



## ***La suave Patria: A Post-Revolutionary Poem.***

### *La suave Patria: un poema posrevolucionario.*

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The present work aims to point out that *La suave Patria* (1921) by Ramón López Velarde is a poem in which not only is there an affable song to the homeland, a predominant reading since its publication, but verses of social criticism with those who extol the necessary nationalist love at a time of national restructuring, such as was the post-revolutionary period in Mexico. In this way, it is true to point out that there is a patriotic loa in the text, thanks to the recurrence of traits of loving association with respect to the place of origin, but, also, it is correct to consider the evidence in the verses of a representation of the context in conflict to which it belongs, being irony the main tool that veils this criticism and the constant contradictions that give shape to this piece from Lopez-Velarde.

**Keywords:** Ramón López Velarde, Mexican poetry, nationalism, social criticism, Mexican Revolution.

#### **RESUMEN**

El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo señalar que *La suave Patria* (1921) de Ramón López Velarde es un poema en el que no solo se encuentra un cántico afable a la patria, lectura predominante desde su publicación, sino que en él conviven versos de crítica social con



aquellos que enaltecen el amor nacionalista necesario en un momento de reestructuración nacional, tal como lo fue el periodo posrevolucionario en México. De esta forma, es cierto señalar que existe una loa patriótica en el texto, gracias a la recurrencia de rasgos de asociación amorosa con respecto al lugar de origen, pero, también, es correcto considerar la evidencia en los versos de una representación del contexto en conflicto al que pertenece, siendo la ironía la herramienta principal que vele dicha crítica y las constantes contradicciones que dan forma a esta pieza lopezvelardeana.

**Palabras claves:** Ramón López Velarde, poesía mexicana, nacionalismo, crítica social, Revolución mexicana.

*La suave Patria* (1921)<sup>1</sup> by Ramón López Velarde (1986), has been a work that has received innumerable critical comments and analyses since its appearance. Even so, it is inevitable to revisit the text a hundred years after its publication in order to highlight that in the poem there is social criticism concerning the post-revolutionary context in which it is inscribed. The Lopezvelardean text was considered, throughout the twentieth century, as an intimate one that limited itself to evoking a past destroyed by the Revolution, that once provincial that contains the typically Mexican and is embraced and defended lovingly by the author. The affection poured into the verses has caused them to be the protagonists of the text, detracting from the relevance of those stanzas that allow the poem to be recognized as one, whose content involves social criticism.

The return to the past in *La suave Patria* appears as a utopia that, following Carlos Monsiváis, operates only at the literary level; he also points out that there is no idealization in the text because the content is offered only "as a poetic flow". Poetry promises this possibility, but, contrary to what is defended by the critic, it is also capable of transcending beyond the aesthetic perception that allows us to see in this text not only the harmonious convocation of the province, but the possibility of placing it in the place of the works that show in them represented the social conflicts of a time in transition.

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<sup>1</sup> *La Suave Patria* was originally published in the magazine *El Maestro* in 1921.



The present analysis does not intend to reveal "What did the author mean?", but to discover one of the perspectives offered by the text and to find out what the connotation of the province implies in a poem that emerged to satisfy a post-revolutionary nationalist project; Likewise, it seeks to recognize how the semantic contradictions exposed in the text operate, mainly those that work under the veil of irony, a resource that is impossible to ignore, thanks to the fact that it covers those moments revealing what can be considered the staging of the social situation of a moment of essential importance in the history of the country and in the reformulation of national identity.

### "The diaphanous Yesterday and the Anguished Today"

The theorist Gerard Genette, in his book *Thresholds* (2001), proposes that a paratext can respond to different categories, including the thematic titles with which the one exposed here is identified; that is, those that appeal to the content of the text. One can be faced with literal thematic titles, of association by synecdoche or metonymy, symbolic or antithetical according to their relationship with the development of the body of the work (p. 73). The link of synecdoche or metonymy and that of symbolic value are annulled as an alternative considering that, in the first case, there is no association between the title and any less central object that is within the poem; on the other hand, the second option, the symbolic, is discarded, because the paratext does not work as a metaphor with respect to the content.

The clear designation of the theme by the title could be thought of as a fact that returns literal to the paratext, this, thanks to the apparent obviousness that the central object of the poem is the homeland, which is undeniable, however, the *soft* adjective leads to consider the possibility that The *soft Homeland* corresponds to an antithetical title, thanks to the remarks that have been made regarding the presence of irony in the verses.

Irony is a figure of thought that allows "to presuppose from the subject the opposite of what the context demands" (Foxley, 2016, p.7); that is, it is a statement that provokes a semantic opposition, thanks to the contextual demands raised at the time of enunciation. Just as what is said syntagmatically is relevant to recognize irony, so the extratextual level serves as a revealing source of



meaning. The linguistic context of the title that occupies here does not allow to conjecture that we are facing two contradictory categories, it is not until observing that both contextual indicators in the development of the poem, as well as extratextual indications, contribute to the recognition that it is ironic to qualify the homeland as soft.

The figure of ironic discourse, following Søren Kierkegaard (2000), is characterized by "a certain superiority", because it appears as a resource that seeks to be understood, but not literally. He is a figure who disdains the plain discourse that in the act is understood by all, which, in addition:

[...] it is given in the highest circles as a prerogative belonging to the same category as the bon ton [good tone], which demands that one smile at unconsciousness and that virtue be seen as narrowness, even though, to some extent, one believes in it. (p. 288).

