truth about the Acteal massacre. The wise people are an authority whose opinions are relied on. In 6, strength and protection come from both heaven and earth: “Maize flower, heaven watches over you, the grassy plain of fire, the soil that gave birth to you” (the present author’s translation).

Moreover, even though logos might not be a rhetorical appeal readily associated with song lyrics, there are also examples in which logical arguments and a depiction of the situation can be assumed to aim to convince the listener. Some examples are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Examples of logos in Lila Downs' song lyrics

No.	Song	Example
1.	La Patria Madrina	Todos quieren tajo del petróleo business Y a quemar la madre tierra con urgencia Para hacer más carros, para gastar más dinero Como si pudieras comprarte la felicidad (Everybody wants a piece (literally: a cut) of the petroleum business And to burn Mother Earth urgently, To make more cars, to spend more money As if you could buy happiness)
2.	Smoke (Acteal)	More women and children were killed on that night More than they could count when they threw 'em in trucks Some children were kneeling,
3.	Smoke (Acteal)	For we know that power Was once sacrifice and it was sacrifice And it was sacrifice of our people
4.	La niña	Desde temprano la niña reza Pa'que su día, no sea tan largo Y con la luz de madrugada Hace limpieza de sus encargos (From the early morning the girl prays For her day not to be so long And with the light of dawn She does her cleaning duties)
5.	Dignificada	En este armario hay un gato encerrado ⁷ Porque una mujer Porque una mujer Defendió su derecho (In the cupboard, there is a skeleton Because a woman Because a woman Defended her right)
6.	Minimum Wage	They're a long, long way from home now But they lookin' to be free California, Alabama and Missouri, Oregon They been workin' like their fathers were A long, long time ago
7.	El bracero fracasado	Me paraba en las esquinas Para ver a quien gorreaba Los pescuezos de gallina (I would stop in the corners To see someone who was scrounging Chicken necks)

7. This is an idiomatic expression in Spanish. It literally means: "In this wardrobe, there is a cat locked in."

The above examples reflect Lila Downs' social activism and criticism. The first example denounces consumerism, which results in the destruction of the environment: "Everybody wants to have a piece of the petroleum business and to burn Mother Earth urgently, to make more cars, to spend more money, as if you could buy happiness" (the present author's translation). The hyperbole "to burn Mother Earth urgently" emphasises Downs' critical attitude. In a similar vein, Examples 4 and 6 reflect the exploitation of workers in Latin America and in the United States respectively. In 4, "from the early morning, the girl prays for her day not to be so long, and with the light of dawn, she does her cleaning duties" (the present author's translation). In 6, the use of colloquial forms (lookin', workin') makes the impression that the song may have been composed and sung by the poor labourers themselves. Example 7, from the lyrics of *El bracero fracasado*, written in the first person, reflects the narrator's desperate attempts to avoid capture by the police and starvation: "I would stop in the corners to see someone who was scrounging chicken necks" (the present author's translation).

By contrast, Examples 2, 3 and 5 denounce murders in which the Mexican state was involved but denied it. Example 2 stresses the number of the people who were killed – too many to be counted – and the fact that "some children were kneeling," which emphasises the victims' innocence and the fact that they were praying when they were attacked. Numbers undoubtedly appeal to reason, while killing innocent children – however emotional the description might seem – seems particularly unfair and illogical, so the argument is predominantly reasonable. On the other hand, Example 3 aims to give hope, but by referring to knowledge ("we know"), it can be classified as a case of *logos*. Example 5 starts with an idiomatic expression which gives it some emotional charge, but on the whole, it appeals to reason, even though defending her rights does not seem a logical explanation of Digna Ochoa y Plácido's assassination. Rather, it stresses the illogicality of the situation: "In the cupboard, there is a skeleton [or, alternatively: something smells fishy] because a woman, because a woman defended her right" (the present author's translation).