Irony can be presented by showing a relationship of opposition between the enunciator and the enunciated; thus, the ironist is able to appear to the outside world an attitude that is not his own. He "enjoys the total infinity of love, and the expansion that others seek in their confidants, he achieves in the fact that he has revealed loudly that he knows nothing" (p. 290). The lyrical voice of *La suave Patria* is enunciated with an initial "I" and resorts to the minimization of his gifts to begin his dissertations on the homeland:

I who only sang of the exquisite  
score of intimate decorum,  
today I raise my voice in the middle of the forum  
in the manner of the tenor who imitates  
5 the guttural modulation of the bass,  
to cut the epic a segment.

I will sail the civil waves  
with oars that do not weigh, because they go  
like the arms of chuan mail



10 who rowed the Spot with rifles.<sup>2</sup>

To the proemio correspond these verses, whose operation is given by the introductory character in which they are located. Ancient poetry used the prelude as an essay exercise so that the one who played the lyre began to captivate the jury. The story, with no apparent origin, opens with arbitrary words that begin the subsequent singing (Barthes, 1966, p. 32). In this proema, the lyrical subject resorts to the topic of false modesty, whose functionality is found in the same as the classical texts, where the formulas of "humility", "weakness" or "little preparation" allow the dwarfing of the speaker to gain the benevolence of the listener or reads.

The syntagma corresponding to the topic of false modesty is originally read as a resource whose existence responded to a necessary excuse determined by the literary tradition; however, we can speak of an evolution of the topic that transforms the poetic demand into a strategy that the context does not require, so it becomes ironic. In this way, this expression becomes subject to a process of relexicalization. According to Edmond Cros about the reworking of lexies:

[...] the way in which these expressions are sometimes de-lexicalized to be relexicalized with new forms within a text, under the evident effect of the deep structures of this text, makes more apparent the criteria of choice followed by the message in the paradigmatic axes at the moment in which it is instituted. (1986, 29).

The strategy of false modesty used by the lyrical voice is no longer read as an essential protocol form of the context, but as a useful resource to remember that the homeland is spoken to in a light tone and without reproach. In this way, at a time when it is necessary to revive patriotic love, subtly treating the homeland is a procedure that adapts to the didactic needs of post-revolutionary nationalism.

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<sup>2</sup> All the quotes that appear in this analysis of the poem "La suave Patria" by Ramón López Velarde are taken from the edition *Ramon Lopez Velarde. Works* (1986).



The exegesis to the second stanza of *La suave Patria* is already made and is nourished by the interpretations made by critics of the poem such as Octavio Paz, José Emilio Pacheco or Alfonso García Morales. The latter recalls the influence that exists, in this section of the proemio, of the French novel *Le chevalier Destouches* (1864), inspired by the theme of the rebellion of the Chuanes against the government of the French Revolution, a situation that could evidence the conservative position with which the lyrical voice is presented (García, 2011, para.18).

Paz's position before these verses is similar when he states:

*The soft Homeland* is not a hymn to national glories or disasters. At the beginning of the poem [...] he warns: "I will sail the civil waves with oars that do not weigh..." And it fulfills it: there are hardly any allusions to the political and social history of Mexico, nor to its heroes, caudillos, tyrants and redeemers. (1963, p. 14).

The defense that is made of the poem as an intimate text, which does not react to social circumstances, is pertinent when it is considered that one is not facing a work whose discourse is associated with social poetry, which finds its essence in the denunciation that it makes, loudly, of abuses and injustices committed by those who manipulate power. However, *La suave Patria* is a literary text that, as such, deviates from the statements that in reality are verifiable, to become a discursive practice that evidences a series of ideological contradictions between what should be and what objectively exists. Following Edmond Cros:

The literary text, like the discursive practice on which it is based, would stage the fiction of the imaginary solution of irreconcilable ideological contradictions. The function of literature would thus be to hide class domination under the guise of universality and unity. (1986, p. 43)

avoid showing that "segment" of history that is formed in the post-revolutionary context, confused by its nature. The contextual situation of the poem allows us to see how ironic is the paired stanza that follows from the warning to go light between the waves:

I will say with an epic mute  
12 the Homeland is impeccable and diamond.



The oxymoron that adds to the constant opposites raised in the text appears with a view to making discreet the sentence that attributes, as if in an unappealable way, the features of "impeccable" and "diamond" to the homeland. Hervé Le Corre (2010) states that "'cut [...] a segment' to the 'silent epic', undoubtedly prevents "La suave patria" [sic] from being a 'great' poem —because it is, to a certain extent, a programmatic and compromising poem"(p. 3). The programmatic position recognized in the poem responds to the evident evasion in lines that, rather than talking about the current situation of enunciation, resort to utopia and the defense of the present from the glories of the past. Likewise, the compromise is thought after the apparent null exposure of those political, social and economic factors that put in between said the validity of the adjectives assigned to the nation.

The mythical province evoked in the text appears more frequently than the paired stanzas or the tercets, where the irony is evident, from which the success that gives the poem is inferred, as the main contribution, the exercise of exaltation of Mexican nationalism, reason for the emergence of the text, and not well the celebration of it by the antithetical asomos that turn the poem into a game of constant oppositions.

The lyrical voice raises its relationship with the homeland from the evocation of a past time that becomes the Edenic space that serves as a paradigmatic example of what will henceforth respond to those motivations that support the need to declare love to the nation. If the current values in which the poem is inserted are not sufficient to legitimize attachment to the homeland, an appropriate resource will be to remember the scenes that glorify the past. Thus, not being able to paint the paradise lived without equivocation, the lyrical subject resorts to exposing an idealized representation of the distant world in the new territory, one characterized by being confusing and unpromising.

Suave Patria: allow it to envelop you  
in the deepest jungle music

15 You Modeled Me Entirely With



to the cadentious blow of the axes,  
between laughter and screams of girls  
and woodpeckers.

### First it was Paradise, then Earth

The cadence to which the movement of the axes alludes, the joy of the young women and the sound of the birds summoned in the proemio are characteristics that respond to images that configure a promised land that no longer exists, as observed in the course of the poem. This approach leads to associate the text with the topic arising from the poem *Paradise Lost* by the Englishman John Milton (1667). The text, of epic descent, mainly Virgilian, has as its main theme the fall of man and its consequences; as well as the enigmatic ways in which God intervenes in earthly life, this through the recovery of the myth of Adam and Eve. Accepting her exile, after eating from the forbidden tree, she laments:

Oh unexpected blow, worse than death! So I must abandon you, O Paradise! Abandon yourself in this way, you! O native soil, and to you enchanting alleys, forests worthy of being frequented by the gods! (2003, p.152).

Feelings of affliction, repentance and remorse were inserted into man's consciousness from succumbing to the seduction of the tree of life. The notion of lost good and earned evil would occupy a privileged place in his existential perception. The discourse of *La suave Patria* resorts to the remembrance of the good times and questions in the First Act:

Who, in the night that frightens the frog,  
he did not look, before he knew of the vice,  
40 from the arm of his girlfriend, the galana  
gunpowder from fireworks?



The look at the pleasant past shows the lack in the present of what could be identified as the Golden Age, in which, following Hesiod (700 b.C.) in his work "The Works and the Days", men could live as gods and possessed a calm spirit. They did not know about pain, work, or insufferable old age; likewise, they could enjoy all the goods and abundance of the fertile land that was shared among virtuous men (Hesiod, 2016, p. 9).

The classical satires took up utopia and updated the myth of the Golden Age in order to question the social conditions through which its context passed. The Greek writer Lucian (217 BC.C.), for example, deals with the theme of the Saturnal feasts in one of his dialogues. These festivities were celebrated every December in honor of Saturn; they were seven days in which opposites mingled: the rich invited the poor to their table, the slaves walked among the free, and the authorities were judged by the people.

Tradition deteriorated and inequalities could not be remedied even in those days. The perversion of the festival gave rise to a text, *Las Saturnales*, which made satire about economic inequalities from the reconsideration of a golden age in which Saturn ruled:

[...] when I reigned and when, without sowing or ploughing, the fruits of the earth came to them, a great indication of the fertility of that time. There was no straw, but the bread was born cooked, the meats stewed, the wine ran like river water, sources of honey and milk ran at every step, because men were all good and made of gold (Luciano quoted by Grigoriadu, 2010, p. 1074).

The concern of the inhabitants before the arrival of the celebration became latent, due to the economic inequalities that prevailed:

Well, it was more reason that first the goods that are now among the few were made common and, done this, then the feast was ordered to be published so that, with more decency, it would be celebrated. But the world is so that either we are ants or camels or, if you want more, we resemble the tragic representative who goes out to the public with a high coturno on one foot -which is the footwear of these tragedies-, and the other without coturno (ibid. p.1082).



The reconsideration of the benefits of the past as a strategy to denounce the weaknesses of the present is a resource used in *La suave Patria*. During the intermission, the poetic voice alludes to the pre-Hispanic world using the mythical figure of Cuauhtémoc:

75 Young grandfather: listen to me loarte,  
the only hero at the height of art.

Anachronistically, absurdly,  
to your nopal tilt the rose bush;  
to the language of white, you immantas  
80 and is a Supplier of Catholic Fountain  
that of responsos fills the victorial  
ash plinth of your plants.

Not like Caesar the patrician blush  
it covers your face in the midst of the ordeal:  
85 th naked head stays with us,  
hemispherically of currency.

Spiritual currency in which it is forged  
everything you suffered: the canoe  
prisoner, the scourge of your young,  
90 the sobbing of your mythologies,  
the Malinche, the Indians swimming,  
and above, to have unleashed you  
of the empress's curved chest  
like the chest of a quail.



The commemoration of the last Aztec emperor began before the end of the nineteenth century. End of century that represented the arrival of progress for the countries of the Western world and the consequent need to strengthen its own identity based on the roots that legitimized its essence in danger, thanks to the rapid installation of modernity. The look at the past became an inescapable exercise to understand the present, from which characters and events endowed with virtuous faculties resurfaced. By the way, Lara Campos (2017) mentions: "from the most remote past to the most immediate, any episode was susceptible to being rescued from oblivion or scholarly knowledge if national pedagogy could be done with it" (p.2).

The effectiveness of the civic formation in development lay in its installation in public spaces, where it was made accessible to the people in general and was no longer limited to elites or small places. The monument to Cuauhtémoc was presented as one of those "altars of the homeland" that rescued the indigenous past, in order to restore its importance above the Hispanic heritage (p. 3).

The formula of exaltation of the hero consisted in discrediting the Spanish enemy. In *La suave Patria*, the greatness of the past is installed in the present to oppose the image of Cuauhtémoc to all those figures who tried to hold the nickname of hero, but who were not up to the "height", that is, who did not hold the same values that led the Aztec emperor to be considered as the true hero.