Last but not least, there are also passages which cannot unequivocally be attributed to any of the rhetorical appeals, as they include two or even all three of them. Some examples are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Examples of combined rhetorical appeals

No.	Song	Example	Rhetorical appeals
1.	Zapata se queda	<p>Cuando sueño contigo Se dibuja el sereno Por todo mi camino</p> <p>Cuando sueño contigo No hay ni miedo ni duda Sobre mi destino</p> <p>(When I dream about you Calm appears All along my way</p> <p>When I dream about you, There is neither fear nor doubt About my destiny)</p>	Ethos and pathos
2.	Resistiré México	<p>Esto es pa' todo el mundo, señoras y señores Así como dice la canción, tú canta y no llores Cuidemos el jardín pa' que siempre nos de flores Después de la tormenta sé que habrá tiempos mejores Cuando pierda todas las partidas Cuando duerma con la soledad Cuando se me cierren las salidas Y la noche no me deje en paz</p> <p>(This is for everyone, ladies and gentlemen, As the song says, sing and do not cry Let us look after the garden so that it will always give us flowers After the storm, I know there will be better times, When I lose all matches [or: games] When I sleep with loneliness When all my exits close And the night does not leave me in peace)</p>	Logos, pathos and to some extent ethos
3.	Smoke (Acteal)	<p>Yet silence is deep as the hundreds of souls And the hundreds of hopes of our people Now every one's waiting and hoping for justice But will there be goodness where men kill their own?</p>	Pathos and logos
4.	Dignificada	<p>Que me doy mi lugar porque yo soy mujer Y todo lo que me pasa no me lo puedo creer Tanto tú y la mentira y los cholos me ven Si lo quiero o no quiero es mi gusto querer (I give myself my place because I am a woman And I cannot believe everything that happens to me; you as well as the lie and the <i>cholos</i> see me Whether I want it or not, it is up to me)</p>	Pathos and logos
5.	Son de Juárez	<p>El respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz En México tenemos orgullo de amar (Respect for others' rights is peace In Mexico we are proud to love)</p>	Ethos and pathos
6.	La línea	<p>Que un niño de ojos de luna Palabra de flor cantó: "Este mundo material Solamente es pasajero" (That a child with moon eyes sang flower words: "This material world is only transient")</p>	Ethos, logos and to some extent pathos

7.	Envidia	<p>Todo lo que hago para ti es una afrenta Y para nada, yo ya no te debo a ti Si sabes bien y ya me conoces ¿pa' qué me invitas a tu fiesta de infeliz? (Everything I do for you is an affront And it is no use, I do not owe you anything If you know it well and already know me Why do you invite me to your unhappy person's party?)</p>	Pathos and logos
8.	Minimum Wage	<p>When I left my dad in Jersey And my sister in Des Moines They've been workin' in this country Pickin' lettuce, washing floors</p>	Pathos and logos

Firstly, Examples 1 and 5 are combinations of ethos and pathos. In 1, the sender addresses Emiliano Zapata, so the appeal is made to an idealised revolutionary character. However, the statement reflects the sender's emotions rather than treating Zapata as an authority or a model of behaviour: when she dreams about Zapata, calm appears all along her way, and there is neither fear nor doubt about her destiny. On the other hand, Example 5 indicates that respecting others' rights and being proud to love is part of the Mexican ethos: "Respect for others' rights is peace; in Mexico we are proud to love" (the present author's translation).

Secondly, Examples 3, 4, 7 and 8 combine pathos and logos. In 3, the rhetorical question "But will there be goodness where men kill their own?" suggests that killing members of one's nation will not end well, which is reasonable (logos). However, the simile: "Yet silence is deep as the hundreds of souls And the hundreds of hopes of our people" evokes an emotional response (pathos), as neither silence nor souls can literally be deep. Example 4 expresses a complaint combining chagrin (pathos) with the search for a logical solution (logos): "I give myself my place because I am a woman and I cannot believe everything that happens to me; you as well as the lie and the cholos [indigenous people adopting Western ways] see me; whether I want it or not, it is up to me" (the present author's translation). In Example 7, the sender appeals both to the addressee's reason and emotions: "Everything I do for you is an affront, and it is no use, I do not owe you anything; if you know it well and already know me, why do you invite me to your unhappy person's party?" (the present author's translation). In 8, the sender apparently presents facts about his father and sister, but, at the same time, the language is emotionally charged ("my dad") and colloquial (workin', pickin').