The five stanzas of the intermission are a history lesson that allow us to celebrate the defeated in life who triumphs in posterity, a trait that can be considered as conformism, but that works as the applause to the merits of a defeated hero (De Aguinaga, 2016, p. 15). The reflections brought from the political plane give room to observations such as those that see how absurd it is, despite the triumph of the foreigner, that the image of that "young grandfather" emerges exposed not only as "a paradigmatic resistant: he is also, ultimately, an irresistible seducer at whose feet the enemy culture ends up surrendering, that "language of white" who, magnetized by the youth, dignity and beauty of the hero, professes to him a fervent devotion" (p. 15). The symbiotic relationship is complete when, in addition to seducing the other, the Catholic faith is impregnated in the beliefs of the Mexican and serves him to dedicate those responses inspired by the torment printed on the feet of the monument to Cuauhtémoc.



The iconography represents the figure of the Aztec hero in a monumental way, however, in *La suave Patria* the lyrical voice emphasizes that his honorable existence is engraved in a "spiritual coin" that encloses the history of the character. Alfonso García Morales (2011) points out that this is a reduction of its own to a miniaturist and anti-monumental tendency of the poem (Morales, para. 29). While it is true that dwarfing is a resource used in other verses, in the one dedicated to this historical figure it would be unsatisfactory considering that it is a passage, the only one, in which exaltation is perceived as serious in the enunciation.

Paradise transformed into Earth will be presented as a subverted Eden, in which there are no longer heroes and where modernity perverts the natural order of things. Following Roger Bartra, from subversion, capitalist industrial society creates or invents its own lost paradise to search in a mythical past for that primitive innocence and lost original order. This is how in the intermission of *La suave Patria* the remembrance of an exemplary mythical figure is used to show, as Ainsa points out with respect to bringing back the past, a present devoid of heroes at the height of art.

### **A nationalist stamp**

The first act of *La suave Patria* is a geographical description of a Mexican territory characterized by its contradictions. The landscape traced in the twelve stanzas of this section represents a scenario formed by an environment where there is room for a city and provincial view, and in which qualities of the Homeland are discovered. The idea of landscape demands the recognition of it as an exercise of subjective construction, that is, what is represented, whether pictorially, literarily or orally, is not there, but is the product of a series of ideas, feelings and sensations provoked by the relationship of the one who enunciates and the place and the elements that make it up (Maderuelo, 2005, p. 14) According to Javier Mederuelo: "The landscape is the result of contemplation that is exercised without any lucrative or speculative purpose, but for the mere pleasure of contemplating" (p. 14).

The problematization made from the different perspectives that study the landscape, has reached conclusions that allow it to be considered not only as a symbolic representation, but as an ideological and historical manifestation. To the contemplative delight, reductionist purpose that was



given to the landscape, is added a function of representation of space based on "the hegemonic social values of each era" (Di Giminiani and Fonck, 2015, p. 5). In this way, the one who expresses his vision of the landscape is representing for himself his perspective of the world, but, at the same time, he configures the one that others have of it, thus modeling their social relations (p. 5). From this point of view, the landscape will be understood as: "the reflection of dominant political ideals [that] allows to disprove the idea that the representations of the physical environment are neutral acts disconnected from other interests" (p. 5).

The promotion of nationalism in Mexico has been closely linked to landscape activity because of that "awareness of territoriality" that contributes to fostering the feeling of national identity. The reason is because it is necessary to create ties between the peoples and the landscape, because in this will be the history, aspirations, collective achievements and psychology of the inhabitants. The gaze turns to the landscape when it is necessary to legitimize a nationality in the process of construction or reconstruction (Ortega, 2009, p. 4)

The lyrical voice of *La suave Patria*, with an all-embracing look, adjectival heaven and earth, from which an open field print is created that contains the concrete and the abstract that conforms the nation:

Homeland: your surface is corn,  
20 your mines the palace of the King of Pentacles,  
and your sky, the herons in slip  
and the green lightning of parrots.

Agricultural Mesoamerica is based on the reality and myth present since pre-Hispanic times in which it is explained that the gods created man from corn. Grain, made known to man by the gods as a gift, is the principle of identity in the worldview of ancient Mexico. Since its discovery, corn has been the main food support of Mexicans, not in vain, then, it is claimed that this plant fills the soil of the homeland, a reminder of the importance of the main economic activity.



Mining, like agriculture, is present as an important component of the national landscape. The geological and tectonic characteristics of the Mexican territory allowed the existence of various mineral deposits, which made this activity one of the most practiced since pre-Hispanic times (Sánchez, Coll-Hurtado and Ramírez, 2003, p. 97). In *La suave Patria* the quality of wealth that promises self-sufficiency granted by agriculture and mining is raised from the appearance of the King of Pentacles.

The reconstruction in the collective ideology of agrarian life is a resource that seeks to invent a mythical Eden with the aim of combating the feeling of guilt that arose after its destruction, as well as to configure a homogenizing national character (Bartra, p. 34). For Roger Bartra, this strategy is indispensable "to bring order to a society convulsed by the rapid arrival of modernity and shaken by the contradictions of the new industrial life" (p. 34).

The province of *La suave Patria* is that subverted Eden from which an attempt is made to legitimize a national identity that refuses to enter completely into industrial life after the Mexican Revolution, because it is necessary to establish the characteristics of the genuineness of the national being before allowing another utopian model to revolutionize the existing or contaminate it. Thus, we will speak of an *archaeotopy*, defined by Bartra as:

[...] the imagination, today, of a previous and ancient place in which happiness reigns; but it is a past and withered happiness that rests in a deep mythical stratum, buried by the avalanche of the Mexican Revolution and for which we can only feel a melancholic emotion (Bartra, p. 34).