Finally, Examples 2 and 6 combine all three rhetorical appeals: pathos, ethos and logos. Example 2 serves as a consolation and encouragement: "This is for everyone, ladies and gentlemen, as the song says, sing and do not cry; let us look after the garden so that it will always give us flowers; after the storm, I know there will be better times, when I lose all matches, when I sleep with loneliness, when all my exits close and the night does not leave me in peace." On the one hand, the

sender expresses feelings of anxiety, unhappiness and unrest, which are supposed to be shared by the listener (pathos). On the other hand, the song appeals to character and evokes a song as an external source of wisdom (ethos), but emphasising the sender's knowledge that there will be better times constitutes an appeal to reason (logos). Similarly, in Example 6: "That a child with moon eyes sang flower words: "This material world is only transient"" (the present author's translation), the child with moon eyes is a symbolic character from indigenous mythology, who, at the same time, is quoted as an authority (ethos). His words of wisdom are metaphorically described as "flower words," which do not add reason or authority to his statement, but, as flowers and words belong to different conceptual domains (Brinton and Brinton 2010, 178), the noun phrase is metaphorical and strengthens the emotional appeal, especially because it is sung rather than spoken (pathos). However, the child's words themselves carry a philosophical message (logos).

5. Conclusions

As the above analysis shows, first, Lila Downs' song lyrics contain all three types of rhetorical appeals: pathos, ethos and logos, as well as a number of borderline cases, which constitute combinations of more than one type. In fact, the interplay between these rhetorical appeals can be quite subtle, as the purpose of song lyrics is not persuasion but mainly entertainment and/or the expression of emotions, even if a particular song may be more serious and involve social criticism. Even some arguments and explanations classified as logos are not purely rational, as the use of such linguistic means as hyperbole or colloquial language aim to strengthen the listeners' emotional response. However, there are also songs which are generally emotional in character and can be put in the category of pathos. Moreover, such songs as *Smoke (Acteal)* and *Dignificada* do not serve entertainment purposes, as they refer to tragic events. Nevertheless, they also combine rhetorical appeals, for example, to reinforce the presentation of facts and arguments (logos) with references to traditional wisdom and wise old people or ancestors (ethos) and vivid images appealing to emotion (pathos).

Second, as a consequence of this complex interplay, logos, pathos and ethos are often expressed in ways which make them more difficult to identify and, rather than focusing on the meaning of a particular excerpt, one has to take into consideration the use of figurative language, such as metaphor, hyperbole, similes, etc. and their functions in a given song text. In general, Lila Downs uses a variety of language means to express her feelings and attitudes and to achieve the intended effect on the listener.

Third, whether her lyrics be regarded as potential means of persuasion or whether they are simply expressive texts which evoke particular emotions largely depends on the topic of each song. As Lila Downs' songs do not constitute political appeals (for example, for electoral purposes), persuasion is certainly not their main goal. However, following Aristotle (*On Rhetoric* 1355b), possible means of persuasion can indeed be identified in many of her songs. In fact, a song such as *La Patria Madrina* might make the listener reconsider his or her attitude towards nature and, for example, abandon consumerism.

As for the limitations of the present study and perspectives of future research, this study analyses sixteen songs, discussing only some excerpts in more detail. However, given Lila Downs' vast artistic output, more detailed and larger-scale investigations of rhetorical appeals in her song lyrics might make a significant contribution to the study of rhetoric and music. Moreover, her lyrics might be compared with those of other socially and politically engaged singers, also from countries other than Mexico. After all, rhetorical appeals in songs still seem to be a largely unexplored area and deserve more research.

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