The couplet following the presentation of national wealth appears as a negative fact, because the divinity and its gift and evil and its concession come into opposition:

The Child God wrote you a stable  
24      and the oil veneros the devil.



Primitive economic practices, agriculture and mining, have a positive value in the face of the industrialization represented by the oil growers that, although the wealth of the natural scene, during the first decade of its exploitation, was the motive of the confrontation between General Manuel Peláez, one of the first negotiators of Mexican oil with foreign companies, and the Carranza government, which intended to consider hydrocarbon only as a national good. Thus, since its discovery, oil in Mexico has forged a history of dispute involving national and foreign interests, since hydrocarbons were considered of significant importance for industrial development. The Mexican subsoil was already glimpsed, during the first years of the twentieth century, as the objective of appropriation of the United States and other powers (UNAM, p.1).

Oil, rather than being considered in the poem as a good that generates wealth, like agriculture, is shown as a national evil, thanks to the relationship it is given with the devil. Likewise, the antagonism between good and evil, vice and virtue, although the latter not necessarily explained as good or bad, but presented as opposite traits, is evidenced in the following stanza:

About your Capital, every hour flies  
ojerosa and painted, in reel;  
and in your province, the clock in sail  
28 that haunt the colipavo pigeons,  
the chimes fall like pennies.

The reel of the capital alludes, as suggested by José Emilio Pacheco, to those blue flag reels that traveled along Madero Avenue in the early twentieth century, when they served as transport to the courtesans (Pacheco, 1999, p. 356). The mention of prostitutes in a city environment makes the city be exhibited in *La suave Patria* as that life that invites immorality. A post-revolutionary city that moved away from the known and created among its inhabitants nostalgia for the Porfirian past. According to Mauricio Tenorio: "the city was like an elegant and evil femme fatale waking up from a long parranda of revolutions and abuses, discovering herself as resacosa and untidy: everything to be remade" (2017, p. 150).



The province, for its part, boasts the calm of the bells of the Church and the virtue of Catholicism. Martha Canfield (2010) speaks of the poem as a protest in favor of the countryside and against the city (para. 5). In this way, the text, a centralist product, appeals to the topic "contempt of court and praise of the village", recognized from the notorious defense of the provincial virtues before the city, understood the latter as those of the imminent post-revolutionary industrialization.

The text "Contempt of cut..." by Antonio de Guevara (1539) points out the benefits of living in the village and speaks of the vices found in court life. The work is immersed in a conflictive context posed by the imperialism of Charles V and Franciscan practices. However, a utopian idea directed the political and social projects of both: the return to the Golden Age (Rabel, 1992, p. 1). The bonanza, fruit of the return to the golden age, was outside the court: "it is the privilege of the village that there are the most virtuous and least vicious men, which is not so true in the court and in the great republics, to give a thousand who hinder you the good and a hundred thousand who incite you to evil" (De Guevara, 2006, p.30)

The provincial homeland presented in *La suave Patria* is that stability that the Golden Age would promise if it had not been interrupted by the Revolution. The prosperity of the nation goes hand in hand with religion, the Catholicism that unifies. And this Catholic faith and love of the terror accepts resignation, as suggested by the following verses:

Homeland: your mutilated territory  
31 is dressed in percale and bead.

The relationship between the fabric and the accounts of little value and the province led Juan José Arreola to propose a return to the "original poverty" that represented an exercise of overcoming, but not as a suffering, but as a satisfactory action:

[...] The image of a people capable of living and reviving beyond injustice immediately emerges. The will to live in joy, wrapping and adorning poverty in percales and beads [...] means a laughing overcoming, one would almost say joyful: such galas belong to a tradition, and the



sumptuous tradition that culminates in the eighteenth century, become here popular ornamentation (Arreola, 1997, p. 95).

The simulation game proposed by Arreola based on the idea of a "fantasy" ornamentation made to Mexican territory also proposes the defense of tradition that does not accept rupture. A similar idea is raised by Canfield (2010), when he points out that the isotopy between percal-bead and homeland lead to suggest a single possibility: "The destroyed country is saved by returning to being peasant" (para. 35). Although it may be a couple of verses where the judgments are not favorable to the image given to the homeland, by opting for the defense of a return to the rural past, suggested by the scholars of the text, there is also the possibility of taking up what Bartra proposed, when he points out the immobilization before the industrialization that emerged from the Revolution. Believing that ensuring economic recovery in the peasant sector prevents us from glimpsing other possibilities that could be added to the rural one.

The exposition of the shortcomings of the homeland continues in the following stanza:

Suave Patria: your home still  
it is so big, that the train goes on the track  
34 as a toy store bonus.

The idea of *La suave Patria* as a text made solely to move and incite the national infatuation has led most of its scholars not to emphasize what they recognize as ironic. The poem, as Víctor Manuel Mendiola (2013) assures: "aroused a complex and contradictory emotion", however, the ideas of a text that:

[...] He advanced through areas difficult to understand, very baroque passages and unusual expressions [...] went almost unnoticed in the air of a fine, generous and light vision, in the form of one who gives a pleasant advice, with a weightlessness of faith, happiness and humor (para. 6).



The principle of opposites would have a place here when it is recognized that a text located in a conflictive moment can show paradoxes. While *La suave Patria* exalts characteristics that elevate the nationalist sense, it is also possible to find exposed the defects of the nation, a fact that does not imply the decision to love or hate what is evoked, but to have a complete perspective of the whole.

The previous statistic concerning the railway led Canfield to affirm that, thanks to a comprehensive look at the text, the land appears small and manipulable: "Large unpopulated lands where the train can be an event: everything is reduced to the dimension of a toy" (para. 12). Rather than accepting that image as an endearing revelation, it would be pertinent to question the minimization made to a large-scale transport such as the train. There is a critique of romantic monumentalism (Prado) and the conflict that represents the notion of the great homeland of the Mexican Revolution and the soft, small, manageable and childish as the toy.

The poetic strategy in *La suave Patria* can be described as one that plays between a coming and going that contemplates both features that elevate patriotic love and those that lead to questions about the social situation of the country. Both perspectives do not cease to be the national reality of the post-revolutionary moment, described from its different angles, which nourish the conflictive mosaic of the nation. This is how, after the minimization made to what should be the great homeland expected by the Revolution, we proceed to show what makes the nation invaluable, that is, the benefits of the mother country:

35     And in the hustle and bustle of the seasons,  
          with your mestizo look, you put  
          the immensity over hearts.

[...]

          Suave Patria: in your torrid feast  
          polychrome dolphin lights,  
          and with your blonde hair she marries  
45     the soul, tightrope walker,  
          and your two braids of tobacco tastes  
          offering mead all my briosas



breed of syrup dancers.

Your mud sounds like silver, and in your fist  
50 His loud misery is piggy bank;  
and in the early mornings of the terroir,  
in streets like mirrors, it empties  
the holy smell of the bakery.

When we are born, you give us notes,  
55 later, a paradise of compotes,  
and then you give yourself all whole,  
soft Homeland, cupboard and aviary.

To the sad and the happy you say yes,  
that in your language they prove of you  
60 the sting of sesame.

And your bridal sky, which when it thunders  
with frantic delights fills us!  
Thunder from our clouds, which bathes us  
of madness, drives the mountain crazy,  
65 requiebra the woman, heal the lunatic,  
incorporates the dead, asks for the Viaticum,  
and at last collapses the loggers  
of God, on the farmlands.  
Thunder of the storm: I hear in your complaints  
70 crunch the skeletons in pairs,  
I hear what's gone, what I still don't touch  
and the present time with its coconut belly,



and I hear in the leap of your coming and going,  
oh thunder, the roulette of my life.

The poetic voice does not use the male figure of the Revolution to describe the country. The text shows the rejection of mythology starring, following García Morales, by "the male who causes discord and violence" (García, para. 12). The lyrical voice chooses to affirm a homeland that adapts satisfactorily to the stereotype of the feminine. Immersed in its multiple oppositions: *The soft Homeland* manifests the antagonism between the two Marys that allude to the model, one positive and the other negative, of the Mexican woman.

The allusion to the Malinche in the middle of the poem as that part of what Was "suffered" by Cuauhtémoc evokes the myth that made her: "the Great Pagan Prostitute: she was the barragana of Hernán Cortés and has become the symbol of female betrayal" (Bartra, 2017, p. 202). The woman that the Mexican nation needs to preserve its virtue is not that Mary, but that protective woman-mother who appears in the poem capable of offering shelter to her children; a mother who with her polychrome landscapes and her daily gifts keeps the hearts of the people full, thus resorts to the allusion that confirms the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe as the protective symbol par excellence.

The woman, an allegory of virtue, is described in such a way that, without a doubt, it responds to the ideal feminine stereotype, since it will be from this that the qualities of the Homeland will spring. it is about the almost ethereal, innocent, decent and neat woman:

95     Suave Patria: you are worth the river  
          of the virtues of your wife;  
          your daughters go through like fairies,  
          or distilling an invisible alcohol,  
          clothed with the nets of your sun,  
100    cross like barbed wire bottles.

Soft Homeland: I love you not like a myth,  
but by your truth of blessed bread,



like a girl peeking out of the fence  
with the blouse running to the ear  
105 and the skirt down to the bone.

Inaccessible to dishonor, you flourish;  
I will believe in you, while a Mexican  
in your tampalo carry the folds  
from the store, at six in the morning,  
110 and when you release your luxury, be full  
the country, of the aroma of the premiere.

The protection and virtues of the mother-woman homeland do not guarantee the expected stability, on the contrary, the text shows the uncertainty suffered in the face of the drastic changes resulting from the Revolution and the arrival of modernity. The loss of the past, an uncertain future and an empty present are the certainties that a context in transition can guarantee. The idea is affirmed when it reads: "I hear what is gone, what I still do not touch / and the current hour with its coconut belly, / and I hear in the jump of your coming and going, / oh thunder, the roulette of my life". As well as in the following stanza:

Like the sota moza, Patria mía,  
in metal floor, you live a day,  
114 of miracle, like the lottery.

Chance is a recurring symptom that does not let go unnoticed the judgment that evidences in the verses the economic instability of the country. According to García Morales (2011), in the poem there is an opposition between Mexico's mining wealth and the random, which, on the contrary, results in the country's economy (García, para. 32). Gambling appears as a picturesque quality attributed to the Mexican who lives confident in "albures, raffles and lotteries, in tomorrow God will say" (DelHoyo, quoted by García, 2011, para. 32) that does not provide certainties, but full of hope.



Economic and political life seems to happen under the designs of chance, when the controls of certain decisions competent to the subject should arise from an accurate Executive power, however, as if it were a child's game, the infrastructure of the National Palace is represented from a minimization:

115 Your image, the National Palace,  
with your same greatness and with your equal  
height of child and thimble.

The researcher Eugenio del Hoyo refers to the incomplete construction of the building in question in 1921, assures that for a wide extension of land such as the one in which it was settled to have two floors was only disproportionate, an observation that in the poem does not go unnoticed (DelHoyo, cited by García, 2011, para. 33). However, says the analyst, what can be taken as an exercise in banal rhyme ("National", "equal" and "thimble") arouses interest in the paradox presented.

The contradiction happens in a similar way as with the tristic that involves the dimensions of the railway. In this third, again, the image of a building whose symbolism has an impact on the concept that can be had of national stability in a conflictive context such as the one evoked is minimized and compared with the height of a child, which implies the opposite of revolutionary impetus.

The landscape becomes important in the poem, since it is from its representation that what contrasts with how soft the homeland can offer will be highlighted. This conjecture leads to question the point of view of Ignacio Sánchez who points out that *La suave Patria* is: "the final point to a long genealogy of nationalist poetry of the landscape and, above all, the evidence of the exhaustion of that genealogy" (Sánchez, 2006, p.). The above, because it ensures that the text criticizes the landscape monumentalism used in the previous century in poems of national exaltation typical of romanticism. So it does not appeal to criticism through the landscape. He adds, in addition, that *La suave Patria* is not part of the literature that contributes to the constitution of the nation.



The poem, more than an end point, can be considered a full stop, as it innovated its aesthetics, but continued to maintain the same functionality of the preceding civic poetry. Although grandiloquent exhibitions of the landscape are avoided, it does not cease to resort to the fundamental ideas of nationalist roots, whose insertion in the text can be attributed to an exercise of propagation of a homogenizing feeling of belonging, which makes it a work that collaborates in the strengthening of patriotic love; that is, that the poem becomes a guideline in the loving conception that the State seeks to sow among the population towards the country during the post-revolutionary period.

The kinship that can be found with the stylistic proposal of the poem and romanticism, which does not allow the total remoteness proposed by Sánchez, is found in the fact that romanticism, as Roger Bartra (2017) points out, tended to discover in magical idealism a remedy to the tragedy of modern man, imbued in a gray reality, uncompromising and trivial. The formula made it possible to transform the universe into a pleasant metaphor (Bartra, p. 189). In this way, *La suave Patria* did not monumentalize the landscape as it was done in Balbuena's "La grandeza mexicana" (1604), a poem that intended, prior to romanticism, to build the image of New Spain before a foreign gaze.

### **Immobility, a guarantee of happiness**

From now on, until the culmination of the poem, the lyrical voice of *La suave Patria* will use the distinctive features of Catholic Mexicanness to remember that they can keep alive the belief of a prosperous and happy country:

It will give you, in the face of hunger and howitzer,  
119 a fig San Felipe de Jesús.

The legend evoked in this mystic assures that Felipe de Jesús was a man of excesses, so the mother wondered when these would end and he would go the right way, to which, incredulously, another woman assured that when a certain dried fig tree would bear fruit. Man, sensing the divine call, retired to preach and died as a martyr; death after which the plant sprouted (Canfield, para. 74). The similarity made between this history and the social moment that the country was going through



allows us to note, as Carmen de la Fuente points out, that, in the face of economic difficulties and the atrociousness of the war, the nation will be able to re-emerge because: "the people will always have as bulwarks the candor and faith emanating from their legends" (para. 74). Ironic or not, these two verses appear as the hopeful preamble that holds the following stanzas in which, again, the lyrical voice alludes to the benefits of the homeland with a festive tone:

120 Suave Patria, chia vendor:  
I want to kidnap you in opaque Lent,  
on a garañón, and with flask,  
and between police shots.

The violence exposed in these verses that involve weapons and an abduction is unusual, due to the absence of scenes like this during the poem, however, one more feature of Mexicanness is added to the panorama. The chia seller is the first of them, present as an indispensable element in the traditional chronicles of the nineteenth century (as an example: "A chia stall at Easter" by Guillermo Prieto).

The importance of Lent is also remembered and used as a background to carry out a social practice understood as "the theft of the bride", considered even in the twentieth century a traditional rural practice (for example, in Juchitán, Oaxaca or Torreón, Coahuila). The methods may be different, since the stallion as transport is replaced by other means less in line with that of the revolutionary male, who, as a rebellious rider, kidnapped women from ranches with or without their consent (Corona, 2013, para.9).

The virtue of the mother-woman's homeland is strengthened to affirm its protective character in the following verses:

Your guts don't deny asylum  
125 for the bird that the nursery buries  
in a box of thread reels,  
and our youth, crying, hidden



inside you the corpse made poma  
of birds that speak our same language.

- 130 If I drown in your joules, it goes down to me.  
from the orchard of your dense hairstyle  
freshness of rebozo and jar,  
and if I shiver, you let me wrap up  
in your incense breath
- 135 and on your fleshy rompopo lips.

National traditions and love of the terroir are entrenched in a promise of comfort in times of vulnerability. Sufficient action to propose the defense of what is had as it is presented, with the successes and failures inherent in all social conditions. The immutability sustained by costumbrismo and provincial Catholicism proposes the need to preserve intact the nature of things, which evades the arrival of modernity and the possible religious influence of other latitudes to save the soul and style of a believing people:

For your balcony of blessed palms  
on Palm Sunday, I parade  
full of shade, because you trepidas.

- 140 They want to die your soul and your style,  
which die go the singers  
than at fairs, with the brave chest  
by impitonando the shirt, they have made  
the lust and the rhythm of the hours.

- 145 Homeland, I give you the key to your bliss:  
always be the same, faithful to your daily mirror;  
fifty times the Bird is the same



drilled into the thread of the rosary,  
and is happier than you, Soft Homeland.

Be equal and faithful; pupils of abandonment;  
150 thirsty voice, the trigarante girdle girdle  
in your steamed breasts; and a throne  
outdoors, like a rattle:  
the straw allegorical cart!

Immobility, as Fernando Ainsa (1998) points out, guarantees the stay in Paradise and, therefore, in the Golden Age. It is, according to the researcher, "an order that is basically that of all the cycles of nature that mark the seasons of the year and the rhythm of harvests that are repeated monotonously, following divine laws" (p. 87)

The antagonism between an here, raised from a post-revolutionary context, and an there, prior to 1921, is presented in *La suave Patria* from the omen of death of the "anima" and the "style" of the homeland. The place from which the virtues of the homeland are enunciated allows us to conclude that what does not correspond to these qualities appear as the negative, because the past, contained in the defended province, is diluted before a threatening future.

The poem contains a problematization derived from the conflict between tradition and modernity. The discourse of modernity accompanies the development of Mexico since the viceregal era of the eighteenth century (Pérez-Rayón, s/f, p. 1). Specifically, from 1900 this topic was understood as progress in the field of health; the construction of useful public works and ornamentation; military effectiveness; progress in the air and land channels of communication; biological, physical, chemical and astronomical discoveries; among others, which promised insertion in a civilized culture (Pérez-Rayón, n.d.).

*La suave Patria* is a conservative nationalist poem, whose context of production agrees with what is stated in the text. Of the elements of the conservative culture of the twenties, which are recognizable in the poem stand out: Catholicism, faith in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which is



conferred the interpretation of the real and leads to reprove secularism and liberalism in defense of morality; the Virgin of Guadalupe as the summit of the religiosity of the people; the spiritual distancing from the capital and its vices. (Monsiváis, 2008, p. 38).

The poem manifests the cultural consciousness of the early twentieth century, witness to the process of transformation caused by the arrival of modernity. The text raises the concern of a change in traditional values, expressed through landscape and customs, put at risk by a contradictory post-revolutionary context that rather than giving a structured and formal welcome to the new State is chaotic. So the only sure route to move towards an uncertain future is the preservation of the values cultivated since ancient times and strengthened by the Catholic faith: homogenizing banner of Mexican society.

The theatrical composition of the poem (Proemio, First Act, Intermediate and Second Act) leads to consider *La suave Patria* as a scenic representation where the Homeland is the main character; installed in a scenography that exposes the Mexican landscape, its color and its flavors. With extensive remarks that define the affable characteristics of a kind mother country. A staging, where, in addition, the paired stanzas function as the Greek choir that made known to the public the parts of the story that it was not possible to identify on stage and that, in the poem, are those rough parts that obscure the picturesque panorama that the nation should be: a Catholic province far from vice, a virtuous childhood safeguarded by the essentially Mexican.

## Conclusions

*La suave Patria* by Ramón López Velarde is a text in which it is possible to identify a critique of the post-revolutionary context. The poem shows a conflictive social moment in which negative and positive aspects shape the nation. However, it is those elements of national affirmation that determine the recognition of the text, since they are part of the construct referring to the myth of Mexican nationalism, so their weight is greater than the negative judgments that show the contradiction of the political, economic and social environment of the new Mexican State.



The poem is also a post-revolutionary work, since it expresses the distinctive nationalist discourse of that period, the one that elevates patriotic love. Philosophical spiritualism is one of the main features that allow it to be linked to the artistic production of the period in question. The philosophical modernism promoted by thinkers such as Emmanuel Kant or Arthur Schopenhauer and the one extended by Latin America by José Enrique Rodó proposed progress based on cultural self-understanding; that is, the rediscovery and acceptance of one's own. In this way, the "authentically Mexican" is exposed in *La suave Patria* and is the pillar that covers up the conflictive aspects of the nation.

*The soft Homeland* should not be regarded as a candid game of versification. By the subjection to the state program to which it responds yes it can be seen as a text that used a popular language to reach the people, but that did not leave aside the astute use of words. The poem presents a softened image of the country, but does not completely hide the difficulties that are also its own. For this reason, it rescues the affable face of Mexican society, so that it is that, one's own identity, that saves the nation involved in a new decisive historical change, which it faced hopefully, but with fear and even reluctant to the imminent transformation.

The celebrations for the centenary of *La suave Patria* are here and the poem is renewed for its topicality. The social circumstances are adverse, however, there is an attempt by the State to make believe that all Mexicans are happy, without considering the heterogeneous composition of the country and minimizing the social deprivations that must be combated. A government persists that seeks to propose an idealized position of social circumstances rather than face reality as it is presented. Likewise, the promise of self-sufficiency revives the hope of the Mexican people despite the economic adversities that haunt the oil, mining and agricultural industries. For its part, Guadalupanism, true to its image, continues to be an identity feature of Mexican society and is the one that maintains the faith of a people that lives in uncertainty.

Perhaps, on its anniversary, *La suave Patria* will be the reading recommended by the government as was the Moral Booklet of Alfonso Reyes at the beginning of the new presidential term. The invitation to read the text must be accepted, but not only to carry out an exercise of repetition



that strengthens patriotic love, as happened in the previous century, but as an action that results in a retrospective look capable of seeing, from a critical vision, the successes and failures of the nation.

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